

AN INVESTIGATION OF THE CURRENT BRITISH COLUMBIAN
EDUCATIONAL POLICY, REGARDING SINGLE MALE CENTRAL
AMERICAN REFUGEE CLAIMANTS, AND THE EFFECT, IF
ANY, ON THEIR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC WELL BEING.

by

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ABSTRACT

Refugees are on welfare and get into difficulty because the Federal Immigration policy does not give them work permits and Povincial Education policy does not provide English as a second language.

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Chapter One

Introduction

My interest in refugee claimants began in the winter of 1987 when my spouse and I volunteered to teach, an ESL class, to Central American refugee claimants at the Carnegie Centre in downtown Vancouver. That winter was an eye opener as we got to know more and more about the claimants and learnt about their aspirations and problems. We had recently returned from two years cruising our own sailboat in Mexico and had developed a great liking and affinity with its people and culture. Our experiences in Mexico and here in Vancouver led me to explore the reasons for the situation in which the claimants had been placed.

The purpose that underlies this study is to discover why Central American refugee claimants are not receiving the help, in terms of education, that they need. In order to do this it is necessary to examine in detail the formation of the policies and circumstances that have shaped the present day situation.

Three major areas of study that arise from the initial question are as follows: What creates Central American refugees; What policies are in place that effect them directly and how were they formulated; and what are the results of these policies on the refugees now that they are in Canada?

To address these three issues I felt it was necessary to explore each of these areas. By approaching the study in this way I hope to be able to suggest ways in which the present policies can be amended to more realistically deal with the emerging crisis that is occurring among our refugee population. It is also hoped that this study will point the way for further study of this complex intercultural, yet global problem.

While working as a volunteer in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, teaching English as a Second Language for the Downtown Eastside Youth Activities Society (DEYAS), I got to know about 30 Central American refugee claimants who were living in the downtown east side of Vancouver. The greatest number of these were political refugees from El Salvador. These men did not all come from the same social class or occupational category, but were spread across the spectrum from near-illiterate to college graduate, with a corresponding range of previous occupations. All were determined to succeed in Canada and attended the winter drop-in classes on a regular basis. This was the only ESL training that they had access to at that time (see update).

Because I was able to observe their problems firsthand, I began to develop an understanding of how they viewed their situations, and the forces that regulated their lives. I came to appreciate how few social services were available to them, and their need,

both for recognition of their existence and for help in integration into the Canadian society to which they had fled.

Identification of the problem

During the last five years, increasing numbers of single, male, Central American refugees have arrived in Canada and sought political asylum as "convention refugees". These young men have gravitated to the larger metropolitan areas, specifically Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver (source Pablo Bazerque, Spanish speaking streetworker for DEYAS). In Vancouver, they have formed a unique sub culture. According to Pablo Bazerque, who comes in contact with them, there are approximately 300 young, single male refugee claimants in Vancouver (as of May 1989). Bazerque claims that it is difficult to give an accurate figure, as the subjects are constantly moving, not only between districts of the city (discussed below), but also to other metropolitan areas across Canada. This movement is hard to trace or document, but in Bazerque's experience is a major problem in attempting to help them establish bases from which to access the Canadian Immigration and Employment determination process. This process will determine whether they will be accepted as immigrants or whether they will be returned to their country of origin.

Within Vancouver, the subjects have grouped themselves in three locations, the Main and Hastings area, the Main and Broadway area and the Broadway and Commercial area. These areas have been selected because of their low rents and active street life. This active street life is reminiscent of that in Central America.

The subjects are, in the main, under- or unemployed, not fluent in English and unsupported by either the local *Latin* community or the community-at-large. Most are on welfare and subsist from month to month. Many have been in conflict with the law and most, if not all, are 'at risk' in being exposed to contact with persons engaged in criminal activities. The temptation to engage in illegal acts is ever present. In a report summary, prepared by William Smiley for the conference on Latin Youth, held at Britannia School in April 1989, he states:

The refugee claimants, usually single young men, have the hardest time adopting (sic). Their uncertain status and lack of services makes it very difficult for them. Immigration policy treats these people as 'gate crashers' and gives them a double message - 'you can come in but you are not welcome'. If they are accepted as immigrants they do not even get the same material support and language training that government chosen refugees receive. They are treated as 'regular' Canadians and basically left to fend for themselves. They are often alone, have little or no English, are unemployed, and have had traumatic premigration experiences. This sub-population seems to be most 'at risk' and has the least resources and services available to them....The highest risk population seemed to be single young men who have come to Canada as refugee claimants. They do not even have the support of family and

friends. These young men face the added stress of waiting to see if they will be deported or allowed to stay in Canada. (William Smiley, 1989)

Difficulties with language and acculturation have further isolated them from others in the neighbourhood. Their treatment at the hands of Employment and Immigration Canada, has increased their anxiety and frustration, due to the time taken to determine their legal status.

This paper will deal with the problems of survival faced by those single, male refugee claimants who arrived prior to January 1989 from Central America. Central America for the purpose of this paper will be those countries that lie between the United States and Panama. Mexico is not normally included in Central America but does produce "refugees" and these are considered part of the *Latin* refugee group currently awaiting processing in Vancouver. In January 1989, the Canadian immigration regulations changed with respect to the determination process. This aspect will be dealt with in Chapter 3. These men range in age from under 20 to over 40. In many cases they come from countries in which there has been or still is civil and/or military unrest. Some are married and have left families behind while most are single but have parents and other relatives in their home country. Many send money back home to support those left behind.

Because of the backlog in the processing of refugee claimants, (Employment and Immigration Canada estimates 80,000 as of January 1989) it takes many months for these young men to obtain work permits. Social assistance should be available within the first month after arrival, but many have reported difficulty in obtaining this money.

The perception of many Canadians is that these young men are members of "Latino gangs" who prey on women and are involved in drug trafficking. (Vancouver Sun, 1989) While it is true that these gangs exist and are, or have been, identified with drug trafficking and prostitution, their membership rarely includes men from the group under review. (The gang most commonly cited in Vancouver, *Los Diablos*, is mainly composed of youths from the Latin American community who came to Canada as adolescents with their families, attended high school and are now unemployed.)

The single males have, however, formed a loose association called *Los Marianas*. This group has been formed as a support system and as a means of establishing an identity for these young men. The only time they are seen as a group is at soccer matches and other sporting events within the Latin community.

The problems faced by the group under discussion involve the difficulties of day to day living in a foreign country and the frustration of planning for a

satisfactory life in a climate of uncertainty. Housing, jobs, language, acculturation, education and status are the major areas that will be explored.

The problems of the group under discussion stem from many sources. It is the purpose of this research to examine the sources of the problem in order that a clear understanding of the nature of the problems can be obtained and analysed. This paper will briefly examine the economic, social and political situations in Latin America that have created refugees. Next, it will examine how our current immigration policy evolved and the repercussions of this policy on the refugee claimants.

Once this background has been established, the remainder of the study will deal with how these young men cope with their situation.

Economic success in a new country requires skills in the language of the new country. This means that ESL training is essential to ensure that these refugee claimants succeed.

The question to be asked is: Does the current Federal Immigration policy and the Provincial Education policy assist single male Central American refugee claimants?

Chapter Two

Review of the Literature

While much material is available on immigration and sponsored refugees, little has been written about refugee claimants. Within the academic world there are only a handful of writers on Canadian immigration and immigrants. Most notable among these are Freda Hawkins and Gerald Dirks. Two journalists, Victor Malarek and Reg Whitaker, have specialized in the field and have both written books and articles on the subject.

Freda Hawkins, in her 1988 book, Canada and Immigration: Public policy and public concerns, mentions Latin American refugees, in passing, as being part of the group of refugees who make up 26.7% of refugees accepted by Quebec. This group includes large numbers of Haitians who speak French and are sought by this province - all of these are sponsored refugees. Her only comment on illegal migrants has to do with the backlog clearance program and this includes all illegal migrants currently seeking status, not just Latin Americans.

Victor Malarek, in his 1987 book, Haven Gate, has the following to say about refugee claimants from El Salvador and Guatemala:

On February 20, 1987, Mr Bouchard....announced a series of "administrative measures" to increase Canada's "ability to help genuine refugees who need our protection by deterring abuse of the refugee determination system." The most drastic move was an attempt to shut

down the overland route through the United States used by refugee claimants from El Salvador and Guatemala, two refugee-producing countries that the Canadian government had acknowledged to be rife with human rights violations. (Malarek, 1987, p.117)

Mr. Malarek is a writer for the Toronto Globe and Mail and has been its immigration expert since 1974. His style, while somewhat sensational, is backed up by solid research. Another author in the same vein is Reg Whitaker, whose book Double Standard was published in 1987. Mr Whitaker researched and wrote his book while on a fellowship at York University. His book is well researched, particularly in his use of the Freedom of Information Act and its revelations regarding the formulation and implementation of the various immigration acts. Mr Whitaker spends a great deal of the book looking for motives and conspiracies, especially regarding covert activities involving the United States' Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). He does, however, include a small section on Central American refugee claimants. His views can be discerned from the following quote from his book:

In the 1980's the main area of the world producing so-called "left-wing" refugees is Central America. The United States, backing right-wing dictatorships and opposing both left-wing guerrilla movements and the left-wing governments of Cuba and Nicaragua, is virtually closed to the people displaced by war and by counter-insurgency drives under American tutelage....A number of them have begun to show up as refugee claimants at the Canadian border. Their flight to Canada is in every sense a genuine refugee movement, since the U.S. government will deport them to their country of origin if they are apprehended--and

in many cases that means certain death.
(Whitaker, 1987, p.295)

Gerald Dirks, a recognized authority in academic circles regarding migrants, supports Mr. Whitakers views regarding the Canadian governments inability to handle refugee claimants from Central America in an honourable way. In an article in the Canadian Journal of Polical Science, of June 1984, he states:

Regardless of the prevailing Immigration Act, refugees from Latin America have never been the recipients of as prompt or as liberal treatment as individuals from such regions as Eastern Europe. This state of affairs has been, and continues to be, attributable to political, administrative and ideological considerations on the part of various Canadian governments rather than to any discriminatory features of immigration legislation. (Dirks, 1984, p.297)

Gerald Dirks' classic, Canada's Refugee Policy: Indifference or opportunism, written in 1977, only very briefly mentions illegal migrants and these are mainly Portuguese and East Indians. The recent exodus from Central America had not got under way in 1977. Subsequently, in various articles in journals, he has acknowledge this exodus but has contributed little to the general store of knowledge. In 1988 he addressed the Refugee Determination Process in his article, of the same name, in the Canadian Journal of Political Science. This article deals more with the mechanism of the process rather than its impact on those within the system.

A 1987 book, edited by John R. Roggee for the University of Manitoba, entitled Refugees: "A third world

dilemma, contains a number of essays on refugees from Central America. The main thrust of these essays is the impact that refugees from Guatemala, Nicaragua and El Salvador have on neighbouring countries rather than on that of those refugees who attempt the arduous trek to Canada. Mr. Rogge introduces the section (section three) on Central America by saying:

Of all the world's refugee-generating areas, Latin America has probably received the least attention from either the media or the academic community. Yet South and Central America, as well as the Caribbean states, have been adding to the world refugee numbers for much of the post war era....Although UNHCR (United Nations High Commission on Refugees) acknowledges that upward of 1 million people have been displaced during the past decade in Central America, only around 120,000 had benefitted directly from the protection and assistance of the agency by mid-1986 (Barton 1986). Nowhere else around the world does such a wide discrepancy exist. (Rogge (Ed.), 1987, p.159)

Rogge goes on to say that the major refugee-producing countries are Guatemala, Nicaragua and El Salvador and the majority of these countries' refugees seek refuge in neighbouring countries, especially Mexico and Honduras. He does acknowledge that a small percentage seek resettlement in the United States and Canada. He never-the-less maintains that "the majority of refugees are being maintained in numerous refugee holding camps or have spontaneously integrated among urban and rural communities." (Rogge, 1987, p.159)

Another collection of essays, edited by Gil Loescher and Laila Monahan, entitled Refugees and International Relations has a few references to refugees from Central America. One of the essays, by Elizabeth Ferris, deals with the "Sanctuary Movement" and its growth and involvement with Central American refugees, particularly those from El Salvador. Ronny Golder and Michael McConnell's book, Sanctuary: the new underground railroad covers this area extensively, but it is Ferris' essay that gives the movement legitimacy by showing that it is one of many such movements initiated by the world's churches internationally.

Escape from Violence: Conflict and the refugee crisis in the developing world by Aristide Zolberg, Astri Suhrke and Sergio Aguayo, published in 1989, contains the following quote in the preface:

Widely perceived as an unprecedented crisis, the number of refugees originating in the developing world since the 1970s has generated urgent concern throughout the West. Such concern is an ambiguous mixture of compassion for the plight of the unfortunate who have been cast adrift and of fear that they will come pouring in. But not only does that fear constantly threaten to undermine the exercise of compassion, it also shows that the affluent countries of the West will neither admit all who seek entry nor give sufficient relief to those who find havens in the developing world itself. This is equally true of neighbouring countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America, which bear the brunt of the crisis. (Zolberg, Suhrke & Aguayo, 1989, p.i)

This book includes two chapters on Central America. The first chapter (chapter 7) deals with the general situation

and goes on to discuss the situation in Cuba and Haiti. The second of these chapters (chapter 8) deals exclusively with Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua. The writing is well researched and tries to step carefully through the minefield of both political and economic realities.

In one decade, social conflict in Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala has displaced between two and three million people, almost entirely from the poorest sectors of the population....(as in) previous cases. We must take into consideration conditions in the countries of origin and reception; there is a clear involvement of societies and international organizations in debate about the displaced; and there is a tendency to use the displaced as pawns in the conflict....These variables are particularly clear in Central America because the displaced come from two countries ruled by rightist forces (El Salvador and Guatemala) and one by a leftist coalition (Nicaragua). (Zolberg, Suhrke & Aguayo, 1989, p.211)

Zolberg et al include an interesting table in their book that shows where the displaced from Central America move to. This table shows that the vast majority of Central American refugees seek asylum in neighbouring countries. Of the one and a half million refugees from El Salvador only one third have sought refuge in countries outside of the region and of these the majority (95%) have sought out the United States. Only 5,317 have migrated to Canada. These figures are for 1987. (Zolberg, Suhrke & Aguayo, 1989, p.212)

To illustrate the change that has occurred in the movement of peoples within the last decade it is interesting

to compare the following quote from The Organization of American States (OAS) with the findings of Zolberg et al.

Throughout the history of Latin America there has....been a significant, if not large, number of Latin American nationals who have temporarily moved into exile for political reasons....The political exiles of years past flowed rather easily into the neighbouring Latin countries where culture, tradition and language posed few barriers: futhermore, politcal exiles have frequently been the wealthier elements, and have not become burdens on the economy of the absorbing state. (Organization of American States, 1965, p.1)

Since the 1970s, there has been a drastic change with the appearance of large international population movements who claim refugee status and whose social composition differs markedly from that found by the Organization of American States (OAS).

The massive outflow from Cuba and later, Chile, Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala severely strained existing legal codes and prompted a call by the Organization of American States (OAS) for more members to accept the somewhat broader obligations of the U.N. convention and to adopt its language in national legislation. (Zolberg, Suhrke & Aguayo, 1989, p.28)

This shift in the type of refugee claimant from Central America has created in the receiving countries a drastic rethinking about refugees and their acceptance.

The above publications have generally dealt with the causes for involuntary movements of people. The next area that is of relevance to this study is the area of reception and acculturation in Canada.

In the area of reception, the most authoritative works are government publications; such as the various Royal Commission Reports, Employment and Immigration Canada reports, and Statistics Canada reports. These give the facts and figures about the people involved, but add little to an understanding of the reality that these people face in their new role. Examples of this type of publication are the Annual Reports to Parliament on Future Immigration Levels. These reports are issued each year and state the number of refugees that Canada will accept in a given year from each refugee-producing area. They do not, refer to or include the number of refugee claimants who will turn up on Canada's doorstep. For instance, in 1986, the number of allowable/estimated refugees from Latin America for the following year was set to be 3,200 out of a total of 12,000 world-wide refugees that would be accepted by Canada. (Employment & Immigration Canada, 1986, p.13). In the 1987 report, the figure for Central America was set at 3,400 for 1988, at the same time, setting a figure of 2,000 for landings (application at the border or within Canada). (These persons were to be determined by the Refugee Status Advisory Board (RSAC), since known as the Immigration Determination Board (IDB). "This figure is not a target, quota or ceiling, but an estimate based on current trends" (Employment & Immigration Canada, 1987, p.11).

Another government sponsored report of some significance is the Perspectives on Immigration in Canada,

Final Report, prepared by the Canadian Employment and Immigration Advisory Council in August 1988. This publication looked at how we, as Canadians, viewed immigrants and refugees. Its findings are somewhat confusing but give the general impression that, while Canadians see the benefits of new immigrants, they would rather they did not settle in their communities and take their jobs. At the same time, citizens felt that Canada should take more refugees, but only from specific countries (Eastern and Southern Europe). The perceptions of the media (explored in this publication) were also mixed, for while expressing sympathy for refugees from Central America in political terms, the media preferred that they stayed in the United States or Mexico. The report included a number of recommendations. If Canada was to accept refugees, we must be prepared to give them adequate language training and enough skills to be self-sufficient. Other recommendations of note read as follows:

That the government take the following measures with regard to the legislation on refugees recently passed by parliament:

- a) Establish a comprehensive settlement for all current refugee claimants to ensure harmonious implementation of all provisions contained in the new legislation.
- b) Ensure that the appeal system....respect the spirit and the letter of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. (Canadian Employment and Immigration Advisory Council, 1988, p.12)

An interesting, but now outdated, government publication is the Aspects of absorption and adaption of immigrants written by Antony H. Holland for the Department of Manpower and Immigration in 1974. In its conclusion it made the following statement:

Many immigrants experience some decline in the occupational status of their first job in Canada compared with that in the former country. Some eventually recover or improve upon their former position although not necessarily in the type of employment that they had intended to pursue in Canada.

Acculturation, as measured by use of an official language and knowledge of Canadian symbols, institutions and personalities, was governed by education and length of residence. Less well educated immigrants relied more heavily on a variety of local social and commercial facilities in their own language and were more dependent on ethnic press and radio.

Finally, there is a minority of *alienated* immigrants whose failure to obtain steady employment at a level commensurate with their qualifications combined with social isolation and lack of acculturation generate deep seated dissatisfaction and stress. (Richmond, 1974, p.47)

By 1984, Mr Richmond, who continued to study in this area, had published an article in the International Migration Today journal entitled "Socio-cultural adaptations and conflicts in immigrant-receiving countries" in which he stated:

The immigrant adaption process is influenced by pre-migration conditions, the transitional experience in moving from one country to another, the characteristics of the migrants themselves and conditions in the receiving country, including government policies and economic factors. Other important determinants

include age of arrival in new country, the education and qualifications of the immigrants concerned, their degree of exposure to the mass media, including ethnic newspapers, radio and television, and the types of social network entered into in the receiving country. The process of adaption is multidimensional in which acculturation interacts with economic adaption, social integration, satisfaction and degree of identification with the new country. (Richmond, 1984, p.110)

These later statements are a far cry from the earlier assumptions put forth in the 1974 government publication where acculturation was measured by a person's knowledge of Canada and its institutions, rather than by how well the person coped within the receiving country.

On education and work opportunities, Mr Richmond, in his 1984 article, had the following comments:

For older immigrants learning a new language and other aspects of acculturation may present more formidable obstacles....Sometimes....class are open only to government-sponsored migrants.

Probably, education, more then (sic) any other single factor, explains the degree and extent of subsequent socio-cultural adaption, and the precise form that the adaption takes.

Ease of access to educational opportunities in the receiving country has an important influence on the socio-cultural adaption of immigrants....Failure to provide such facilities or to assist in the cost of further education by governments or employers, lead to the underutilization of immigrant skills and abilities, as well as frustration and disillusionment on the part of immigrants themselves.

In modern societies, a high degree of literacy, as well as oral fluency, is needed by all those seeking employment in other than unskilled work. (Richmond, 1984, p.113)

In conclusion Richmond stated that "social, cultural and educational policies are needed that will ensure integration

within the context of a genuinely polyethnic and multicultural society" (Richmond, 1984, p.122).

A study by Alex Stepick and Alejandro Portes on Haitian refugees in Florida found that the greatest barriers to acculturation were lack of language skills, the ghettoisation of the refugees and the lack of opportunities to meet English-speaking Americans (Stepick and Portes, 1986). They also found that there was racial backlash that resulted in much prejudice that further isolated the refugees from the English speaking locals. A similar backlash has been reported in Canada against Central American and African refugees.

In cities whose prosperity has attracted the largest share of immigrants - notably Montreal, Vancouver and Toronto - the shifting colour balance of society has already spawned outbreaks of open racism...(in consequence) Ottawa has acted to stem the flow of illegitimate refugees, by, among other things, tightening its refugee-screening procedures. (Maclean's Magazine, 1989, p.15)

In conclusion, it can be seen that while the study of refugees from Central America has not been neglected by academics and the media, it has not been made a major part of any one study. Rather, it has been a footnote to other studies that have dealt with other groups of migrants and the impact of Canada's immigration policy on these other groups. It is hoped that this research will contribute to this neglected area.

Chapter Three

Although the major focus of this research is the reception and coping mechanisms of the refugee claimants it is important to understand the forces that have shaped their attitudes and perceptions prior to arrival.

This background is included to enable the reader to understand the political and social forces that are at work in shaping past and current social and political situations in Central America. These forces have been instrumental in the creation of refugees and are thus germane to this discussion.

A Profile of Central America

Why does Central America produce refugees? Central America has always been a battle ground of cultures. This narrow neck of tropical jungle which lies between North and South America was the meeting place between cultures long before the arrival of Columbus. Beginning with the early migrations from Asia during the ice age, nomadic groups, under pressure from successive waves of new arrivals in the north, moved south to Central America where they were forced by geography to form into cohesive societies for their own protection. As each, new wave, occurred so new allegiances had to be forged for survival. The arrival of the Spanish in the 16th century changed the whole cultural, social and economic structure of the area. The Europeans culture was

superimposed on the existing cultures and the resultant culture with its class, colour and liniage structure became dominant. Shortly after the American War of Independence the colonies within Central America, including Mexico, were encouraged to throw off the European yoke, and did so, often with the help of the United States. This aid was reciprocated by allowing certain United States interests to become involved in Central America.

The United States' Monroe Doctrine has been the fulcrum of this conflict which has allowed the U. S. government and business to exploit and dominate Central America.

The Monroe Doctrine (December 2, 1823) states in part:

"...a principle in which the rights and interests of the United States are involved, that the American continents, by the free and independent condition which they have assumed and maintain, are henceforth not to be considered as subjects for future colonization by any European powers."

In 1904, this doctrine was added to by President Theodore Roosevelt:

"Chronic wrongdoing or an impotence which results in a general loosening of the ties of civilized society, may in America, as elsewhere, ultimately require intervention by some civilized nation, and in the Western Hemisphere the adherence of the United States to the Monroe doctrine may force the United States, however reluctantly, in flagrant cases of such wrongdoing or impotence, to the exercise of an international police power."

In 1912, President William Taft added this codicil to the nation's diplomatic arsenal:

"The day is not far distant when three stars and stripes at three equidistant points will mark our territories: One on the North Pole, another at the Panama Canal and the third at the South Pole. The whole hemisphere will be ours in fact, as by virtue of superiority of race, it already is ours morally."

To these remarkable statements of policy can be added the U.S. State Department memorandum of 1927:

"We do control the destinies of Central America and we do so for the simple reason that the national interest absolutely dictates such a course....Until now Central America has always understood that governments which we recognize and support stay in power, while those we do not recognize and support fall."

Finally, in 1947, President Truman said the United States would:

" support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressure."

These measures set the stage for what has happened in Central America since World War II. With the war in Europe and the Pacific over, and the United States' prosperity now firmly entrenched on a war economy, it was essential to maintain this momentum. Any attempt to return to the neutral days prior to 1941 would have slowed down the United States economy, and so the war machine rolled on. The "Cold War" in Europe, followed by the conflicts in Korea and Vietnam,

ensured a continuation of this economic model. In Central and South America, minor wars and skirmishes, often engineered by the United States on behalf of U.S.-based multinational corporations, ensured their hold over the region. The emergence of Castro's "communist" regime in Cuba, backed by Russia and China, ensured a continuing interest in Central and South America.

Rosemary Radford Ruether, in a forward to Renny Golden's and Michael McConnell's book, Sanctuary: The New Underground Railroad, has this to say about the United States' role in the "Third World" and more specifically in Central America:

Since the Second World War, (the United States) has developed a permanent war economy. The purpose of this war economy is to maintain U.S. control throughout the world in defense of the Western Empire and its ability to use cheap labour and resources of former colonized regions of the planet. This war economy pursues military escalation in the two spheres where it perceives this control to be threatened-- the nuclear arms race with the U.S.S.R., leader of the second world, and counter revolutionary repression in the third world. Much of the war against the third world is carried out through surrogate armies maintained by military elites whose power the U.S. funds within those third world states....the prime area of such repressive control, backed up by local militia and at times, direct military intervention by the U.S., is Central America, seven tiny states, with a combined population of less than 25 million, that form the "bridge" between North and South America. (Golden, R. & McConnell, M., 1986, Foreward (vi))

The problems faced by Central America during this period are similar to those faced by the other emerging nations during the post war period. Since World War II and the restructuring of global power, the vast majority of

voluntary migrations have involved people from developing countries. The subsequent reorganising of national boundaries, as Europe released its colonies, and the emergence of the United States as the major force on the world's political stage, changed the status quo everywhere. In most developing countries the scarce revenue producing resources were readily exported for short term gains. Military spending, inappropriate development projects and economic mismanagement ensured that this wealth rarely benefited those most in need. Mass poverty and insecurity increased. Better health care in many third world countries (India,Africa) enlarged the population, by decreasing the number of infant deaths. This expansion increased the countries population beyond its ability to feed and cloths its citizens. The oil crisis of the seventies increased the massive debt load being incurred by the developing nations, as they sought to cope not only with their internal problems, but also with their attempts to "westernize".

The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, after their overgenerosity in the previous two decades, were, in the 1980's forced to dictate drastic austerity programs in the Third World. The effect of these programs invariably has fallen on the lower middle class and the poor. This has led to a further deterioration of their already precarious situation.

This economic crisis has exacerbated the demand to sell even more raw materials to the industrial nations, and has

led to ecological disaster in many parts of the developing world. Deforestation, desertification, pollution of air and water and drought have exacted their toll. All these problems, added to those of governmental instability, or, in many cases in Central America, military rule, have led to a mass displacement of persons.

Mass displacement has become a truly global phenomenon. Many of those uprooted in the developing countries have made their way to the industrialised states, only to be confronted by further social and economic crisis. Here recession and rising unemployment have led to new waves of popular xenophobia. Migrants are increasingly subject to harassment. (Sadrudin Aga Khan and Hassan Bin Talal, 1986. Foreward).

In Central America, the presence of military juntas, death squads and revolutionary wars have led to mass trans-border migrations. These migrations have often brought only temporary relief as the new host country has all too often been at conflict itself. During the later part of the last two decades only Mexico and Costa Rica have not been involved in 'open' internal strife.

Migration in Central America, until the late 1970's, was mainly economic in nature. People moved primarily for economic factors such as wage differences, increased employment opportunities and the rural settlement of unoccupied areas. Since 1980, migration has increased drastically and has been mainly refugees rather than economic migrants. It is estimated (1985) that there are 175,000 refugees from neighbouring countries living in

Central America, excluding Panama. Panama and Mexico contribute another 175,000, bringing the estimated total to 350,000 for Mexico and Central America. (Torres-Rivas, 1985)

E. Torres-Rivas presented the following data about refugees within the region :

<u>Receiving country</u>	<u>Country of origin</u>				
	El Salvador	Guatamala	Nicaragua	Other	Total
Mexico	120,000	55,000			175,000
Guatamala	70,000				70,000
Nicaragua	17,500	500		500	18,500
Honduras	19,000	1,000	19,200		39,200
Costa Rica	10,000	1,000	25,000	2,700	38,700
Belize/ Panama	3,000	5,500			8,500
Total	239,000	63,000	44,200	3,200	349,900

(Torres-Rivas, 1985)

The receiving countries in Central America have been hard put to deal with this sudden, and in some cases massive, influx of refugees. Many of these countries are themselves undergoing economic crisis and internal strife yet have attempted to adopt policies and programs to meet the needs of the refugees. In many cases, they have attempted to move the refugees to special camps away from the borders because these refugees are often subject to retaliatory raids or have brought the host country into international dispute by being accused of harbouring rebels and of encouraging their activities.

The Central American debt amounts to some \$21 billion (1985) or a debt, per capita, of \$750. At the same time the

GNP has declined in all of Central America, including, Costa Rica, the most stable and least debt ridden country in the region. (World Bank, 1986) These factors have prevented the Governments involved from being able to supply the support and material aid the refugees require. Many of the settlement programs have been inadequate or poorly thought out and mass dissatisfaction among the refugees has resulted. This resultant dissatisfaction has caused many refugees to migrate to the United States of America.

The strict regulations and the increased surveillance of the U.S. border has made it increasingly hard for illegals to remain in the lower U.S. states, especially since the Simpson/Mazzoli Bill of 1982 and the Rodino/Mazzoli Bill of 1985. These Bills have sought to strengthen the enforcement of the immigration laws by providing more funding and by making the penalties for the hiring of illegals prohibitively expensive (up to \$10,000 per offence).

These measures have ensured a steady trickle of these displaced people into Canada as refugees. Many of them have fled with no clear destination in mind, have not followed the normal channels, and have arrived at Canada's border unprepared for the determination ordeal that now confronts them.

For Canada, the United States' intentions and domineering stance in the south were of little concern. Until 1973, our primary concern was maintaining a separate identity from our powerful southern neighbour. Canada,

because of its lack of population and sovereignty, retained a low profile on the world scene. This changed during the Trudeau years (1968-1979, 1980-1984) as the then prime minister sought not only to repatriate the constitution but also to become a leader and spokesman for the non-aligned (those nations perceived to be neither part of the communist block nor part of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, (NATO)).

Canada had until the 1970's almost no contact with immigrants or refugees from Central America. Canada's first contact with refugees from south of the Rio Grande was with Chileans. Although this incident is not within the province of this research it illustrates the bias against immigrants and refugees from the region.

On September 11, 1973, the Chilean armed forces with the assistance and approval of the CIA (Whitaker, 1987, p.134), staged a *coup d'etat*, ousting and then executing the freely elected President, Salvador Allende. Allende represented a left wing coalition known as the "Popular Unity" (P.U.). The P.U., with its mandate from the people, challenged the foundations of the ruling class by controlling an important element of the state, the executive power. In so doing, they seriously threatened the wellbeing and capital of many large multinational corporations operating in Chile (Anaconda Copper, I.T.&T., and Kennecott Copper). (Dirks.G., 1977 p.244; Whitaker. R., 1987 p.254; Gilbert & Lee, 1986 p.123 - 124) For the United States, a *coup d'etat* was the only

logical solution, and in view of the Monroe Doctrine, essential to maintain its role as the major powerbroker in the Americas. After the *coup d'etat*, the Canadian embassy in Santiago was swamped by people seeking political asylum as the Chilean army swiftly retaliated against the coalition members by rounding up all Allende's prominent sympathizers, and placing them under arrest pending trials and execution. Foreign embassies were soon crowded by refugees fearing for their safety. Canada's response to the situation was initially slow.

By the end of December, 1973, Canadian officials had received approximately 1,400 applications for immigration to Canada but only 184 had been approved. (Dirks, 1977 p.248)

Despite a major effort by the Canadian Council of Churches, it was not until 1974 that the Canadian government established a special immigration program for Chileans called "The Special Chilean Movement". By the end of 1978, 6,225 refugees had registered in the program. Gilbert and Lee, in their 1986 article, Latin American Immigration to Canada, have the following postscript to their section on the Special Chilean Movement:

Evidence suggests that the Canadian Government deliberately slowed down the process of accepting this group of refugees. This became apparent when the program of Chilean refugees is compared with that involving the Hungarians in 1956, the Czechoslovakians in 1968 and the Ugandan Asians in 1972....in general terms, it is logical and understandable that countries like Canada have more sympathy for refugees from certain regions. However, it is also logical to conclude that the

creation of refugee programs was politically motivated. Human compassion seems to be of less importance when deciding the fate of refugees. (Gilbert & Lee, 1986 p. 125 - 126)

The conditions that have lead to the creation of refugees in Central America are primarily due to the instability of the region, which are the direct result of two major factors - economics and politics. In all of Central America, including Mexico, the power and the wealth of the states is held in the hands of a small, inter-related group of elites. The elites are, more often than not, of European descent whose family have been in Central America since the early days of the European occupation and control most of the land and finance in the country. In Mexico, 16% of the population hold and control 85% of all the land and wealth in the country (World Bank Staff, June 1980, p.22). In El Salvador, 2% of the population hold and control 60% (Salvaide, 1988); in Guatemala, 3% hold and control 65% (ICCHRLA Annual Report 1989, p.41); in Nicaragua, prior to the overthrow of Anastasio Somoza in 1979, 8% held and controlled 90% (Walker, 1987, p.56). Since then the Sandinistas have redistributed some land left vacant by wealthy landowners who fled when Somoza lost power, but the distribution of land, power and wealth is still not equitable.

In most of Central America the wealth and property of the various countries is not evenly distributed. As noted above only a small percentage of each country's citizens are wealthy, the majority are poor and subsist on either poor

landholdings or at low paying jobs in both rural and urban settings.

The middle class, where it exists, is divided into two disparate groups. The first is composed of professionals such as doctors, lawyers, engineers and senior civil servants, who receive reasonable salaries and some are able to obtain more through "*mordida*", meaning "the bite" or a bribe. Many of these professionals aspire to joining the elite through marriage. The second group, who are not as well paid but who can achieve some benefits, is composed of mechanics, printers, artisans and junior civil servants who keep the machinery of state running.

This disparity between the rich and the poor has led to a system of government that has very little regard for the mass of the people. Their concerns are rarely considered in any serious administrative planning except in terms of ensuring that they survive as a passive, pliant and cheap labour force. The field of politics is one of money and class. Those with money and class dominate and control. These elites are, in turn, controlled and dominated by huge North American and European multinationals who support the elites in exchange for non-interference in the way they conduct their business. The aspirations of the cheap labour engendered by these systems, that is fundamental to the elites' huge profits, is ignored.

In general it can be said that the mass of the population, both rural and urban, struggles from day to day

to survive. These people are usually farmers, labourers, factory workers, service industry workers and are paid on average in Central America about \$10 -15 or less per day. Much of this work is seasonal and often hard to obtain and retain. Injury or illness is cause for dismissal. Add to this struggle the ideological wars currently in progress and the creation of refugees is assured.

The major refugee-producing countries in Central America, as far as Canada is concerned, are El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. Other countries in the region producing political refugees include Belize and, more recently, Panama. Mexico also has emigrants but these are generally considered to be economic rather than political refugees (Statistics Canada, Employment & Immigration, 1986)

Chapter Four

Canada's Immigration Policy and its effect on Central American refugee claimants.

This chapter will deal with those sections of the immigration act that have a direct bearing on the refugee claimant under review and how these sections are applied and interpreted in Canada. It will also deal with how some of the disparities within the policy evolved.

By the mid 1960's it had become obvious that the 1952 Immigration Act need serious revision. Consequently a Royal Commission, under Joseph Sedgewick was undertaken in 1967. Mr. Sedgewick's recommendations led to the creation of the Immigration Appeal Board (IAB) in 1967. The IAB was to act as a nonpolitical and nonpartisan buffer between the applicant for immigration and the minister responsible for immigration and his officials.

In 1973, Robert Andras, Minister of Manpower and Immigration, set about establishing a new comprehensive immigration policy. He asked for submissions from groups and individuals across Canada. The results were released in December 1974. By April 1978, Canada's "New Consolidated Immigration Act" had passed through all its stages and had become law. The new act established the four basic principles that underlie our present immigration policy:

- 1). Non discrimination.
 - 2). Family reunification.
 - 3). Humanitarian concern for refugees.
 - 4). Promotion of national goals.
- (Immigration Act 1978)

Immigration was to be linked to Canada's population and labour market. The act, unlike previous ones, also required visitors to obtain visas outside of Canada, and prohibited visitors from changing status while within the country. On refugees, the act states as follows:

An immigrant who is not a member of a prohibited class designated in section 5 of the Act (certain classes of criminals, prostitutes etc) may be granted landing in Canada if a) he is a refugee protected by the convention;....

Convention under the act is defined as:

"Convention" means the United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees signed in Geneva on July 28th, 1951 and includes any Protocol thereto ratified or acceded to by Canada. (Immigration Appeal Board Act: Immigration adjustment of Status Regulations. (Chapter 941 of the Immigration Act. April 1978)

This section also deals with "landing" and grants the applicant, refugee status, which entitles that person to reside in Canada until the outcome of a special inquiry conducted under the Immigration Inquiries Regulations, at which the presiding officer shall:

Inform the person being examined that the purpose of the hearing is to determine whether he is a person who may be admitted, allowed to come into Canada, or to remain in Canada, as the case may be, and that in the event a decision is made at the inquiry that he is not such a person, an order will be made for his departure from Canada.

An earlier provision within the Act allows for:

"an interpreter who is conversant in the language of the applicant and the cost of such interpreter shall be born by the Department of Employment and Immigration". Regarding deportation, " No person shall, pursuant to Subsection 37(1) of the Act, be included in a deportation order unless the person has first been given an opportunity of establishing to an immigration officer that he should not be excluded." Furthermore, in Section 12(c), it states: where the presiding officer has reason to believe, from information obtained at the inquiry or otherwise, that the person (i) claims to be a refugee or a Canadian citizen, or (ii) may be a refugee, [he shall] inform him of the right of appeal based on a claim described in paragraph 11(1)(c) or (d) of the Immigration Appeal Board Act under the Act and the procedure to be followed in exercising such right of appeal."

(Immigration Act 1978)

What all this means, is: a person who comes to Canada and asks for asylum as a refugee is normally admitted to Canada, and then undergoes a determination process. However, because of the large number of claimants who have applied from within Canada since 1978, the process has become bogged down. Delays of up to five years before completion of the determination process are not unusual. Delays are caused by the lack of trained interpreters and counsel and the small number of appeal board personnel, and involve lengthy waits between initial hearings and appeals. There is a major stumbling block that most refugees face: namely, though they are at risk personally, they often are unable to provide documentary proof of the threat from which they are fleeing.

The United Nations Protocol, to which Canada became a signatory in 1967, states:

A refugee...is a person who has a "well founded" fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion. (U.N. Protocol, 1951)

Most refugees' have a problem proving that a "well founded fear of persecution" exists. Boards of inquiry have chosen to interpret this phrase as meaning (in the words of Victor Malarek) that the refugee be required to prove he was either

individually persecuted, harassed, tortured or imprisoned for his beliefs, [or] he would have to establish that the bomb or missile that devastated his village, killing 650 people and wounding another 1,500, was meant "specifically" for him.

(Malarek, 1987, p.97)

This narrow interpretation of the Convention has meant a high rejection rate and a lengthy appeal process in case after case, ensuring that the ensuing backlog has grown larger and larger. The high rejection rate, in turn, has prompted many to use statistics to show that most applicants are not real refugees but rather "economic refugees"-- a derogatory term currently much in vogue.

When Canada signed the U.N. Convention in 1969, the nation was committed to accepting refugees based on their need for succor rather than on their suitability as Canadian immigrants, as had previously been the case. Section 3(g) of the 1976 Immigration Act states: "[the need] to fulfill

Canada's international obligations with respect to refugees and to uphold its humanitarian obligations with respect to the displaced and the persecuted". When this was written, the government did not anticipate that refugees would be applying from within Canada. It had always been assumed that refugees would be from countries which were geographically unconnected to North America, and that the refugees' distance at time of application would still ensure "de facto" government ability to pick and choose, from the mass of refugees applying, those who would be of value and benefit to Canada. The arrival of refugees from South and Central America in the 1980's caught Ottawa off guard. The Immigration Act guaranteed individuals a hearing on their claim for refugee status, regardless of how they came to Canada, and now the government could not treat these applicants selectively.

There were few refugee claimants until the late 1970s, due to the great distance between most refugee-producing countries and Canada. During the 1970s Canada sponsored refugees (on request of the United Nations) in a number of crisis situations. These included the East Indian Ugandans forced by President Idi Amin to leave Uganda on short notice in August 1972 ; the Chileans forced to leave Chile after the murder of President Salvador Allende in September 1973; and the boat people who fled Indo-china following the fall of Saigon in April 1975. These well-publicized intakes of sponsored refugees were followed by a series of illegal

movements. Those illegal migrants who reached Canada generally consisted of groups or individuals who had fled either by boat or plane. On arrival in Canada they had asked for asylum. Freda Hawkins explains this second wave as follows:

It is well-known that legal immigration and refugee movements often inspire or set in motion illegal movements in the same direction. The ancient commerce of immigration also flourishes today in the interstices and within the loopholes of immigration law. We are also witnessing the early stages of a remarkable out-migration by all available means from third world countries as knowledge of the higher living standards and safer, more secure life in the developed world becomes more widespread....Refugees and undocumented migrants are in fact competing today for admission to countries of first asylum and permanent settlement. (Freda Hawkins, 1988, p.131)

During this initial period the Canadian Immigration act allowed for visitors to apply for immigration status within Canada. This loophole was closed in November 1972. Subsequently in July 1973, a bill was presented that allowed only genuine refugees to applying from within Canada. These facts have led to a number of publications that have dealt with the abuse of the system rather than about the claimants themselves.

The sudden influx, in the late 1970's, of South American refugees, mostly Chilean, forced the then-minister, Lloyd Axworthy, to establish a task force under W.G. Robinson. Robinson presented his report "Illegal Migrants

in Canada" in June of 1983. The report recommended that an amended refugee determination process be devised to deal with these "queue jumpers", and that it be implemented at the "first opportunity". He further stated:

...it [the refugee determination process] has outgrown its legislative garment. Moreover, it must be given the capacity to deal effectively with abusive claims. Otherwise our resources will be squandered in fighting a rearguard action in Canada, when they could be so much more efficiently deployed in attacking refugee problems at their source. (W.G.Robinson, 1983. p.109)

The conclusions of this report were felt to be unsatisfactory by Axworthy. However, the Liberal government, of which he was part, was soon afterwards defeated. Axworthy was replaced by John Roberts of the Conservatives, who commissioned another study. In 1984, Ed Ratushny completed this study and presented it to Roberts. The new report, entitled "A New Refugee Status Determination Process for Canada", pointed out the many flaws in the system then in place, and recommended quick action. Of first importance was the fact that the old system caused some people, who were refugees, but who were unable to prove their claims, to be sent back to their countries of origin, with the threat of persecution, imprisonment, or even execution. The report prompted Roberts to initiate a second study. This time Rabbi W.Gunther Plaut was selected to head it.

Simultaneously, the Supreme Court of Canada handed down a

ruling that altered the determination process. The court upheld the refugee's right to a full oral hearing before the appeal board. Prior to this ruling, appeal hearings were based on the written submissions of the admitting officer, and tapes or transcripts made at the time of the applicant's original hearing. All subsequent appeals under the system were based on procedural criteria and not on whether a claim was justified on its own merits. Flora MacDonald, who was by now minister, did not challenge the Supreme Court ruling, and the process was changed to allow for oral hearings.

In April 1985, Rabbi Plaut presented his report to MacDonald. It was tabled before the House of Commons two months later. At this time, it was estimated that 13,000 refugee claimants needed to be processed, at a projected cost of \$3,500 each. By September 1986, the case load had grown to 23,000 refugee claimants and the delay within an individual's hearing process had grown from the original six months to as much as five years. Rabbi Plaut, in writing about the processing of refugee claims made within Canada, states:

These have become protracted and cumbersome and have occasioned serious backlogs....Measured by the immensity of the world-wide refugee problem, the task of determining the status of persons who claim refugee status inside Canada is rather small. Generally a few thousand persons a year make such a claim (actual figures based on the fiscal year for 1980 - 1981 were 2,434; for 1981 -1982, 3,726; for 1982 - 1983, 3,640; and for 1983 - 1984, 6,792). Yet, as indicated,

the process of reaching a final determination has become complex and the delay considerable. At present it may take between two and five years before a claim is decided....For those who indeed are refugees such a delay is intolerable from any humane point of view. Their lives are in shambles to begin with, and with every month that passes the opportunity for an early rebuilding of their existence on a permanent foundation is delayed.

(W.G. Plaut, 1985. Foreward)

As pointed out earlier, Canada signed the U.N. Convention and Protocol in 1969, and gave it legislative force in the 1976 Immigration Act. The recognition of the convention created the legal concept of a convention refugee, and used the convention definition outlined earlier. Canada did not, however, provide an automatic right of asylum, only a right of protection against "refoulement". The principle of "non-refoulement" is fundamental to the entire structure of international actions in favour of refugees, and guarantees that no person claiming refugee status will be sent back unwillingly to the country from which they have fled for reasons covered by the U.N. Convention. Canada can, and does, deport refugee claimants to "third party" countries through which they have passed during their journey to Canada. In the case of Central and South Americans, this "third party" country is usually the United States. The United States is not, however, a signatory to the U.N. Refugees' Convention itself, and has no qualms about sending Latin American refugees back to their countries of origin.

The 1976 Immigration Act states, "Entry into Canada is a

privilege conferred by Canada upon the entrant". This statement of sovereignty, found in most countries, knows no limitations and applies to visitors and refugees alike who apply from outside Canada. For them, the Canadian government has the right to refuse entry. For those already in Canada, who apply after arrival for refugee status, the situation is different.

Such persons must be dealt with in the context of our international obligations which are part of Canadian Law, and a person who is a refugee as defined by the Convention may not be returned to his/her country of persecution....Declaring a claimant to be a refugee is, then, not a privilege we grant, but rather a right we acknowledge.

(W.G. Plaut, 1985. Foreward)

Rabbi Plaut, in his report, is critical of the process of refugee status determination and makes many valid recommendations. He is, however, most critical of the delays within the system and warns of its negative effects on claimants.

The structure of the Act and its administration have made "in-status" claimants ineligible for employment authorization. Often, to support themselves during the determination process, claimants must therefore violate the law. (W.G. Plaut, 1985, p.37)

As mentioned earlier, this problem has since been rectified. In 1987, most claimants were given work permits, except

married women with husbands eligible and able to work.

In May 1986, the then junior minister of Employment and Immigration, Walter McLean, announced a new program. He ushered it in by saying:

there is agreement that claims to refugee status should be treated fairly, humanely and expeditiously....this Government has given very careful consideration to all the views expressed by refugee aid groups, church groups and ethnic organizations across the country.
(House of Commons, May 1986)

The new program got underway in September, but was immediately criticized by refugee groups and the Canadian Bar Association because of its appeal procedure. Under this procedure, appeals could only be launched against procedural inconsistencies and not on the merit of the claim.

Finally, in May 1987, a new bill regarding refugee determination was presented to the House by Benoit Bouchard. He declared that the new bill,

...ensures that no genuine refugee will be returned to a country where they may face persecution. It also ensures that refugee claims will be processed fairly and quickly. It will now only take months to process a claim, not years. (House of Commons, May 1987)

This bill established a Convention Refugee Determination Board (RDB). This board would be an independent quasi-judicial body consisting of a two-person panel; the hearing would be non-adversarial; the claimant would have the right to counsel; and only one board member need find for the

claimant for his or her claim to be accepted. Negative decisions, which obviously need be unanimous, could be appealed (with leave) to the Federal Court of Canada, but only on matters of law. The new bill of 1987 was based primarily on the findings and recommendations of Rabbi Plaut, especially with regard to the sections on refugees and refugee determination.

Rabbi Plaut, in his extensive report "Refugee Determination in Canada", was not just concerned with the mechanics of the refugee determination process, but also with the humanitarian treatment of claimants. In section IV, "Further Considerations", he recommended that while "awaiting the decision, refugee claimants must eat, sleep, be clothed and live in dignity." He argued that our very signing of the U.N. Convention, "has an implied obligation to ensure that claimants are provided with the necessities of life and are in a position to fully pursue their claim to protection." This aspect of the problem had previously been recognized in the 1976 Act in section 8.10(4)(a).

...Canada's legislation and policy with regard to refugees is...to ensure that persons claiming to be Convention Refugees are given every opportunity and assistance to advance their claim; (Immigration Act, 1976, p.144)

and in Section 8.11(2).

...we must make it possible for claimants to await the outcome of their claims without undue physical or economic hardship. (Immigration Act, 1976, p.144-145)

Rabbi Plaut concludes this section by saying "While our efforts have been well intentioned, the practical results have often been less than satisfactory."

The arrival of Latin Americans in Canada is, in relative terms, a recent phenomena. Statistics Canada indicates that of the almost four million immigrants to enter Canada between 1946 and 1973 only 55,289 (1.4%) were from Latin American countries. (Canada Census 1981) This number includes all of the immigrants from all of Latin America; that is, all South America as well as Central America, including Mexico, Cuba, San Domingo and Puerto Rico, but not those of the Guyanas or Surinam. Since 1973, the number has escalated as repressive military juntas have replaced the old aristocratic orders. From 1973 to 1981, 40,000 immigrants sought out Canada as a future home. The initial waves of immigrants from Latin America did not include many from Central America. These immigrants more often sought out the United States of America as a new domicile. An appreciation of the change that has occurred since 1981 can be seen in the immigrant figures from El Salvador:

1963 -1972	88	1981	292
1973	127	1982	857
1974	232	1983	2,551
1975	178	1984	2,557
1976	194	1985	3,236
1977	126	1986	3,014
1978	102	1987	4,344

1979	108	1988	-
1980	112	1989	-

(Employment and Immigration Canada 1989)

This increase can be directly related to the October 1979 military coup that overthrew General Carlos Romero, and the subsequent collapse of a succession of military juntas that tried to run the country. The well publicised execution of all opposition leaders on the 27th of November 1980 was the trigger that lead to the sudden increase in the emigration of the mainly middle class. It should be noted that most refugees take an average of two years to reach Canada from the time they leave. This includes both sponsored and declared refugees.

As mentioned earlier, refugee claimants are often "at risk" while awaiting the outcome of the determination process. The reasons for this are rooted in the situations in which refugee claimants find themselves. Boredom and frustration at their situation, without the relief of either work or school, lead many into committing criminal acts. Some claimants have had to wait over five years and in, one case personally known to me, eight years (personal interview with applicant). The wait, especially before January 1989, at which time claimants were given permission to work legally in Canada, has ensured that many have become dispirited and unable to successfully cope with the restrictions of a job. Even when these problems are overcome, the difficulty of finding employment, given the

language and cultural barriers that exist, causes problems, and usually results in spurts of short-term work at minimum wage. The temptation to make money illegally or to engage in illegal activities as a source of excitement is, for many, overpowering. The abject poverty many left behind in Central America is highlighted by the relatively affluent Canadian lifestyle, and crime seems an easy way to obtain this lifestyle, rather than existing in a boring and still relatively impoverished limbo.

While subsisting on welfare, unable to work for many reasons, education is denied these refugee claimants. Undoubtedly, it would make them better eventual citizens, and would enable them to function more successfully in Canadian society. Even simple English as a Second Language training is not readily available in British Columbia (in Ontario, the provincial government has provided ESL for all, including refugee claimants), except through church and volunteer groups. As Rabbi Plaut emphasizes in his report:

The immigration regulations as they presently exist do not provide for the issuance of student authorization to claimants and their children.[Where it exists] This is generally handled in an extra-legal fashion whereby the CEIC (Canadian Employment and Immigration Commission) assures the school authorities that it will overlook violations of the Immigration Act, 1976. The immigration regulations should be amended to permit refugee claimants and their families to apply for and obtain student authorization. (Plaut, 1985, p.149)

The CEIC has generally interceded on behalf of children. In

Ontario, they have interceded on behalf of certain groups of adult claimants, but in the rest of the country, including British Columbia, they have ignored the plight of the adult claimants.

Rabbi Plaut's recommendations were ignored in the new legislation and so the burden of educating adult refugee claimants still falls mainly to volunteer groups.

Putting the question of educational opportunities aside, another factor that has ensured a slow response to Central American refugees has been our relationship with the United States, and the need to ensure our and their national security. All the countries of Central America, except Nicaragua, are supported, both financially and militarily, by the United States. This means that any person fleeing their "legitimate" government is automatically an enemy of the state, and therefore someone of doubtful political orientation. In the United States, the perception, especially in security terms, is that if you are not "right wing" you must be "left wing". This simplification, and the equally simplistic American perception that all Central American countries (other than Nicaragua) are democracies, has, in the United States, enabled legislators to enact measures that ensure that refugees from these "democracies" are denied entry. Reg Whitaker, in his book "Double Standard", claims that much of the severity extant in the implementation of the Canadian Immigration Act towards Central and Latin American refugees is in response to U.S.

Cold War policy. Talking about the new immigration act of 1987, he states:

...when the Tories did apply the brakes, it was apparent that the real target of their wrath were the Central and Latin Americans, whose claims were legitimate by any reasonable measure-- except the old and not-so-reasonable measure of the cold war. (Whitaker, 1987, p.296)

Gerald Dirk echoes this perception:

Regardless of the prevailing Immigration Act, refugees from Latin America have never been the recipients of as prompt or as liberal treatment as individuals from such regions as Eastern Europe. This state of affairs has been and continues to be attributable to political, administrative and ideological considerations on the part of various Canadian governments rather than to any discriminatory features of immigration legislation. (Dirks, 1977, p.246)

Under the old Act of 1976, refugee claimants had to undergo the lengthy wait of the determination process. They also were hard put to survive, in our society, without resorting to criminal acts, thus putting themselves in a position whereby they could readily be deported. Nevertheless, they were admitted and permitted to stay until the determination process settled their fate. Today, with the new act in place, refugee claimants must make their claim while still technically in the United States. If they do not make a claim upon entry, they are considered to be in Canada illegally. The new rules also forbid carriers such as the airlines and bus companies from transporting anyone from

specific countries into Canada without valid travel documents. The list includes all the countries of Central and South America, but not the Soviet bloc, or Southeast Asian countries. Reg Whitaker states:

Salvadoreans and Guatemalans were stopped at the U.S. border and told to wait in the U.S. while immigration inquiries in Canada were arranged. Canadian authorities explained that they had an agreement with the U.S. that no one awaiting a Canadian inquiry would be deported. The U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service officials scoffed at this and stated flatly that anyone who had a criminal record or "derogatory information" on his file would be deported. "Derogatory information" is a code term for "national security risk". This is truly a vicious circle, since the U.S. defines virtually anyone who flees one of its right-wing client states as a Communist. (Whitaker, 1987, p.296-297)

The new Immigration Act of 1987 seems especially designed to discriminate against Convention refugees. Refugees from Communist states generally fall under the "designated-class" provisions and so are treated more like immigrants than like refugees. The new amendments have shifted the burden of proof that a person is specifically at risk onto the claimant. It has further ensured that claimants are ineligible for work or schooling (this has since changed since work permits were generally granted as of January 1, 1989). The new determination system has also severely limited a claimant's right to appeal a negative decision of the two-person board.

Chapter Five

The Problems of Latin American Male Refugees

Central American refugees or immigrants arrive in Canada in two distinct ways. The first is as immigrants - people who have applied from within their country of origin and been accepted. These people meet the guidelines for entry into Canada and are generally from the middle class, have had a fair amount of education and are healthy. They also have skills, trades or professions that are in short supply in Canada. The specific guidelines are found in section 44 of the Immigration Act. These people are part of Canada's ongoing program of immigration and their numbers are legislated each year by the Department of Employment and Immigration. These persons rarely suffer the trauma of refugees as they often arrive with marketable skills and, in many cases, jobs and housing. The second come as refugees. Refugees come in two ways. They either seek asylum abroad at Canadian consular facilities or from within refugee camps in host countries visited by Canada's teams of immigration officials. Successful applicants are accepted under a yearly ceiling set by the Federal Government. Otherwise they come here as visitors, students or illegal arrivals, and at some time thereafter apply for refugee status from within our

borders. These latter refugees were, until January 1989 dealt with under the immigration act of 1976.

Each of the groups is treated by the Canadian Government through Employment and Immigration Canada under different categories.

Immigrants are accorded all the benefits of Canadian society on arrival and are often helped financially. This includes education and language training where applicable.

Sponsored refugees enjoy most of the benefits of immigrants and in most cases the head of the household receives further help and training to ensure that he or she does not become a burden on society.

On the other hand, refugees who claim status inside Canada were, until January 1st 1989, given refugee claimant status which entitled them to remain in Canada, but were not allowed to seek work or education. They were required, until their determination process was completed, to wait. Some refugees were given claimant status under "ministerial permits", and these claimants were often, after some delay, given permission to work. However, neither they nor the other refugee claimants were accorded all the normal rights available to Canadians or any of the help accorded sponsored refugees. These benefits include free language training and assistance with housing and job training.

This difference in treatment has resulted in a marginalized group of refugees who must survive on \$468 per month welfare while awaiting the determination process. This payment, not unnaturally, forces them to live in the cheaper areas of our cities. The refugees in question are predominantly single men between the ages 18 and 40. They generally have low levels of education, and few, if any, marketable job skills and little ability to speak English or French. They are often suffering from mental and emotional traumas, as a result of their past experiences, both in their country of origin and during their journey to Canada. These traumas, and the plight in which they find themselves, often lead to alcoholism and drug dependence. The need to obtain illicit substances, in turn, often leads to involvement with criminal elements.

Alcohol is generally the most abused substance among the male Latin American refugee population, drugs are only used by a small fraction of the group. Whether those with these disabilities were alcoholic or drug-dependent before arrival is not clear, but certainly the long wait for the determination of their status has taken its toll and, if not dependent before arrival, many are now.

Regarding the situation in Vancouver, Pablo Bazerque (Spanish speaking street worker with the Downtown Eastside Youth Activities Society, DEYAS), with

whom I worked as a volunteer at the Downtown Eastside Youth Activity Society and whom I consulted in the process of this study, stated that much of his time during his working day was spent in assisting those refugee claimants who had become involved with the law. The most common offense was "drunk in a public place", but increasingly, he was having to deal with those who had been arrested for working as "mules"--carriers for the drug trade. it is interesting to note that Pablo sees that his role as a social worker is often at odds with other social agencies.

I see my role as one of helping people get off the street and on with their lives--bringing those who are not in the system into it by whatever means. Betrayal, police intervention or whatever else, as long as they get into the system. Once into the system (I) ensure they stay in the system and do not return to total dependence on the street. I feel that Employment and Immigration Canada are not overly concerned. They are very protective of moneys--require receipts for rent, etc. before giving funds, especially emergency funds. (Pablo Bazerque, May 4, 1989)

William Smiley suggests that new arrivals to Canada receive a double message regarding cultural expectations.

On the one hand, it (Canadian society) seems closed and cold, while on the other hand, it seems open and liberal. They see Canadian youth culture as being free and undisciplined. Drug and alcohol abuse is seen to be almost normal behaviour....the first impression many *latinos* get of Canadian society is somewhat negative. (W. Smiley, 1989)

While attending the Symposium for Latin American youth, one of the speakers (originally from El Salvador) made the following statement:

We come from countries in conflict. Our family situations are difficult. We often have to let our families down because of the difference in culture. The treatment of us by the locals can be discriminatory. We need to find identity as Latins but we often look to the wrong areas. We look to crime. Because we are from El Salvador we have seen bad things, death and killings. Canada is pacifist. The effect is to make one unsure, especially if we live alone with no family. It is very hard to succeed without support. Crime, alcohol and drugs are an easier solution! (Tania, from El Salvador, May 27 1989)

The determination process, on which so much depends, has kept this group of individuals in limbo for up to five years in some cases. Ottawa, in an attempt to clear up the growing backlog, has begun a new program. A release from the Minister of Employment and Immigration dated March 31st, 1989 states:

The process of assessing the 85,000 cases in the backlog for a creditable basis for refugee status is expected to take about two years to complete....Permission to work was given to backlog claimants effective January 12, 1989 with a change in the employment authorisation regulations. (Ministry of Employment & Immigration, 1989)

This ability to work has, for some, been an opportunity to get on with their lives. Those able to take advantage of their new status and with specialized skills, have moved out of the East end and found lodgings elsewhere in the city. However, the pull of the group and the need to converse in Spanish has kept even these in

touch with their less fortunate *compadres*. Those who are unskilled and speak little English, have found some work in seasonal jobs-- farming (fruit-picking etc.), construction or tourist-related (dish-washing, etc.) These jobs are ones in which only minimal English is required. Jobs, for this group are only temporary and the men are forced by economics to remain in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver. Conflict between *Latinos* and the non-Hispanic local residents has recently become a problem and a number of violent incidents have taken place. The use of Oppenheimer park on Powell Street, in the down-town East-side, became the scene of a number of, at times violent, confrontations during the summer of 1990. The *Latinos* wanted to use the park to play soccer while the local non-Hispanics wanted to play softball. Another place at which conflict occurs is at the community centre at 44 Alexander street, here the argument is over the evening recreational activities and in particular the types of films to be shown on the video.

During the winter the *Latinos* tend to congregate at "44 Alexander Place" Community Centre or at the Carnegie Library. The community centre offers entertainment facilities and cheap meals and the library offers a drop in ESL program a couple of evenings a week as well as economical snacks and the opportunity to read the newspaper and look up employment opportunities. During

the rest of the year the *Latinos* tend to congregate in Oppenheimer Park. Most evenings when the weather is fair, they can be found there playing soccer, listening to music or discussing life.

At present, it is estimated that there are between two and three hundred single male refugees from Central America in Vancouver. This figure was obtained from the Spanish-speaking streetworker from the Downtown East Side Youth Program, Pablo Bazerque, who also gives the following profile of the community of *Latinos* in the Downtown East Side:

Refugee backlog in B.C. -5192 persons
of Central American origin.

Single males represent -300
approximately (some movement between Montreal,
Toronto & Vancouver).

The single males are generally poor, or from poor backgrounds, and can be divided into two distinct groups-- rural and urban.

Rural-- illiterate, and regarded as "dumb" or naive by the rest of the Central American community - virtually no education.

Urban-- usually illiterate, but "street smart" - average education grade three.

Illiteracy - estimated at 60 - 70%.

(My study, using a small sample, did not support some of Pablo's views)

These single men are lonely, often war-traumatized and desperately in need of emotional support. This situation has led many of these men to set up informal relationships with native Indian women (the reason for

their choice is said to be that they are the "only ones available"). Native women are patient and tend to wait to get respect and attention relative to European-Canadian women. This trait finds favour with Central American men, who tend to feel that women should be quiet and subservient. Native Indian women are culturally closer to *Latinos* in outlook and expectations than European women are. Also European women tend to prefer educated men and see *Latinos* as illiterate failures. However the mingling of Native Indian women and *Latinos* is not very smooth, as the Latin men become very aggressive, and occasionally resort to violence to correct the faults they see in their partners. Drug dependence and heavy drinking are not acceptable behavior for women in *Latino* culture, and are often excuses for violence. (Octavio Paz, 1959) *Latinos* are also shocked at the sexual promiscuity among native Indian women. Latin men are generally not pimps and "will not put women to work, (Pablo)" and indeed will use violence to stop "their" women being involved in prostitution. Latin men have also been known to beat up their native Indian partners to stop them from using drugs. "Do not fix (ingest or inject narcotics) when with me" is a common agreement made between Hispanic/native couples. However, paradoxically, they may ask their partners to help them sell drugs. The *Latino* men are very protective of their Indian partners, and only become aggressive with them when these women continue to use

drugs or large amounts of alcohol, or return to prostitution. (Pablo Bazerque, 1990; Roger Barany, 1990)

The family-class refugees of Latin American origin, in contrast to the single male refugees, are often from the middle-class in their country of origin. They usually have arrived as "sponsored refugees", either directly from their countries of origin, or from refugee camps in neighbouring countries. (Approximately 4,800 are, like the single male refugees, people who applied for refugee status from within Canada. They to, in terms of employment and education, have had to await the results of their determination process. Their children are however eligible for regular schooling.) "Sponsored" refugees are often professionals, and although resentful of the many blocks in their path, regarding regaining their professional status in Canada, are generally able to create new lives for themselves and their families. Their inability to obtain professional status in Canada is generally due to a lack of English and the extra educational requirements necessary for Canadian certification, to which all professional immigrants in professional fields are subject. "Sponsored" refugees are able to establish, with government and community support, a tolerable and not too unpleasant new life. Their families do suffer from internal stress, which is aggravated by the struggle to regain their former status and by their language difficulties.

While "Sponsored" refugees form the bulk of Latin American refugees in Canada a significant number of "Refugee Claimants" are also present. Of the 5192 adult refugee claimants in B.C. only 3308 work permits have been issued (April 1989). Most females within couples have not been issued work permits unless they are the major breadwinner within the family. This has led to problems, as many jobs are available for the women, whereas few exist for the men. Family stress occurs because of this, and also occurs as their children enter school, and in comparison with their parents, soon become conversant in the English language. This makes the parents dependent on the children as interpreters and negotiators, creating a balance contrary to the norm in Latin-American society. Our different social mores also put a strain on family relationships. Family breakups are common among Latins and they will no longer cohabit but stay together "for show". The women are now in double jeopardy-- no independent work permit, and fear of deportation, if they leave their husband, on whose behalf the determination process will be conducted. This practice seems archaic in view of the norms of modern Canadian society.

Refugee children, many who came to Canada in their teens, have not fitted in well. They have not succeeded in school, and have a high dropout rate. Because they have not graduated and are often unemployed or

unemployable, they tend to hang around shopping malls and get into petty scrapes with the law. Many have joined gangs such as *Los Diablos* and have become involved in petty crime rings dealing in stolen property, prostitution and drugs. William Smiley claims that discrimination against Latins by the local non-Latin population has led many Latin youths to reject their cultural identity. This rejection has resulted in Latin youth adopting a defiant attitude to society.

...a defiant attitude towards society as manifested by the gang members who join together to reinforce their identity and support one another in what they perceive as a hostile, closed society....access to power, status and money are gained through gang membership and activity. For some, it is an alternative to welfare. (Smiley, 1989)

Nona Thompson, from Stepup, a special school under the Vancouver School Board for students in conflict with the law, noted, at a recent talk she gave on gangs, that *Los Diablos* was composed of approximately 30 gang members, plus many "wannabe's"--youths who try to emulate gang members. These youths are caught up in the "glamour of the gang" because of the rewards that associate membership bestows on them--"notoriety, girls, drugs and money". Thompson went on to say that it is the "wannabe's" who perpetuate most of the crimes blamed on gangs, and that they are only loosely directed by the actual gang members. They are used because usually they are juveniles, and thus dealt with relatively lightly by

the courts. At the same conference, Wayne ---- (name withheld for security reasons) of the Vancouver Organized Crime Squad confirmed Thompson's assessment of Vancouver Latin American youth in local crime.

The single males examined in this study are often included (by the public) with this group, but in fact they are not often gang members, being older and generally of a different social class.

Chapter six

Research Methodology

Canada is still seen by many aspiring refugees as the land of hope. If we as Canadians are unable to cope with the current influx, how are we going to deal with the larger numbers that will seek our shores as the world population continues to escalate? Our current policies are already overwhelmed. In 1989 the backlog for processing refugee claimants in Canada was estimated at 120,000. Today this number has not been substantially reduced, but has been added to by a new influx of applicants that have arrived under the new streamlined program. This added number has been estimated at approximately 40,000 and is being added to by about 3000 per month. (Vancouver Sun, 14 Feb. 1991, Joan Bryden, Southam News)

By choosing to study the problems experienced by a small but growing source of refugee claimants, I hope to be able to underline the major problems faced by all refugee claimants as they attempt to rebuild their lives in Canada.

I felt that by concentrating on a few subjects and doing an in depth study I would gain a greater insight into the target group. The survey was therefore extensive in terms of the range of questions and the time taken to complete. All the questionnaires were only completed

after a lengthy interview. I felt that this would, for the purposes of a general survey, give me sufficient data to obtain a profile of the male refugee claimant. In fact, thirteen subjects were interviewed, in order to obtain at least one subject who could clearly be seen as an economic refugee. Twelve subjects was determined to be the minimum number required. This represented 10% of the single male Central Americans living in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver.

Prior to the planning of the questionnaire I interviewed personel from the various agencies that come in contact with the refugee claimants. These interviews included people from Employment and Immigration Canada, legal Services, the Office of the Secretary of State, the Canadian Council for Refugees (Vancouver), Human Rights groups, Oxfam, Amnesty International, human rights lawyers, social workers, refugees, ESL instructors and Vancouver School Board personel. (a full list is given in the Acknowledgements) I also attended a number of conferences that focused on Central American refugees. These included the "Human Rights and the Disappeared" at Simon Fraser University (SFU) in April 1989, the Latin American Youth Symposium at the Britannia Centre in July 1989, the Canada and the Organization of American States at SFU (Harbour Centre) in March 1990, and the Employment and Immigration services, the Backlog Clearance Process at MOSAIC in may 1989.

After extensive interviews and discussions with those who regularly come in contact with these refugees, and my own personal observations as a volunteer ESL teacher at the Carnegie Centre in the downtown eastside of Vancouver, it was determined that the best approach would be to make the interviews broad-based. This would put in perspective the areas most relevant to the research. As well, personnel both at the Downtown Eastside Youth Project and at MOSAIC suggested some additional questions that would, on publication, be of value to their work in the field. Not only would the survey be of assistance to the two organizations involved with Central American refugee claimants but would, I hoped, be of benefit to the refugee claimants. I feel that by highlighting the inequities and inadequacies of the present policy that this will alter policy and be of benefit to the claimants in their need to assimilate and acculturate into the Canadian milieu. I was asked by Pablo Bazarque of D.E.Y.A.S. to enquire into their abuse of drugs and alcohol, and their relationships with women. This information proved useful in establishing a more complete profile of the claimants and how they spent their time and money. It also highlighted the major areas of concern for the various agencies that deal with them on an ongoing basis. He also asked that some idea of the relationships in their home background be explored to discover if alcohol had been a problem in their homes.

Roger Barany, from Mosaic, asked me to enquire as to which areas of the city those questioned resided. Because information was being gathered for other agencies the confidentiality of the clients was paramount. This raised an ethics issue. I felt the information gained would be of assistance in the allocation of resources to best serve the clients and would therefore abrogate any possible conflict of ethics. The inclusion of questions from other sources, would in a less broad based survey, have comprimised the researcher, however the information requested fell within the scope of the research and supplied information of value in the final analysis. Confidentiality was ensured by my not enquiring of the interviewees surname, address or employer. Each interviewee was given a number and no record of first name was made or maintained. Accordingly, the questionnaire was designed to include their areas of concern, as well as my own. In addition, variables which had been studied in similar research conducted among refugee claimants in Florida were included in the study. The idea behind this was to see if the general profile in both cases matched, in hopes of finding generalizations in the typical profile of single male Latin American refugees.

In order to alleviate any anxiety on the part of the interviewee, I tried, in most cases, to get Pablo Bazarque of D.E.Y.A.S. to introduce me to them or at

least to accompany me to Oppenheimer Park and introduce me to the group who might become potential interviewees. Pablo accompanied me to the park on six of the ten occasions during which interviews took place. My being introduced by Pablo ensured that the prospective subject would know I was not from Immigration Canada or any other official agency.

The questionnaire was designed to be used in a one-on-one interview situation. I wished to create a questionnaire that would take about one hour to administer, and that could be answered with as little effort and as little command of English as possible. The questionnaire was divided into six sections as follows:

1. Individual background characteristics
2. Arrival and early experiences
3. Educational and related data
4. Occupation and employment record, both in country of origin, and in Canada
5. Economic history in Canada
6. Beliefs and Orientation

Because of the sensitive nature of some of the questions, I was prepared to accept a refusal to answer, and informed all the subjects that they could decline to answer questions that they thought were not valid.

Section 1, dealing with individual backgrounds, required answers to questions such as: where do you come from? where is that? how big is the town/village that

you lived in? what did/does your father do? These questions are generally nonthreatening and allow the subjects to answer in simple one- or two-word answers. I felt it important to lead up to more sensitive questions in this section such as: why did you leave?, slowly so that the subjects would be relaxed when answering such complex questions. Having asked this question, I immediately returned to safer ground by talking and asking questions about their journey from homeland to Canada.

Section 2 included mainly factual questions, that again required simple answers. I included dates in my questions, as I remembered from my stay in Mexico that "Latins" are very interested in dates and in all probability would remember the important dates. This assumption proved correct, as most subjects could tell me to the day when specific events took place. This section also had some sensitive questions, and these were organized so that they generally required either a yes or no answer. For example, when asking about their principal problems in Canada, I would give them a number of choices, such as language, economic, family/cultural adaptation (fitting in/sense of belong), immigration status, inability to work, and other. Those who had other problems were thus offered the opportunity to mention them, and felt less selfconscious, having reviewed other problems that they might have faced.

Section 3, after the initial question of educational level acquired in their homelands, generally employed a sliding scale. For example, the question regarding knowledge of English employed a scale ranging from "none" to "fluent", while newspaper readership ranged from "daily" to "almost never".

Section 4 was kept short as it dealt with employment, both in the country of origin and in Canada. This section, I felt, might be more difficult to administer because of language problems, and so I attempted to derive the maximum of information with the minimum of questions.

Section 5, on their current financial status, was set up to be as simple as possible with only short answers required.

Section 6 was mainly composed of sliding scale answers like Section 4, that could be checked easily as I talked with the subjects.

As mentioned earlier, questions germane to the study were buried within the questionnaire. The questions that I was most anxious to obtain answers to were those on their educational status in their countries of origin, as well as whether they had managed to obtain any education in Canada. I also wanted to determine their level of English competence and how they had acquired it, if they had not had ESL classes. The questions on newspaper reading, radio listening and TV

watching were designed to extract this information. Other questions that might help determine this were those regarding the ethnicity of the area that they lived in and their relations with non-Latin Americans in Canada.

Once the questionnaire was designed, it was presented to the interested parties at the Downtown Eastside Youth Project (D.E.Y.A.S.) and at MOSAIC for comment. After review, a few items were added, and some of the existing questions were amended so as to focus on the particular aspects under study and so as not to cause undue anxiety in the subjects.

Upon revision and acceptance of the questionnaire's design, it was determined, with the aid of the social worker for Latin American refugees at the D.E.Y.A.S. (Pablo Bazarque), to carry out the interviews over the summer of 1990 at Oppenheimer Park. This park is used most days by the refugees, particularly in the afternoon. They play soccer or softball as well as hanging out and meeting friends.

Prior to starting the interviews, I visited the park with Pablo Bazarque from the D.E.Y.A.S. to be introduced to some of the refugee claimants. I spent my first few meetings just chatting generally and getting to know a few of the more verbal and relaxed members of the group.

I began the interviews in late June and visited the park each Wednesday, except "Welfare Wednesday" (the last Wednesday of each month--the day welfare cheques were

distributed), and attempted to interview at least one subject and sometimes two per week. "Welfare Wednesday", it was pointed out by Pablo, would not be a good day, as this was the day that welfare cheques were issued, and many of the subjects would have already spent some of their cheques on alcohol and would be difficult to interview.

Interviews continued through July and into August before I had obtained all thirteen. Delays were unavoidable what with "Welfare Wednesday", the "cruise ship scam", interference from the city police and a personal altercation between myself and one of the subjects. (for further details see observations at the end of this chapter)

Many of the subjects were very apprehensive about being interviewed. I found the best approach was to set up each interview the week before. I found that by setting up appointments with more subjects than I really needed, I would usually get one or two to return to be interviewed.

The subjects' apprehension is understandable. When one considers the repressive circumstances from which they have escaped, and the hardships and questioning they have had to endure from border patrols, police officers, and Immigration officers during their journey to Canada and their subsequent dealings with Employment and Immigration

Canada and welfare personnel, it is amazing that they are as forthcoming as they are.

When conducting interviews, I would sit with each subject and talk for about ten minutes about the interview procedure, explaining why I was doing the research. I emphasized the positive results possible from such research, and pointed out that if my findings were taken seriously by the government agencies involved, they might benefit in the long run. Our conversation would be conducted in English with some "pidgen" Spanish, as my Spanish is limited. (Though I understand more than I can speak--I spent one and a half years in Mexico as a cruising sailor and did pick up some workable Spanish).

After I felt that the subject was at ease, I would begin the actual survey. I never wrote down the subjects' names, but numbered them one to thirteen. Because there were only 13 subjects it was easy to keep track of those I had previously interviewed so that no duplication occurred. Each survey took over an hour. Some of the interviews were even longer, especially if a subject spoke poor English. In many cases, a friend, who spoke better English, would be asked to assist as an interpreter. I carried a Spanish/English dictionary with me and it was often used. I found that I got the best results if I explained why I needed the answer to each question.

Once the subject had relaxed and the survey had begun, in most cases he was willing to respond to the questions. In some cases this did not happen and then the survey was not completed. Such surveys were torn up and disposed of in front of the subject involved.

Subjects were chosen more by their willingness to participate than by any random method. Any randomness lay in their being available and willing on the day and time that I was there.

This study was not intended to be a statistically significant survey of the population under study but rather a survey intended to provide an indepth portrayal of their lives prior to migration, during migration and their new lives in Vancouver. The study was further intended to discover the facilities available to them and whether they were adequate to their needs. Other areas that it was intended to explore was how they were coping with the Canadian culture and how they perceived their treatment by the public at large and the institutions and agencies that they dealt with.

Observations

It should be noted that some difficulties arose during the conducting of these interviews that, while not relevant to the study, highlight some of the problems others should be aware of if they attempt to conduct surveys with this type of group.

The "cruise ship scam", resulted from the discovery by some of the subjects that alcohol could be purchased from cruise ship passengers at about half the retail price. Duty-free liquor was being taken off the ships by passengers, at the urging of some crew members who then collected the liquor off them and sold it at well below liquor store prices. The cruise ship employees were selling the liquor to refugee claimants and other residents of the downtown east side, who were only too eager to save money.

Police harassment was another ongoing problem during the study. For Example, on one occasion, soon after I had arrived at the park and had begun to talk with some of the refugees (a number of whom I had interviewed already), three squad cars arrived and five police officers approached the group. The group, prior to my arrival, had been listening to "KISS FM" (a rock music station) on a "ghetto blaster" (a large portable stereo). The police told them to turn the radio down. The group did so, and asked why. They were informed that a complaint had been filed about the noise. When the group protested, the police began picking out individuals and roughing them up. The more this happened, the more violently the refugees protested. The police (deliberately, in my opinion), allowed the whole incident to escalate, and soon a number of the refugees had bleeding noses and split lips. This went on for some

time, until a sixth police officer arrived and told the others to leave (as a matter of incidental interest, the officers who did most of the roughing up were in plain clothes). Although I was present and quite obvious, I was totally ignored by the police throughout the whole incident. Because I was ignored this might have strengthened the belief among some of the claimants that I might be connected with an official body and not who I claimed to be. This might have been why there was mistrust and hostility on my next visit. After the confrontation with the potential interviewee I had to get Pablo to re-introduce me before I was able to proceed with my survey.

One week later, while I was attempting to interview one of the subjects, he took exception to my presence and proceeded to strike me with his fists. His friends all rushed up and dragged us apart, and he fled. The others explained that he had been drinking, having had a hard time with his determination board hearing that morning. He apparently thought I was involved with Immigration, because I was always around asking questions.

Chapter Seven

Analysis of Data

Section 1.

Background

Based on the data obtained from the thirteen subjects it can be extrapolated that the majority of single male Latin American refugee claimants come from medium-sized towns or cities with a mean population of approximately 50,000. The subjects were split nearly evenly into those with rural backgrounds (6) and those with urban backgrounds (7).

Family backgrounds indicate that these men are from working class families which would not be regarded as poor within their communities. Of the thirteen subjects' parents' education (two fathers' educations were unknown) the fathers' mean was 3.8 years of school. Four of the fathers had no formal education at all. On discounting these, the mean of the remainder was 7 years. Considering the age of their fathers, (mean = 64.5 years), this educational level is high, taking into account the schooling opportunities available in Central America fifty years ago. The mothers' mean was 3.5 years of school including six with no formal schooling. Given the general attitude to womens education fifty years ago in Central America (still prevalent today in rural areas) this is a respectable average.

Five of my subjects were still students at college when they fled. Of the remaining eight all but one had either followed in their fathers' footsteps or had entered trades or professions. One of the young men did not fit this pattern, as he had been employed as a "mule" (carrier of illegal drugs across the U.S./Mexican border). This subject was included as an example of a so-called "economic refugee" -one who did not flee because of persecution.

A family profile is difficult to obtain. I can say that all the subjects seem to have had reasonably successful upbringings and have inherited the work ethics of their parents. Five subjects are from intact homes, five are from single parent homes (mothers), two subjects were brought up by other relatives and one subject by his father and stepmother.

Family size varied sharply between rural and urban dwellers. Subjects from rural families had an average of 8.67 siblings while urban subjects had an average of only 2.7 siblings.

Only two subjects were married. Both currently send money to support their wives, and hope that the wives can come up and join them soon.

The average age of departure from the country of origin was 25.3 years. However, the majority were between 21 and 23 years of age when they left. Two subjects were

considerably older, and only left due to severe persecution and fear for their safety.

The subjects did not all leave at the same time. Two came prior to 1982 with the rest coming up during the period 1985 to 1989.

The reasons for the departure vary and are as follows:

Student activist	3
Political activist	2
Personal death threats	2
Violent death of relatives	2
Avoidance of draft	2
Army deserter	1
Fleeing criminal prosecution	<u>1</u> (Mexican)
	13

Both the students and political activists actively opposed their countries' governments, and may have a hard time proving their claims as refugees unless they have been specifically targeted by the police or government as enemies of the state. Those who received death threats, or whose families have experienced a series of political murders, will, if they can substantiate them, be able to claim asylum under the U.N. Convention. Those avoiding the draft will receive very little sympathy. The army deserter's fate could go either way. He claims to have been a member of a "death squad" and, as such, that he executed and disposed of a number of civilians before being in a position to flee. A case last year in Montreal dealing with a known member of a "death squad" resulted in the refugee claimant being granted asylum. (Lawsuit resulting from a RDB hearing at which Stewart Istvanffy

represented a Mexican soldier, V.Cruz, who killed civilians under orders. Stewart Istvanffy spoke at the Conference of Human Rights and the Disappeared held at SFU in April 1989) The Mexican will, I suspect, be returned to Mexico to face criminal charges. Not being a member of a refugee determination board (RDB), I cannot make any real judgment in the cases of the subjects I interviewed, but it would appear to me, having studied the mandate of the RDB's, that all but the Mexican deserve consideration, and that of the remaining twelve only three are in serious doubt; the draft dodgers and the army deserter. The draft dodgers deserve consideration in the light of our treatment of U.S. draft dodgers during the Vietnam War. The army deserter should be judged with the previous case in mind.

Eight of the thirteen refugee claimants that I interviewed used the bus system to travel, not only through Central America, but also north across the United States. Two of the subjects hitch-hiked, and used buses only after they had found work enroute, and could afford to do so. One subject travelled by rail, while another drove up in his own car. The last subject walked the entire trip from Mosote in El Salvador to Brownsville in Texas. From Brownsville, he was transported by various means by members of the "sanctuary movement" to the Canadian border. Two other subjects were also helped by the "sanctuary movement". The "sanctuary movement" is an

underground organisation established by various churches within the United States and Canada that assist refugees in gaining access to both the U.S. and Canada.

Only two subjects travelled directly to Canada. Of the others, four spent time in both Mexico and the United States before coming to Canada. The remainder spent time in the United States. Most of them found jobs along the way to support themselves. The average length of the journey from home to Canada was thirty-three months. If one does not include the two direct travellers, the average length of the journey was just over thirty-eight months. This is just over three years. Figures supplied by refugee agencies had suggested a figure of between two and three years was average. (Mosaic - Roger Barany)

Section 2. Arrival and early years

Five subjects entered Canada in Ontario, and unlike those who entered in British Columbia, were offered ESL training, at the same time as being eligible for welfare. The eight subjects who entered in British Columbia were, with one noticable exceptions, eligible for welfare within three months but were not eligible for ESL training. All subjects were granted work permits in January of 1989.

The status given the refugee claimants differed as follows:

Refugee claimant	9
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Ministerial permit	1	
Refugee status	1	
Permanent residents visa	1	
Visitors permit (1yr.)	1	(later granted refugee claimant status)

Although all subjects were contacted and interviewed in Oppenheimer Park, only seven lived in the immediate area. The others were from the two other areas of Vancouver, where there is a concentration of *Latins*, Broadway between Fraser and Main Streets, and Broadway and Commercial.

On average, each subject had moved 3.2 times while in Vancouver. The most common reason was to move to a better and more suitable place. The ethnicity of the neighbourhood chosen was predominantly one in which there are many other *Latins*, both refugee claimants and immigrants.

Some of the refugees had relatives already in Canada on arrival, but only one of the subjects received help from a relative, and that was only for a period of one month.

Most subjects claimed that they received the most help on arrival from government agencies (Health and Welfare Canada). Two received help from friends while a further two received help from church organizations (in both cases an extension of the "sanctuary movement").

Seven subjects noted language as their major problem. Five subjects noted economic difficulties. Other areas of difficulty experienced by the subjects are as follows:

Family/Cultural	2
Adaptation	3
Inability to find work	4
Concern over status	1
Police harassment	1
Misses family	1

One subject was very resentful of the fact that he was treated as a refugee claimant and just wanted to get on with his life. In his home country, he had held a senior professional position, as a police detective and he had expected to be welcomed with open arms because of his skills and qualifications.

Section 3. Education and related areas

The refugee claimants interviewed had, apart from two, attended some secondary school. Three had completed high school, and these three had also completed post-secondary courses. Of the remainder, eight were attending or had attended post-secondary institutions that did not require high school graduation. The two subjects who had not attended secondary school at all had completed Grade three and Grade six. Both these subjects were from very small villages and each worked on the family farm. This lack of secondary education, among farm children, is not uncommon in Central American countries, and the tendency for farming children to attend only primary or elementary school was observed by the writer in Mexico during 1986 and 1987.

Education in Vancouver, for the subjects of the survey, has been very limited. The five subjects who entered Canada in Ontario were all offered six months of ESL classes. These classes were free and the refugees were encouraged to attend. They all took advantage of the opportunity for at least a while. The rest of the subjects have had little or no ESL classes. ESL classes that some have attended have been held on an ad-hoc basis at churches and the Carnegie Centre in the downtown eastside. Practice has been for the local community street worker to solicit volunteers, who offer classes one night a week during the winter. These classes have been of a drop-in nature, and so the teaching has been fragmented and dependent on which groups of students turned up.

The subjects, because of their status, are not eligible for ESL classes unless they can pay for them. For most, this is well beyond their financial resources. In Vancouver, even if the subjects have the money to attend, there is a long waiting list (six months or more). The classes are held either all day or every evening, and for many, especially those working or looking for work, the length of the term is daunting. ESL courses are held at MOSAIC but these, too, are over-subscribed.

On questioning the subjects, it was found that seven felt that their English was moderate and three claimed to

be fluent. The remaining three scored their English at minimal. From my own observations, I would allow two to claim between "moderate competence and fluency" in English, with the rest somewhat below "moderate", except two whom I would place at a "minimal" level. These last two were only just able to make themselves understood at a very basic level, and did not have enough language to obtain jobs or to communicate except in monosyllables. In both these cases, I had to use an interpreter and a Spanish/English dictionary when all else failed. My Spanish I would rate at "minimal".

The subjects' knowledge of Canada ranged from almost none to extensive. The three subjects with "extensive" knowledge were the three college graduates, and on questioning, I found that they did, in fact, have a very good grasp of Canadian history and geography, as well as the current social and political structures and polititians. Those with "moderate" and "some" knowledge were reasonably well informed and knew the current premier and prime minister as well as the provinces and capitals. They knew where Victoria, Prince George and Kamloops were, and how to get there by road.

All the subjects except two read the local newspaper (both the Sun and the Province were read). Four subjects read the paper every day, while five others read the paper more than once a week. Six subjects read in English only and one read in Spanish only. The remaining four

readers read in both Spanish and English. Spanish newspapers were obtainable at stores on Commercial Drive or at "La Quena".

Nine subjects listened to the radio on a regular basis (CBC and KISS F.M.). Two subjects also listened to the Spanish broadcasts on Co-op Radio and the CBC.

Television was favoured by all the subjects, except one who never watched. Eleven watched regularly. Only the regular North American programs were watched. None watched the Spanish program on Saturday mornings on Community TV.

Section 4. Occupation and Employment

Prior to arrival in Canada

All thirteen subjects had some work experience before leaving their home country, including the five subjects who were students. One of the subjects had held two concurrent jobs due to the seasonal nature of his primary occupation. He was both a farmer and a brickmaker.

Three subjects have worked at their respective occupations for more than ten years prior to moving. The others had worked, on average, between two and six years, except for two of the students who had only worked for six months and one year respectively.

The breakdown of their occupational activities can be organized as follows:

Students	5
Farmers	1 1/2
Trades/Labourers	1 1/2
Civil servants	1
Prof/Managerial	3
Military	1

Not counting the students, the total years of employment of the remaining eight subjects is approximately fifty years, giving a mean of 6.25 years for the group. If one includes the students, the mean is 4.8 years. Considering the mean age of the group as 25.3 years, it is evident that these are people who have been active contributors within their countries' economies.

Since arrival in Canada

Since coming to Canada, things have changed for them. Only five have had the opportunity to be students, and then only for a short period of time. It should be noted that only three took much advantage of this opportunity. The remaining two felt that their English was adequate and that obtaining work was a higher priority. The average number of years of employment for the group since being in Canada has been 0.9 years. Work has only been obtainable legally since January 1989, but a number have been able to find work "under the table" before that. Nevertheless, the average obtained is in sharp contrast to their work record in their home country. It should be noted that three subjects have had almost continuous employment since their arrival, and it is these subjects'

work records that have raised the average. All three of these subjects were eligible for ESL classes in Ontario. Only two of the subjects have never been unemployed, and both of these had formal ESL classes. On the other hand, three subjects have never obtained employment since arrival in Canada. One of these has been in Canada for eight years, not being legally allowed to seek employment until January 1989. This long wait has made him unemployable, as he no longer has any skills or work ethic. The other two in this group are recent arrivals, and, in my view, have not yet assimilated sufficiently to be acceptable to employers.

Subjects obtained their first jobs in Canada through either new friends in the Latin American community or church organizations or through their own initiative. Only one subject found his first job through Employment and Immigration Canada. The duration of these first jobs was a mean of 4.2 months (discounting the three subjects who never found employment).

It should be noted that during the interview period of over two months, only two of the subjects were actually employed. The rest were either "between jobs", or waiting for seasonal farm work to begin.

On the whole, the group interviewed has had a dismal employment record in Canada that is in sharp contrast to their employment record prior to leaving their countries of origin. Apart from the three subjects who have had

almost continuous work, the rest have subsisted on welfare except for brief spells of generally low-paying work. Two of the three continually employed subjects have not received welfare, while the third has only received welfare on arrival in Canada, and while attending ESL classes. He was, at the time of the interview relocating in Vancouver from Fort St. John, and living off his savings till he found another job.

Section 5. Economic Data

Six of the subjects have been employed for more than 50% of their stay in Canada and the mean income of these six was a monthly income of \$1608.33, during the periods in which they have been employed. Their pay ranged from \$1000.00 to \$2800.00 per month. Of these six, five entered Canada in Ontario, three of them availing themselves extensively of the free ESL classes offered (two had a reasonable grasp of English when they arrived, obtained employment shortly after arrival, and have been actively employed ever since). Only one of the six, who have been consistently employed entered Canada at Vancouver. His English was relatively fluent when he arrived. The remaining seven entering Canada at Vancouver, (all with marginal English) none of whom were offered the opportunity of free ESL classes, have been on welfare for the greater part of their stay. Four of them have found only occasional work. For the second seven,

the mean monthly income has been \$486.00, their welfare cheque paid each month.

Seven members of the group interviewed send money to their homeland each month; either to wives (2) or other relatives (5). This remittance averages \$220.00 per month with a range of \$90.00 to \$1000.00.

The living costs for the group were found to be as follows:

	Average	Range
Rent	\$275.00	\$250 - 425.00 per month.
Food	\$150.00	\$120 - 300.00 per month.

Amounts spent on clothing, entertainment and transportation were only obtained from a few subjects, most of whom were employed. Clothing for these subjects (sample of 4) averaged \$100.00 a month with a range of \$50 - \$300.00. Transportation (only 2) averaged \$25. Most subjects either obtained clothing from relief organizations or purchased what they needed at "Value Village" (a chain of large secondhand stores found in the greater Vancouver area) or similar second hand stores. Entertainment (including alcohol and tobacco) (sample of 4) averaged \$52.00 with a range of \$20 - \$200.00. I was unable to get a very satisfactory ideas as to how much the subjects spent on entertainment. Most stated that they spent some money on alcohol and tobacco, but they were not able to say how much. During the interviews, it became obvious that their major concerns on "Welfare Wednesday" were to pay rent, purchase food and send money

home (where applicable). Most of the rest was blown on binges. Anything remaining went on tobacco and/or the movies.

Few, if any, of the unemployed possessed any real material possessions and those that they had were mainly obtained through street trading. Items such as stereos, watches, and TV's were much coveted, but only available to those who had been successful in gaining employment.

Section 6. Orientation and beliefs

Religion cannot be said to play a major role in these peoples' lives. Of the thirteen subjects, five were Roman Catholics, two were of an unspecified Christian persuasion and one was an evangelical Christian. The remainder did not observe any faith. Of the five who went to church, one went daily, three went weekly and one monthly. The remainder did not attend any church. Although a number of subjects had been assisted by church organizations, they felt no obligation to take part in church functions except to get assistance with food (soup kitchens) or clothing needs.

Twelve of the subjects expressed a strong desire to become Canadian citizens, and only one was undecided. These same twelve claimed to be very satisfied with life in Canada. The dissenter was only "satisfied" with life in Canada, and expressed extreme impatience over the determination process. He was now unsure that coming to Canada had been the right move for him. This individual

had never been out of work and had averaged over \$2000.00 per month in wages since arrival. He expressed the desire to be able to get on with his life without the threat of having his claim found spurious by the RDB and being sent home.

Most of the refugees (9) have had some interaction with the non-Latin Canadian population. Only four claimed to have had little or no contact except at an official level (contacts with Employment and Immigration Canada, Health and Welfare Canada and the police).

Seven subjects have experienced incidences of discrimination. Four of these had had "many" experiences. On the other hand, six subjects said that they had experienced no incidences of discrimination.

Ten subjects claimed to have had some access to employment, of which three claimed to have had many offers of employment. Only three subjects have been unable to find any work at all. These three were mentioned earlier. On questioning these three, I was unable to get, from them, a satisfactory answer as to why they have been unable to obtain work. In one case, I suspect a basic aversion to work. I base this on his not having been able to work for six of the eight years he has been in Canada. The other two are recent arrivals, and their level of English would, in the current employment market, make them virtually unemployable.

In general, relationships with landlords (a common problem in the downtown eastside for most residents) were positive. I obtained only two negative responses and these, it turned out, had been caused by misunderstandings with regard to rental due dates - again, a language related problem.

Relationships with government officials (Employment and Immigration Canada, and Health and Welfare Canada) were generally positive. Negative responses were based on suspected discrimination, but seemed on questioning, to be the result of miscommunication due to language problems rather than discrimination.

Relationships with the law (police or law courts) were divided. Five of the subjects felt negatively towards the law. These subjects had been arrested for a variety of offences ranging from "drunk in a public place" to "break and entry" and "theft over \$500.00". I found the results of this part of the survey surprising, in that more than half (7) subjects felt positive towards the law. I myself witnessed one incident of police brutality while conducting these interviews (see Methodology) and had been told by the various social workers who work with these people that police harassment is common. I can only conclude that this type of harassment is common in Latin America and was not regarded as unusual, whereas harassment and arrest over

drunkenness is very rare and so causes resentment when it occurs here in Canada.

Only two subjects expressed negative attitudes to relief agencies such as the churches, community centres or the DEYAS centre. This animosity again, stemmed from a lack of understanding of the agencies role, rather than from perceived discrimination.

The majority of the subjects have had positive experiences at work since arrival, with only two negative replies. Their complaints were based on salary disputes. In one case, through a misunderstanding which was subsequently rectified (I instructed the subject on how to institute an appeal through the Employment Standards Branch). In the other case, a subject was underpaid. An unscrupulous employer deliberately misrepresented the employment conditions of a job. This employer is now known to the rest of the local Latin American community and is avoided.

Despite the fact that the studied Central American refugee claimants come from five different countries, they seem to get along very well with each other. This compatability could, in part, be due to the isolation they feel within the local non-Spanish environment, as well due to their common bond of language and culture. Two subjects did, however, express negative feelings about their *compadres*, mainly because others were, in

their view, behaving like "bums and not getting down to work".

Only three of the subjects expressed negative feelings towards the non-Latin street people. They felt that these people were a disgrace to our society, having been born and raised in Canada, and still having made nothing of their lives despite all the advantages they had been given. They saw other street people as troublemakers, especially in their use and abuse of Oppenheimer Park and the community centre. Generally, these sentiments were not applied to native Indians.

One interesting finding was related to the subjects' relationships with women. Ten subjects expressed satisfaction with the relationships they either had at the time of interview or had had in the past. Two expressed displeasure, and one claimed that no suitable women were available to have relationships with. All regarded relationships as essentially short-term. None wanted anything permanent until such time as their lives had some semblance of order. The two who were married men said that they missed their wives but nevertheless used prostitutes. The others refused to pay for sex and felt to do so was not *macho*. Most of the relationships they formed were with native Indian women. Most expressed the sentiment that European Canadian women were not suitable because they were "bossy" and tried to organize and run their lives. Subjects said they had no opportunity to

meet women in the local Latin community. Relationships (other than one-night-stands), lasted only a few weeks or months, but most preferred "one-night-stands" or at most a week. Their relationships with native Indian women have been discussed earlier in this study.

Problems with mood altering substances were evident, and common. The substance of choice was alcohol, although three said they were drug abusers (marijuana and cocaine). Seven still had problems with alcohol. Two felt that they were able to control the problem, and two felt that there was no problem. Two of those with serious alcohol problems also had problems with drugs. All the subjects said that they had not had any problems with either alcohol or drugs prior to leaving their countries of origin. This statement's validity is questionable, given personal observations of alcohol consumption during my stay in Mexico. It is more likely that there was little awareness of the concept of substance abuse within the countries of Central America. Alcohol and drugs cost money. This money has been obtained by various means, usually illegally. Shoplifting, theft from autos and drug runs to Seattle for local pushers, are the commonest crimes. Because of the sensitivity of this subject, I was not safely able to explore this area any further.

A Comparison Study

In 1984 a study of Haitian refugees was conducted in Florida, by Alex Stepick and Alejandro Portes. The results were published in 1986. This study gathered data in the following areas:

a) individual background characteristics of Haitian immigrants; b) their arrival and early resettlement experiences; c) their education, knowledge of English and information about the United States; d) current employment status and occupation; e) income and use of public assistance; f) predictors of employment, occupation, and income; and g) beliefs and orientations. (Stepick & Portes, 1986, p.329)

I became aware of this study after choosing my research topic, but before finalizing my methodology, and decided to try to collect data on some of the same variables as those in this study, for comparative purposes.

Haiti, like Central America, has not traditionally been a producer of refugees. This changed in both areas with the arrival of despotic dictatorships supported by the United States. In Haiti's case, the rise to power of Francois Duvalier in 1958 saw the first large exodus of refugees. These first refugees fled to New York, Paris and Montreal, seeking a French-speaking environment. French is the official language in Haiti, and the common language spoken is Creole, a dialect with a French base--hence the choice of cities where French is spoken (New York has a large French quarter). Florida, where Stepick/Portes' study was undertaken, was largely ignored by Haitian refugees until about 1977.

Haitians had largely ignored Florida as a migration destination until the last decade. Between 1977 and 1981, however, fifty to seventy thousand Haitians arrived by boat in South Florida, with the number peaking in 1980 during the Mariel Cuban boatlift (Stepick, 1982a:12; Carter, 1980, p.). Another five to ten thousand came by airplane. The inflow declined significantly in 1981 and again in 1982, partly as a consequence of a maritime interdiction program initiated by the U.S. government. (Stepick & Portes, 1986, p.331)

Historically, the first wave of refugees from Haiti were the displaced upper middle class of the country. Migrants leaving Haiti today, as studied by Stepick and Portes, tend to be members of the working class.

Similarly, Canada was not sought as a destination for Central American refugees until the enactment of the Simpson/Mazzoli Bill of 1982 and the Rodino/Mazzoli Bill of 1985, restricting employment of illegal aliens in the U.S. Prior to these laws, the U.S. was the destination of choice.

The survey done in Florida looked at both sexes and, while this complicates the comparison, I feel that it does not invalidate it. The Florida survey separates the Males from the females and the figures for both groups are given individually. Numbers for males only are therefore easy to obtain and are distinct from those of females.

In analyzing the results of the Florida survey, the authors acknowledge that while no simple generalizations can be made about the refugees' backgrounds, some

patterns do emerge. The migration group is relatively young, with an average age of 29. This average is close to that found in my survey where the average age at departure was 25, with an average length of journey of three years, bringing the average age in Vancouver to 28.

In the Haitian sample, 63% were considered rural residents (from villages with less than 10,000 in population) compared with 60% from the Central American sample. Also, it should be noted that 63% of the Haitians had resided continuously in their places of birth prior to migration, compared to 84% of the Central Americans studied.

A general comment that can be made about the two populations is that they are young and primarily of rural origin, but urbanizing. A brief look at the following figures gives a quick breakdown of the more relevant

demographics.

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Significant Group</u>	<u>Vancouver Study</u>	<u>Florida Study</u>
Age (years)	all subjects	28	29
Marital Status	% Single	84	54
Birthplace	% Villages < 10,000	60	64
	% Cities > 50,000	28	19

Stepick and Portes make the following observation about the reception that the Haitian refugees received on their original arrivals in Florida.

When significant numbers of Haitians began arriving on South Florida's shores in the late 1970's, locally dominant groups perceived their uncontrolled entry as a threat to the economy of the area, an army of unnecessary and unwanted labour. (Stepick & Portes, 1986, p.334)

Similar feelings have been expressed in Vancouver with regard to migrants from "Third world" countries. This attitude is, I suspect, universal and contributes negatively to the integration of migrants into the dominant community. As in the Haitian case, it has been the church and other liberal organizations that have championed the cause of Central American refugees in Canada. They have lobbied governments, both at the provincial and the federal levels, for recognition of the special needs of these refugees.

The Haitians, like the Central Americans, have experienced discrimination at the hands of lawmakers. The "red tape" surrounding the entry of these people has, in Stepick's and Portes's words, resulted in "severe psychological stress". Pablo Bazerque indicated that in the Central American population he deals with in Vancouver (the group I studied), the psychological scars of their treatment in Canada add to their problems integrating into society and make it even more difficult to deal with the traumas of their past lives in Central America and their misadventures on the road to Canada.

Another area where comparison of the two studies is illuminating is that of economics. Stepick and Portes found that:

In spite of the traumas associated with detention and uncertain legal status, economic problems have been the central concern for the Haitians since their arrival....In sum, Haitian refugees arrived into the city that did not expect or desire their presence. They suffered frequent incarcerations and, when finally released, lacked the support of strong family networks. They sought refuge in ethnic neighbourhoods which gave them access to cheap, but deteriorated housing. These severe initial difficulties combined to make economic problems their central concern in the United States. (Stepick & Portes, 1986, p.335)

Central American refugee claimants are placed in much the same position. They usually have not had to undergo incarceration, but have experienced all the other negative forces faced by their Haitian counterparts. The following table gives some idea of the similarity of their arrival and resettlement problems.

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Significant Group</u>	<u>Vancouver</u>	<u>Florida</u>
Mean no. relatives in country at arrival	all	.06	1.6
Perceived help (%) received from relatives	fair amount	7.5 (1/13)	78
Perceived group that gave most help (%)	relatives	7	90
	govt. agencies	53	5
	churches	15	5
	self	7	0
Principal problem (%)	none	0	28
	language	54	
2.7			
	economic	38	
39.8			

	cultural	15	
6.1	assimilation		
	legal/	7	
8.6	immigration		
Ethnicity of neighbours (%)	same ethnic group	46	65

As can be seen from the above chart, members of both groups have few relatives in the country of refuge. However, in the case of the Haitians, the amount of perceived help received from these relatives is high, whereas the support received by Central American is very low. This could be because the Florida Haitian ethnic group is much larger than the Central American group in Vancouver (80,000 Haitians arrived in South Florida between 1977 and 1981, compared with an estimated 7,500 Central Americans in Vancouver at the time of my study). The Central American community in Vancouver is still relatively small and quite fragmented (from several different countries, whereas the Haitians are all from the same country). The differences in perceived sources of help can be seen as a direct outcome of the solidarity that exists in the Haitian community in Florida and the group negativism that results from the frequent incarcerations suffered by these refugees. In contrast, the strong reliance in Vancouver on government agencies is likely due to Canadian social services, which traditionally are much more extensive than those in the U.S.

In a comparison of perceived problems, both groups expressed concern regarding their economic situations. Only language problems rated a higher response for the Central Americans in Vancouver. The variation in results in the two surveys in this area may possibly lie in the larger number of Haitians to be found in Southern Florida, which eliminates, to some extent, the need to speak English. A larger percentage of Haitians also claimed some knowledge of English at arrival-- 68%, compared with 23% of the Central Americans.

A comparison of educational data for the two groups shows similarities.

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Categories</u>	<u>Vancouver</u>	<u>Florida</u>
Education in Haiti/C.A.	% High School Graduation	23	9.6
Average (years)		9	5.9
Education in U.S./Canada	% None	61	45.4
	% E.S.L only	39	86.7
Average (months)		6	7.6
Knowledge of English	% None	54	31.6
	% Some	23	38.2
	% Fluent	23	30.1
Knowledge of U.S./Canada	% None	23	39.5
	% Some	54	50.1
	% Moderate	23	10.5

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Categories</u>	<u>Vancouver</u>	<u>Florida</u>
Newspaper Reading	% Daily	31	18.7
	% Weekly/Monthly	54	35.3
	% Almost never	15	46.0
Language	% Creole/Spanish	8	28.0
	% English	46	31.9
	% Both	31	40.1
Radio Listening	% Daily	69	69.8
	% Weekly/Monthly	23	27.1
	% Almost never	7	3.1
Language	% Creole/Spanish	0	26.3
	% English	77	11.5
	% Both	0	62.2

On average, educational data for the two groups show that the Central Americans have achieved a slightly higher mean level of education than their Haitian counterparts. Stepick and Portes, in their analysis of the educational levels of Haitian refugees, suggest that the group who migrate have an above-average level of education compared to the norms of Haitian society:

Results thus reveal a population with above average levels of education by Haitian standards, but significantly below the U.S. average. (Stepick & Portes, 1986, p.338)

Previous employment is another area where the two groups can be compared.

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Categories</u>	<u>% Vancouver</u>	<u>% Florida</u>
Occupation	Full-time Student	8	-
	Jobless	-	28
	Farm/Blue collar	46	55
	White collar	15	4
	Service	8	4
	Professional	8	9
	Military/Police		15

-

It can be seen that the two populations are similar, in that the majority of both groups were employed either as farm workers or in the trades.

Recent employment among the two groups in their new countries show an interesting pattern.

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Categories</u>	<u>% Vancouver</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>Florida</u>			
Occupation	Jobless/Never Employed	23	35.7
	Farm/Blue collar	54	61.9
	Skilled	7	8.0
	Services	15	3.4
	Professional	0	1.0

When we compare this table with the one above, we can see that in most cases, job expectations have had to be lowered. Among the Central Americans, apart from the full-time student, all had been employed prior to leaving, while 28% of the Haitians reported that they had been unemployed. For the Central Americans, occupational figures "in Canada" reflect occupations that they have held but may not necessarily hold at the time of study.

The jobless rate is, in reality, much higher than statistics suggest as much of the work is seasonal and/or temporary. When interviewed, only two subjects were actually employed. In the case of the Haitians, the figures represent their actual status at the time of interview. Stepick and Portes state:

The jobless rate in this sample does not reflect unwillingness to join the labour force. To the contrary, less than 2% of the males...define themselves as unemployed and not looking for work. Thus the jobless rate is almost identical to that of true (involuntary) unemployment. Current levels of unemployment are not only overwhelming but reflect a quasi-permanent situation for the respondents. (Stepick & Portes, 1986, p.338)

Taking into account the employment record of the Central American refugees during the time they have been in Vancouver, it can be fairly said that they and the Haitians have had similar experiences. A brief look at each group's dependence on social assistance reveals that the average length of time that they require assistance is 10.7 months for Haitians and 9.1 months for Central Americans. Economic success in a new country requires skill in the language of that country. This usually means ESL training, for both the Haitians in Florida and the Central Americans in Vancouver. Stepick and Portes report that English classes for the Haitians have been less than successful.

Many refugees have attempted to improve their education, particularly their English skill, but so far these efforts have yielded little results. As a whole, the sample has little knowledge of English or information about the U.S. society. (Stepick & Portes, 1986, p.338)

In Vancouver, the results are still "not in" as the only facility available to the refugee claimants has only been in operation since September 1990. The success of the claimants who had ESL training in Ontario would suggest that the group presently in Canada might have a higher success rate than their Haitian counterparts. This could, in part, be due to the smaller numbers and the pressures of the economic reality forcing assimilation.

While access to education and skill training is of fundamental importance, it is doubtful that at this late date the training can ever remove the gap between expectations and reality.

Chapter Eight

Review of services and agencies

Once refugee claimant have passed the first hurdle of being allowed to remain in Canada, they must, while awaiting their determination hearings, survive as best they can on the \$486.00 per month they receive from welfare. How do they cope? How do they make their space within available choices and opportunities?

The answer to these questions is one of the thrusts of this paper. Before one can arrive at a satisfactory answer it is essential to review the background against which they must work.

Refugee claimants have contact with only two government agencies: firstly, in the process of dealing with their refugee status claims, and secondly, while collecting their welfare cheques. No specific government group or agency is responsible for their welfare or available to discuss their particular problems or concerns. Those agencies they do deal with, rarely have a Spanish-speaking member of staff. Interpreters are sometimes available at Employment and Immigration Canada and refugee determination board hearings, but more commonly, especially after their initial hearings claimants must supply their own interpreters. These interpreters are often supplied through MOSAIC (see below for further details).

Other organizations with which the refugee claimants sometimes come in contact include the Downtown Eastside Youth Project, through their Spanish-speaking streetworker Pablo Bazarque (mentioned previously), the community centre at 44 Alexander in the downtown east side, the Carnegie Branch of the Vancouver Public Library (which incidentally, has no collection of Spanish-language books), and ESL drop-in classes, as well as the various churches and societies in the downtown east side.

Organizations, like MOSAIC and the Immigration Service Society of British Columbia (ISS), that are in part funded by the Canadian Employment and Immigration Commission (CEIC) and the Immigrant Settlement and Adjustment Program (ISAP), are nonprofit societies whose specific goals are helping with the assimilation and training of immigrants. They only become involved with refugee claimants (including those from Central America), indirectly, through some of their auxiliary programs such as interpreting and legal aid. The ESL programs they offer are not available to refugee claimants. A new service on the ground floor of the building housing MOSAIC recently started offering ESL classes to refugee claimants. ISS, in particular, is dedicated to helping only landed immigrants and government-sponsored refugees. MOSAIC does, on the other hand, try to give support services to refugee claimants when they can.

The only other organizations that the refugee claimants sometimes become involved with are politically oriented organizations such as The Human Rights Commission of El Salvador (CDHES), SalvaAide, and the Canadian Honduras Information and Support Association (CHISA), to mention a few. All these associations have branches in Vancouver, and although supportive of all refugees, appeal more to the interests of more educated and settled refugees, rather than to the group under study herein.

One other place that offers moral support to refugee claimants is the cafe "La Quena" on Commercial Drive in Vancouver. The management of the restaurant encourage Latins to gather at this location and promotes and supports many Latin events in the community. At "La Quena", Latins get together to socialize in Spanish. Here they can meet and share experiences, as well as gain information on job opportunities and hear the latest news from their homelands. Newspapers from many Central and South American countries are available for patrons to peruse. Networking among the many social groups within the Vancouver Latin community is possible within the informal atmosphere of the cafe. The clientele tends to be polarized politically towards the left.

By far the most important support service to the refugees are the Spanish-speaking streetworkers. These individuals work out of their local area offices and meet

on a regular basis with many of the refugees during their evening patrols. They help them with many of their day-to-day problems and try to find the support and extra services they need. Without this essential service, the single male refugees would have difficulty in surviving. More of these streetworkers are desperately needed, but funding is, as always, a problem.

Having established the services and help available, we now come to the nub of the question as to how they survive on their meagre welfare cheques and the few services available.

Firstly, it should be pointed out that these people are survivors. They have survived repression in their homeland, the rigors of the leaving and the journey North. They have also endured their "half open" acceptance into Canada. Secondly, they are people who have taken charge of their own futures by leaving the "security" of their birthplace.

Accommodation and food are easily accounted for: the areas to which they have gravitated contain a number of cheap hotels and boarding houses where the average rent is \$250.00 per month. Food, especially in "China town" is relatively cheap to buy and a large number of services and organizations provide meals to the needy.

The most pressing needs are spiritual and these are met, to some extent, by the closeness of the group. The amount of self help and support given within the group is

augmented by the street-workers, such as Pablo, who are an essential link that contributes to their well-being. However this support is certainly not enough and the groups could do with more. In the downtown eastside, Pablo from the D.E.Y.A.S. is the only Spanish speaking street worker and he is on duty only on Wednesday to Sunday from 3.p.m. to midnight. Most nights he is lucky to get off the street before two or three in the morning. At other times the clients must deal with the English speaking staff who usually have their hands full dealing with the large Native Indian population who also inhabit this section of town.

Oppenheimer Park is used as a meeting place by the refugee claimants from all three areas in Vancouver. It is used both as a socializing area and a meeting place. During the spring, summer and fall "scratch" sports events are held. Soccer is played in spring and fall while in summer it is softball. Most fine evenings will find anywhere from twenty or more latins gathered in the park. The park serves as a recruiting ground for jobs, especially in the summer and fall for farm work. It is also used as a place to swap news from home and discuss everything from politics to life in general. A number of young Native Indian women also congregate in the park with the latins, especially around the beginning of the month following "welfare Wednesday". Because this group has generally little free cash they are more likely to be

found around the park or at 44 Alexander (in the winter) than at La Quena. The reason is cost. Le Quena is a restaurant and clients are expected to purchase at least a coffee.

44 Alexander community centre is during the winter frequented by many of the latins. The centre offers cheap meals, free T.V. and videos as well as card games, table tennis and pool tables. The centre is very active and supports a mix of groups including Native Indians, Caucasians, Latins and occasionally West Indians. The centre is generally busy and noisy and not a good place to consult others over current problems.

The Carnegie library offers a wide variety of services. English newspapers and magazines are available but, as mentioned earlier, no books or magazines in Spanish. Chess and card games have their own room as well as a room for T.V. and video. E.S.L. classes are also offered as well as classes in simple job skills such as writing resumes and letters of application, training in how to obtain a drivers licence etc. The library also has a small restaurant where meals and soft drinks, coffee and tea can be purchased at very reasonable prices. The library hours are from 10.a.m. to 10 pm Monday to Saturday.

Hotel rooms are not a good place to socialize as the managers are very strict about visitors. This is because they constantly feel that the friends will stay overnight

or bring booze into the room and create a disturbance. A number of those interviewed mentioned having the manager burst into their rooms and expelling all those present when they attempted to get together this way. The end result is usually that the renter loses the room and all are thrown out. When they protest, the police are called and they are all evicted and charges laid by the manager usually for disturbing the peace or alcohol abuse.

Educational opportunities

Because of the restrictions placed on refugee claimants' eligibility to receive the free ESL classes that are available to immigrants in British Columbia, none of the refugee claimants who entered Canada through British Columbia's border crossings have received any formal ESL classes until the very recent past (n.b. see note at the end of this chapter about a new program in Vancouver).

In Ontario, ESL classes are available to all newcomers to Canada, whether they are immigrants, refugees or refugee claimants. The Toronto Board of Education has adopted a policy, contrary to general guidelines set down by the federal government, which offers free ESL classes to all who need them. The Toronto Board of Continuing Education Calendar states: Reading, writing and oral language development are taught in small groups and through tutoring. Course contents focuses on

day to day life skills, such as home management, shopping and banking. These courses lay the foundation for those who wish to develop their English Language skills through English as a Second Language programs. Learners may choose from two programs - bilingual or unilingual....

ESL literacy: Unilingual

This program operates in an environment in which the diversity of languages and cultures may exist. For this reason, course content offered is in English only, and support of mother tongue is not available....These programs are free. (emphasis author's)
(Calender, Adult and Continuing Education, Fall and Winter 89/90, Toronto Board of Education)

Free programs are available to:

Canadian Citizens residing in Ontario
Landed immigrants residing in Ontario
Those applying for Landed Immigrant Status residing in Ontario
(Calender, Adult and Continuing Education, Fall and Winter 89/90, Toronto Board of Education)

Significantly, this last clause also is applicable to refugee claimants, as they are, in essence, applying for landed immigrant status.

In contrast, similar classes in British Columbia are available only to landed immigrants. Refugee claimants are treated as residents, rather than immigrants, and are required to pay for any courses they wish to take. Courses cost between \$60.00 and \$120.00 apiece for an approximately 10-week term. Understandably, this cost is out of reach of most refugee claimants. There is, in Vancouver, a long waiting list for these courses and

those wishing to take them often have to wait for six months or more.

Some private organizations and church groups have, in the recent past, attempted to provide ESL services for refugee claimants. These classes are often dependent on volunteer teachers and are usually of a drop-in nature. The Downtown East Side Youth Project offered one such program a year ago at the Carnegie Library in the downtown east side. The program was offered one night a week during the winter months. Despite the well-intentioned efforts of the organizers and teachers involved, the program was not very effective. I participated in this program during the winter of 1988/89, and found that it needed to be offered on a much more regular basis (ie. several times a week), with financial support and greater availability of resources, for it to succeed. The church groups in the area have attempted to run similar programs, but these, too, have suffered from a lack of regular participants, with students demoralized by the lack of funding and materials required to provide a sound educational base to ESL learning.

For most refugee claimants in British Columbia, there are no ESL classes. Yet it is the refugees' greatest need, if they are to be able to make their way successfully in Canadian society. Gerald Dirks comments, in his book on Canada's refugee policy, as follows:

The temperament, education, and vocational training of the new refugee significantly accounts for his ability or inability to adapt to a strange environment. By nature, some people are inflexible in temperament and encounter marked difficulty in adjusting to a foreign society. The strain may be severe enough in some cases to result in mental or physical collapse. (Dirks, 1977, p.12)

Freda Hawkins outlines twelve areas of difficulty that may be faced by newcomers to Canada. These areas include:

...employment; emergency welfare and medical assistance; language training; translation and interpreter services;...vocational training and adjustment;...and substantial protection for individual human rights and the rights of immigration organizations. (Hawkins,1972,p.361)

Hawkins also expresses the hope that other provinces will follow the lead of Ontario in setting up special programs for all immigrants. She particularly admires and recommends Ontario's three-part program for immigrants that includes reception services, orientation, and intergroup development. This program is available to all newcomers irrespective of their status (landed or applying for landed immigrant status).

It is surely time that the governments of some other provinces paid attention to these moves and began to develop their own distinctive brand of programs to facilitate the settlement and adjustment of immigrants.
(Hawkins,1972,p.360)

A new program has recently been instituted, in Vancouver, that is attempting to address some of the needs of the refugee claimant population for ESL classes.

This program began operation in September 1990, under a "Section 28" grant from the federal government. The program is sponsored by the Inland Refugee Society at their facilities on Commercial Drive in Vancouver. Classes are offered four days a week on a full-time basis, and evenings from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. twice a week. The school operates with three full-time teachers and a number of volunteers. At present, each class enrolls eighteen students. The program is scheduled to run until the end of March, at which time a new group of students will be enrolled. Pam Goodwin, one of the teachers in the program, informed me that the program already has a long waiting list and that "they could easily triple the program starting yesterday".

This program is a beginning, and it is my hope that the future will see more enterprises like this.

Chapter Nine

Conclusions

I have shown that some parallels exist between the findings of Stepich and Portes in Florida and my own research in Vancouver. While the survey conducted in Florida involved 499 adult Haitians, compared with a sample of only 13 in Vancouver, the parallels are significant. I feel that in cases where the two surveys corroborate one another it can be argued that the data collected in Vancouver can be said to be supportable despite the small sampling undertaken.

The group of Central American refugee claimants in Vancouver arrived unannounced and without any demand for their services, thus they, like the Haitians in South Florida, "were defined, from the start, as a redundant labour force and were deprived the *de facto* protection provided by employers to established sources of immigrant labour (Stepick, 1982b; NACLA, 1979; Bach, 1983)". (Stepick & Portes, 1986, p.347)

Stepick and Portes hold out the hope that despite the difficulties faced by the Haitians in South Florida they will eventually find a niche within the existent society. They cite two reasons for this optimism.

First, there is the motivation of the immigrants themselves. Individuals who dared to cross 700 miles of open sea to Florida shores aboard barely seaworthy craft comprise, undoubtedly, a select group. Their commitment to stay in the U.S. and advance economically, despite all difficulties bodes well for the future. Second, it is likely that the original hostility and prejudice found in their new environment will decrease with time. (Stepick & Portes, 1986. p.347)

In the case of the Central Americans in Vancouver I would suggest a similar optimism. The Central American refugees who reach Vancouver have travelled many thousands of miles over an average of three years. This has often been through hostile territory or through countries where all aliens are subject to harassment and arrest. They bring a determination to succeed, both economically and spiritually. They, too, have had to overcome an initial reluctance regarding admittance and all are still uncertain as to their ability to stay and be granted "landed" status.

It is likely that this group will eventually fill a low-wage, menial job niche "that is preferable to widespread unemployment. Such jobs may provide the requisite base for future advancement by an ambitious group." (Stepick & Portes, 1986. p.348).

A question that needs to be asked is: do we need immigrants? The answer to this is an unqualified "yes". Constantine Passaris, an economics professor at the University of New Brunswick and member of the Economic Council of Canada and an acknowledged specialist in Canadian immigration and refugee movements, puts it this way:

While our history of Canada is closely linked to immigration, it is becoming obvious that Canada's future will be largely dependent on the same factor. Canada's contemporary demographic profile, characterized by the end of the baby-boom, the decline in fertility rates, the ageing trend of the population and the prospects for an absolute decline in population shortly after the turn of the [twenty-first] century, necessitate an enhanced role for immigration and a more proactive immigration policy to confront the social and economic challenges and opportunities of the ensuing decades. (Passaris, 1989, p.28)

(Other studies support this trend, Don Devoretz (SFU) and the Lourier Institute) Complete.

The rich potential that lies in the multilingual capabilities of immigrants, be they landed or refugee, will, in the future, be a valuable resource for Canada as trade continues to develop in the Americas and across the Pacific to our partners on the Pacific Rim. The ability to speak fluently in Spanish and English, and the contacts in the home countries of the refugee claimants under review, will, in the long run, be of value to Canada. Instead of creating hardships and barriers to these displaced people, we would better serve our longterm interests by making them as quickly as possible, productive members of our society. After a waiting period of, on average, five years, these people have earned the right to remain, to try and establish new lives without the threat of deportation under which they presently suffer. Hopefully their offspring will be able to take their rightful place in Canadian society and this will somehow address the repression, poverty and uncertainty their parents face today.

Current figure coming out of the federal Department of Employment and Immigration indicate that our current acceptance rate of refugee claimants is 91% after final hearing (Dirks, 1984, p.300;). In 1990, at a conference on Central American refugees held in Vancouver, Lloyd Axworthy, Liberal immigration critic and former immigration minister, claimed that this figure was 95%.(Personal communication). If this is the case, surely it would be better to give these people ESL training and the job skills that they need to become productive potential citizens, rather than being doomed to continue belonging to a marginalized part of Canadian society. Those (currently 5%) who are deemed not to have an acceptable claim, and who are returned to their countries of origin, will leave with skills that will benefit their countries, and may eventually indirectly benefit Canada if they use their skills to help their countries overcome their massive international debt loads (which are currently being helped by Canadian banks and other financial institutions to the detriment of Canadian taxpayers).

The longer we delay in helping these people to develop the skills need to become self-supporting, the harder it will be for them to integrate successfully into the Canadian system, and become productive citizens. Research elsewhere (Alan Nash(1987), Constantine Passaris(1989), Freda Hawkins(1972,1989) and Gerald Dirks(1977,1984,1988)) has

indicated that immigrants, as a group, produce six new jobs, each, within three years of landing in Canada.

...the Longitudinal Study of the Economic and Social Adaption of Immigrants did indicate, in work published in 1981, that members of a sample of self-employed immigrants landed in 1969 had, on average, created six jobs each within a period of three years. (Nash, 1987, p.i)

I suspect that these refugee claimants, who have, on their own initiative, travelled the length of North America to arrive in Canada, will prosper and become assets to Canadian society as well, if given half a chance.

Recommendations

I think that the system that allows these refugees access to Canada, but delays their determination and refuses to assist them in becoming competent and independent adults is indefensible.

The situation that single male, Central American refugee claimants find themselves in, upon arrival in Canada, is one of confusion and disorientation. Not only are they caught up in the "red tape" of their having sidestepped the normal and accepted means of entry, but they also must face and answer questions fundamental to their applications as refugee claimants, in a foreign language, and often without the assistance of an interpreter. On being admitted to the country so as to pursue their claims, they are left to fend for themselves in a society that they

do not understand and whose language they barely comprehend. Prior to January 1989, they were only able to support themselves by accepting welfare. Since that date they have been eligible to seek work. With no formal ESL classes or specific job training, many are not equipped to take the opportunity to seek work. As well, many of the occupations that they pursued in their countries of origin are not transferable to the Canadian economy, and so they are usually forced to seek menial, low-paying entry level jobs such as dishwashing or working as busboys, building site labourers, or seasonal farm workers, jobs that require few skills and are not particularly dependent on language skills. Even in these jobs, they must compete with the many new Canadian immigrants, as well as other Canadians.

Judging by the results of my survey, and admittedly it covers only approximately 10% of the refugee claimant population in the downtown core at the time of survey, I feel obliged to point out that the five refugee claimants interviewed who had entered Canada in Ontario, and were thus eligible for ESL training, demonstrated clearly the value of the training they received. This training took them beyond the stage of "just coping" and up to the level of being conversant with the social and economic underpinnings of Canadian daily life, as well as enabling them to function at a more-than-survival level in their daily lives.

My recommendation to the provincial ministries involved is that they follow the lead of Ontario, ignore the stated

policy of the federal government, and open ESL classes and other training to all seeking landed immigrant status, including refugee claimants.

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APPENDIX I

Interview Data Analysis.

Country.

El salvador	9
Guatamala	2
Honduras	2
Mexico	<u>1</u>
TOTAL	13

Background Charactoristics.

Population of birthplace.

Under 100	1
100 - 500	2
500 - 1,000	0
1,000 - 5,000	0
5,000 - 10,000	3
10,000 - 50,000	2
50,000 - 100,000	3
100,000 - 250,000	1
250,000 - 500,000	0
500,000 - 1,000,000	<u>1</u>
TOTAL	13

Rural 4.* = 6. Urban 9.* = 7.

*Two subjects who indicated they were from urban areas (pop 6,000) were from farming families and for the purpose of this study should more correctly be placed in the rural category.

Occupation of father.

Blue collar	1
Farm worker	0
Farm owner	4
Tradesman	2
Business	3
Services	2
Professional	<u>0</u>
TOTAL	12 *

* One unknown, deceased.

Average age of father: 64.5years.

Average education of father: 3.8 grades.*

* 7 fathers with less than grade 5. 4 with no formal schooling. Discounting uneducated and unknown (2) median is grade 7.

Occupation of mother.

Housewife	9
Domestic	2
Business	<u>2</u>
TOTAL	13

Average age of mother: 53.

Average education of mother: 3.5 grades.*

* 6 have no formal schooling, discounting uneducated median is grade 6.

Average number of brothers. 3

Average number of sisters. 2.2

Siblings. Rural average	8.75
Rural plus urban farmers average	8.67*
Urban average	4
Urban minus farmers	2.7*

*Two families lived in small urban areas (pop 6,000) but were farmers.

Family status.

Both parents present.	5
Mother only present.	5
Neither parent present	2
Mother remarried	1
Father remarried	2
Father deserted	3
Mother deserted	1
Father deceased	5
Mother deceased	1

* 5 subjects from intact homes. 5 subjects from single family home. 2 subjects brought up by relatives. 1 subject original father and stepmother.

Occupation of subject.

Student	5
Semi skilled	1
Farmer	2
Tradesman	1
Business	3
Professional	<u>1</u>
TOTAL	13

Marital status.

Married	2
Unmarried	<u>11</u>
TOTAL	13

Departed from.

Home	11
Elsewhere	<u>2</u>
TOTAL	13

Average age at departure: 25.3

Year of departure.

1980	1
1981	1
1982	0
1983	0
1984	1
1985	3
1986	0
1987	3
1988	2
1989	2

Reason for departure.

Student activist	3
Political activist	2
Death threats	2
Death of relatives	2
Avoidance of draft	2
Army deserter	1
Fleeing criminal elements	<u>1</u>
TOTAL	13

Means of travel.

Bus	8
Train	1
Hitch hike	2
Private car	1
Walked	<u>1</u>
TOTAL	13

Intermediate destination(s).

Country.

Mexico	4
United States	10
Direct travel	<u>2</u>
TOTAL	13

Average length of stay for all subjects.	10.5 months
Average length of stay for indirect travellers.	16 months

Total length of journey.

Average for all subjects.	33 months
Average excluding direct travellers	38.36 months

Section 2. Arrival and early experiences.

Arrival point in Canada.

Toronto	4
London	1
Vancouver	8

Declaration to Immigration Canada.

Toronto	4
London	1
Vancouver	7 *,**
Atlanta Ga.	1

* one subject did not make claim at border, at 'Albany St' Vancouver

** one subject arrested inside border and made claim under escort at the Sinclair Centre.

Status given.

Refugee claimant	9
Ministerial Permit	1
Refugee status	1
Permanent residents visa	1
Visitors permit (1 year)	1*

*subject granted refugee claimant status on expiry of visitors permit.

	Yes	No	Later
Eligibility for welfare	12	1	
Eligibility for employment	8	5	4*
Eligibility for education	5**	8	

* All refugee claimants given work permits Jan. 1989.

** Only subjects who entered in Ontario given ESL classes.

Area living in Vancouver.

Downtown Eastside.	7
Fraser.	3
Commercial.	1
Other.	2

Number of moves within Vancouver. Average 3.2

Reasons for moves.

Problems with landlord.	2
Looking for better place.	6
Deliberate for anonymity.	1
Would not comment.	4

Number of relatives in Canada on arrival.	Total.	8
Number of relatives in Canada now.	Total.	11

Help received from relatives (%). None*

* One subject received help during first month.

Most help received in first six months -

None.	1
Relatives.	*see note above

Friends.	2
Government Agencies.	7
Churches/organisations.	2
Self.	1

Principle problems in Canada -

None.	0
Language.	7
Economic.	5
Family/Cultural.	2
Adaption.	3
Immigration Status.	1
Inability to work.	4
Other.	5*

*Police harrasment,resents being refugee claimant,misses family,unable to find work,unspecified.

Ethnicity of Neighbours.

Latino's.	11
Native Indians.	3
Europeans.	6
Chinese.	2
East Indians.	1

Section 3

Education and related areas.

Education in country of origin -

Grade 1 - 3.	1
Grade 4 - 6.	1
Grade 7 - 10.	7
Grade 11.	1
High School.	3
Attended college.	6
Attended tech.	2
Completed post sec.	3

Education in Canada -

None.	8
English courses.	5

Knowledge of English -

None	0
Some	3
Moderate	7
Fluent	3

Knowledge of Canada -

None	3
Some	3
Moderate	4
Extensive	3

Newspaper reading -

Frequency	Daily	4	Language	Spanish	1
	Weekly	5		English	6
	Monthly	2		Both	4
	None	2			

Radio listening -

Frequency	Regularly	9	Language	Spanish	0
	Seldom	3		English	10
	Never	1		Other	4

Television watching -

Frequency	Regularly	11	Language	Spanish	0
	Seldom	1		English	12
	Never	1		Other	0

Section 4

Occupation and employment.

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Country of origin</u>	<u>years</u>	<u>Canada</u>	<u>years</u>
Student	5	.5	3	.75
Semi skilled	1 (6m)	.5	7	.5
Blue collar	4 (5y;1y;6m;?)	2.16	5	.75
Farm work	2 (6y;6y)	6.0	2	2.0
Trades	1 (12y)	12.0	1	.5
White collar	1 (11y)	11.0	0	0
Services	1 (2y)	2.0	2	.75
Prof/Managerial	3 (4y;10y;?)	7.0	0	0
Military	1 (2y)	2.0	0	0

N.B. Years above reflect average years for the group.

Unemployment -

Average months during past three years 9.13 Range 1m - 2.5y

Never unemployed 2 Range 1.5y - 2.5y

Never employed 3 Range 6m - 8y

Help in securing first job in Canada -

Relatives/Friends 3

Self 3

Government Agencies 1

Other 3

No jobs to date 3

Duration of first job 3.25 months
4.225 months *

Current employment 2 Duration 2m Range 2w - 4m

Current unemployment 11 Duration 8m Range 1m - 2y *

*These figure discounts the three who have not obtained employment.

Section 5

Economic Data

Current income from all sources

	No./subjects	Earnings
Welfare	7	\$486.00 per month
Employment	6	\$1608.33 per month Range \$1000 - 2800

Use of public assistance 11 Duration 16m Range 2w - 8y

Remittance to home 7 Average (month) \$220 Range \$90 - 1000

Living costs -	Average	Range
Rent	\$275	\$250 - \$425
Food	\$150	\$120 - \$300
Clothing	\$100 (4)	\$50 - \$300
Entertainment	\$52 (4)	\$20 - \$200
Transportation	\$25 (2)	\$20 - \$30
Other		

Section 6

Beliefs and orientation.

<u>Religion</u>		<u>Ferquency of church attendance</u>	
Catholic	5	Daily	1
Protestant	0	Weekly	3
Evangelical	1	Monthly	1
Other	2	Rarely	0
None	5	None	8
Satisfaction with life in Canada -			
	Very satisfied	12	
	Satisfied	1	
	Not satisfied	0	
Plan to become a Canadian Citizen -			
	Yes	12	
	No	0	
	Undecided	1	
Opportunities to interact with Anglo/Canadians -			
	Many	6	Source -
	Some	3	Work 5
	None	4	Church 2
Experiences of discrimination -			
	Many	4	Source -
	Some	3	police 1
	None	6	stores 1
Employment opportunities -			
	Many	3	
	some	7	
	None	3	
Relations with landlords -			
	Positive	9	
	Satisfactory	2	
	Negative	2	
Relations with Government Officials (Employment/Immigration)			
	Positive	8	
	Satisfactory	3	
	Negative	2	
Relations with Law Enforcement Agencies -			
	Positive	6	
	Satisfactory	2	
	Negative	5	
Relations with Relief Agencies -			
	Positive	7	
	Satisfactory	3	
	Negative	2	
	None	1	
Relations with Employers -			
	Positive	5	
	Satisfactory	3	
	Negative	2	
	None	3	

Relations with other Latins -			
Positive	10		
Satisfactory	1		
Negative	2		
Relations with non-Latin street people -			
Positive	7		
Satisfactory	3		
Negative	3		
Relations with women -			
Positive	6		
Satisfactory	4		
Negative	2		
None (unavailable)	1		
Ability to cope with mood-altering substance			
Positive	4	Alcohol	8
Satisfactory	2	Drugs	3
Negative	7		
Other problems -			
Yes	9		
No	4		