

LATIN AMERICAN REFUGEES IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND: A
CHRONOLOGY OF FORCED MIGRATION AND ANALYSIS OF
RESETTLEMENT EXPERIENCES

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Abstract

This research seeks to contribute to the study of forced migration and resettlement programmes through the analysis of experiences of Latin American people who were granted refugee status in New Zealand from 1973 until the present. This study aims to analyse the reasons that forced people from Latin America to flee their countries and become refugees in New Zealand and how such “push” factors have varied over time. In particular, I will consider differences in their country of origin, socio-economic backgrounds, and access to education by exploring the political context of specific Latin American countries during their most significant periods of migration and displacement.

Most of the Latin American refugees who arrived in New Zealand during the 1970s and 1980s had fled military dictatorships. More recent arrivals have been displaced from their country of origin as the result of conflicts surrounding narco-production and trafficking, civil wars, repression against indigenous and peasant populations, and the uprising of armed movements. This has also seen a shift from receiving refugees from Southern Cone countries such as Chile, to countries further north, especially Colombia.

Semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted with two groups of participants between February and June 2016 in five cities of New Zealand with high concentration of former refugees from Chile and Colombia. Group one is comprised of nine former refugees from Latin American countries who were accepted in New Zealand from 1973 until 2015 under the quota refugee category or as asylum seekers. Group two comprises four case and cross-cultural workers providing services for resettlement agencies with experience supporting former refugees from

Latin America, whose opinions were used to support the discussion and findings of this research.

It is expected that this research will help to develop more accurate policies to support former refugees from Latin American countries, understanding their previous experiences, refugee journey, cultural aspects, and the differences among countries within the Latin American region. It is also expected that this study will assist the wider community to confront the stereotypes associated with refugees in general, but particularly with Latin Americans. This research has the potential to raise awareness of Latin American people living in New Zealand who have fled wars and conflicts and help to spread information about the reasons that forced them to become refugees. Therefore, this will increase the support and understanding towards them.

The significance of this research is its potential to influence policy makers and workers in the fields of refugee resettlement and counselling to improve services while considering specific cultural aspects of their Latin American clients. Therefore, this study offers recommendations for improving refugee policies and services, that have been backed up by professionals with vast experience on refugee issues.

Declaration of Originality

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Signed: _____ On: ____/____/____

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List of Abbreviations

AALCO	Asian-African Legal Consultative Organisation
ALAC	Auckland Latin American Community
AUT	Auckland University of Technology
AUTEC	Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee
EU	European Union
FARC	<i>Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia</i>
FDR	<i>Frente Democrático Revolucionario</i>
FMLN	<i>Frente Farabundo Marti para. la Liberación Nacional</i>
IACHR	Inter-American Commission of Human Rights
ICFJ	International Centre for Journalists
INZ	Immigration New Zealand
IPA	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
LARG	Latin American Research Group
MERCOSUR	<i>Mercado Común del Sur</i>
MIR	<i>Movimiento de la Izquierda Revolucionaria</i>
MRRC	Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre
OAS	Organization of American States
OAU	Organization of African Unity
RASNZ	Refugees As Survivors New Zealand
REAF	Refugee Education for Adults and Families
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
US	United States of America
WINZ	Work and Income New Zealand

Chapter 1: Introduction

A global refugee and displacement crisis has escalated rapidly over the last decade, a trend that appears set to continue. The European Union (EU) is currently experiencing its largest influx of asylum seekers for many years, creating new political and cultural consequences (Brenke, 2015; Edwards, 2016; Fargues, 2016; Gilmartin, 2016; Jackson, 2015; Khan, 2015). Daily news reports from across the world highlight stories about refugees suffering in camps, entire families trying to cross over dangerous borders, children caught in clashes between refugees and security forces, and hundreds of people escaping on improvised boats and dying at sea. Fargues (2016) states that during 2015 alone, around 1 million people entered Europe through illegal and risky land or sea routes, with the Mediterranean shore representing the world's most lethal migratory route. The vast majority of the most recent migrants are refugees fleeing war, conflicts, persecution and various types of human rights violations, mainly resulting from events in the Middle East, North Africa and Western Asia. The period from 2014 to 2015 witnessed the worst refugee crisis since the end of WWII, with Syrians comprising the majority of the refugee population (Norton, 2015).

By the end of 2015, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) reported that an alarming 59.5 million people were forcibly displaced; representing an increase of 8.3 million persons from 2013 and the highest level ever recorded (UNHCR, 2015a). Yet by June 2016, just 12 months later, another UN report showed that the number had increased further: over 65 million people were now displaced worldwide (UNHCR, 2015b). This meant that for 'the first time in the organization's history that the threshold of 60 million has been crossed' (Edwards, 2016, para. 3), with one person in every 113 being either an asylum seeker,

internally displaced or a refugee. Out of those 65 million, 21.3 million are refugees (half of these are children), more than 40.8 million are internally displaced persons and 3.2 million are asylum seekers (UNHCR, 2015b). Syria remains the largest source-country with almost 5 million refugees and over 6 million internally displaced people. This is followed by Afghanistan and Somalia, with 2.7 million and 1.1 million affected people, respectively (UNHCR, 2015b, p. 3).

Thus, the global community must consider several issues urgently. These include the ways in which receiving countries are responsible for providing humanitarian assistance to this growing refugee population, the challenges refugees face in terms of integration into host countries, and what policies can help with this integration process. For example, developing regions hosted 13.9 million people, representing 86 per cent of the world's refugees under UNHCR's mandate, compared with the 2.2 million hosted by developed countries (UNHCR, 2015b, p. 15). For a second consecutive year, Turkey hosted the vast majority of refugees (2.5 million), followed by Pakistan, Lebanon, Iran, Ethiopia and Jordan.

1.1 Latin American Refugees

The Latin American and Caribbean regions did not figure among countries registering significant forced migration movements until the beginning of the 1980s (Schmeidl, 2001). A few exceptions to this were registered in Haiti and Cuba from the early 1960s onwards, after waves of governmental repression and poverty in those countries. In addition, outflows from Chile, Uruguay and Argentina occurred after military takeovers in the early 1970s and lasted until the mid-1990s; important refugee flows from Bolivia (1966–1982) and Paraguay (1966–1969) resulted from the activities of authoritarian regimes. Nevertheless, large refugee flows began in the 1980s, originating mainly from Colombia and Central American nations. These

movements were the consequence of the sociopolitical conflicts that resulted from failed land reforms, impoverishment, repression and the marginalisation of indigenous and peasant populations. Massacres, the illegal drug trade and the creation and expansion of guerrilla movements also contributed to the situation. Nicaragua, Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras registered a continuous flow of people migrating first to neighbouring countries such as Mexico, and then to the United States (US). By 1984, between 750,000 and 1.3 million people from Central America had migrated (mostly illegally) to the US, representing in some cases at least 10 per cent of Central America's population at the time. These people were not recognised as refugees; as such, they did not receive appropriate protection (Smith, 2001). The civil war in Peru from 1980 to 2000 was the second longest civil war in the history of Latin America after the Guatemalan Civil War (Caston, 2013). The Peruvian war increased the number of refugees considerably and displaced people within the region. The ongoing civil war in Colombia that started in the 1960s led to the highest numbers of refugees and displacements during the 1980s and 1990s. This war made the region more vulnerable to the problems related to these massive forced migration movements.

At the end of 2015, the Latin American and Caribbean region had registered over 7.6 million people of concern for the UNHCR (UNHCR, 2015b, p. 60); this number includes refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced persons and stateless persons. The region has over 337,000 refugees and almost 45,000 asylum seekers (UNHCR, 2015b, p. 60). Colombia is Latin America's largest source of refugees and the tenth largest source-country in the world, with more than 340,000 refugees and 6.5 million internally displaced people (UNHCR, 2015b, p. 17). By the end of 2015, the Americas hosted 5 per cent of global refugees (around 769,000), taking refugees

mostly from within the region; Colombians comprised the largest proportion. The US, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, and Ecuador host the vast majority of Colombian refugees.

New Zealand has taken a small cohort of Latin American refugees, mainly from Chile and Colombia, an intake divided into two distinctive waves. The first refugee wave to arrive in New Zealand consisted largely of Chileans fleeing the military dictatorship during the 1970s. While most Latin American refugees who arrived in New Zealand during the 1970s and 1980s had fled military dictatorships, the more recent arrivals have been displaced from their country of origin due to civil war and narcotics production and trafficking. A shift is also apparent, receiving refugees from countries in the Southern Cone (Chile) to refugees from countries in the north, especially Colombia.

Chilean refugees were the first Latin Americans to enter New Zealand in significant numbers and the first group to be assisted by the Inter-Church Commission on Immigration and Refugee Resettlement. New Zealand accepted 354 Chilean refugees from 1974 until 1982. In 1982, the quota for Chilean families was closed (Beaglehole, 2013; Wilson, 2014). New Zealand was not necessarily the country of choice for Chileans, but the UNHCR had major difficulties placing them in their country of first choice, and appealed to New Zealand to accept them. This situation was somewhat expected. As Beaglehole (2013) explains:

It was hardly surprising that none of the refugees had expressed a first preference to settle in New Zealand. There was no established Spanish-speaking community in the country and, in Latin America, New Zealand was not known as a country of immigration. (p. 76)

Jorge Sandoval (Sandoval & Bidwell, 2008), a Chilean survivor of imprisonment and torture during Pinochet's dictatorship, gained refugee status in New Zealand, and recounts in his memoir how unknown the new country was:

At the time I knew nothing about New Zealand and confused it with New Guinea, probably because both countries had lots of people with brown skins. It might sound ignorant, but in 30 years of living in New Zealand I've met many people who knew nothing about Chile. (p. 74)

The National government was initially reluctant and later cautious about receiving political refugees from Chile, fearing they could have strong left-wing affiliations; the government was also concerned about the difficulty of conducting proper police and security checks (Beaglehole, 2013). After the UNHCR requested assistance and offers from communities and religious groups were made to help resettle Chilean refugees, the government accepted the first group of 20 families. The majority of these had fled to Peru and were waiting international assistance. Later, 20 more families were also welcomed; after that, more small groups were accepted.

The second distinctive wave comprised mainly Colombians affected by the long-standing civil war in that country, who had started to reach New Zealand from the end of the 1990s. Other waves coming in to the country during the same period included refugees from Nicaragua, El Salvador and Peru. A distinctive case was the arrival of the first refugees from El Salvador in 1989, a group comprised of families who had been living in a Mexican refugee camp and who came to New Zealand after the intervention of CORELATINA, the Latin American Refugees Commission, which later transformed into the Auckland Latin American Community (n.d.). According to official data (Immigration New Zealand [INZ], 2016a), from 2005 until

2015, 663 Latin Americans were accepted as refugees in New Zealand under the quota programme: most were from Colombia (582), followed by Ecuadorians (80) and just one Peruvian (INZ, 2016b). Other Latin Americans did not come under the quota system and arrived in New Zealand as individuals, gaining refugee or protected-person status, either as asylum seekers or political exiles; however, these are specific cases.

1.2 New Zealand's Experience with Refugees

As part of its humanitarian obligations, New Zealand has a long history of resettling refugees. It is one of 26 countries in the world providing a resettlement programme for mandated refugees from the UNHCR, taking an annual resettlement quota of 750 individuals (INZ, 2016a). According to the UNHCR (2015c), the country has proved its long-standing commitment towards refugee resettlement, continuing to implement the Refugee Resettlement Strategy in support of resettled refugees achieving positive social integration and self-sufficiency. Other countries implementing annual quotas include Australia, Canada, the Netherlands, Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden and the US.

Over 33,000 refugees and displaced people have been resettled in New Zealand since WWII (INZ, 2016a; Saker, 2010). Originating from 39 countries, 16,861 refugees have been resettled in New Zealand during the period 1979 to 2002 (INZ, 2003). The largest numbers originate from Cambodia (4,666), Vietnam (4,162), Iraq (2,015), Somalia (1,596), Laos (1,268) and Ethiopia (966). In the decade between 2005 and 2015, 7,060 refugees arrived in New Zealand from 44 countries.

The early refugees in New Zealand arrived as small groups of people fleeing persecution based on religious or cultural grounds during the end of the nineteenth

century. Accounts of those arriving in New Zealand (Beaglehole, 2012) suggest the first group of refugees were Danes escaping German occupation in the 1870s, followed by groups of Jews escaping Russian persecution in the 1880s, and French Protestants facing religious persecution in the 1890s. However, 1944 is officially considered the beginning of New Zealand's refugee resettlement programme, and is the year in which the official statistics began distinguishing between refugees and immigrants. The refugee resettlement programme started with the arrival of approximately 834 Polish citizens fleeing WWII in Europe; 732 of these were orphaned children who had faced hunger, life in prison camps, disease and the loss of their families (Beaglehole, 2012, 2013). These refugees came into the country as part of an initiative promoted by Countess Wodzicka, the wife of Poland's Honorary Consul, and Janet Fraser, the wife of then-Labour Prime Minister, Peter Fraser. Originally, the group was meant to return to Europe, but they were granted permanent settlement in New Zealand as the impossibility of returning home became apparent. This was considered a significant gesture of humanity from the New Zealand government. As Beaglehole (2013) writes, 'The acceptance of more than 700 Polish children was New Zealand's most prominent and generous response to refugee children' (p. 120).

The next important influx comprised European refugees after WWII, who arrived in New Zealand between 1949 and 1952. Between 4,500 and 5,000 people arrived in the country on ships provided by the International Refugee Organisation. They were divided into four intakes, ranging from Hungarians, Czechoslovakians, Greeks, Russians, Ukrainians and Yugoslavs, and some stateless people (Department of Labour, 1994). A few years later in 1956, more than 200,000 Hungarians fled their country after the Hungarian Revolution against Soviet domination. More than

1,000 Hungarians from refugee camps were accepted in New Zealand between 1956 and 1959 as part of Cold War politics and the New Zealand alliance against communism (Department of Labour, 1994). Beaglehole (2013) notes that these refugees were young and white; they also had the work skills that New Zealand needed. The first group reached Auckland on 13 December 1956 and received an amount of cash and an English-Hungarian dictionary. Temporary reception centres were set up in Auckland (Mangere) and Wellington, while the New Zealand Red Cross helped with donations.

The year 1959 marked an important year for New Zealand's policies towards refugees, as it became one of the first countries to accept refugees considered difficult to resettle, such as people with disabilities, health problems, older persons or large families with a many dependent children. These groups were categorised as 'handicapped refugees', being outside the acceptance criteria adopted by resettlement countries at that time. This action was highlighted and recognised by the UN Secretary-General Dan Hammaskjold, who declared that 'New Zealand was the first overseas country to accept a group of refugee families containing handicapped members' (Department of Labour, 1994, p. 18). By 1963, more than 200 refugee families with handicapped members were resettled in New Zealand under the medical category, a program that achieved international recognition and stressing the importance of contributing by accepting this vulnerable population.

New Zealand also assisted the waves of refugees from China that appeared in the international picture in the 1940s through to the 1960s, after civil war in that country, and the establishment of a communist government. In 1962, the government admitted 50 Chinese orphans from Hong Kong for adoption by New Zealand families. Beaglehole (2013) considers that these actions must be seen in the context

of a strong and increasing anti-Chinese sentiment that contrasted with the previous acceptance of white European orphans and the recommendations made by politicians and immigration authorities to accept only Western and Northern Europeans. Later in 1967, 12 Chinese families from Indonesia were admitted, and in 1970 a further 42 Chinese refugees were accepted under a new quota (Department of Labour, 1994).

In 1965, New Zealand's national government accepted 88 members of a community of Russian Christians known as the 'Old Believers', who were prosecuted first in Russia and then in China, where an estimated 2,000 had settled. The first group arrived in Christchurch in 1965. The local community, especially farmers, provided support to the new settlers. Over 1,500 people donated money, household items and garments (Beaglehole, 2013). New Zealand authorities found relocating the Old Believers very challenging, as they insisted on being resettled in large groups as a cohesive community, rather than integrating separately into their new society.

Other groups facing prosecution started to arrive during the 1960s and 1970s (Beaglehole, 2013). Between 1968 and 1971, New Zealand accepted around 125 people from Czechoslovakia and Slovakia who had professional and technical knowledge. The first group of 100 arrived in 1968 and 25 more came between 1970 and 1971.

During the 1970s, New Zealand resettled Indo-Chinese refugees after the national government made a political move to accept 135 Vietnamese refugees and 114 Indo-Chinese students who were studying in the country; they were granted permanent residency (Beaglehole, 2013). Some 210 refugees living in camps in Thailand were selected by New Zealand officers and accepted, after meeting the criteria and expressing their willingness to emigrate. In total, between 1977 and

1993, approximately 5,200 Cambodians, 4,500 Vietnamese and 1,200 Laotians were accepted for settlement in New Zealand. The majority of these were government-selected and others were admitted under an emergency quota (Beaglehole, 2013). By the 1980s, the refugee quota was filled mainly by Indo-Chinese refugees, who made up almost half of all refugees accepted (Department of Labour, 1994).

Between 1972 and 1973, New Zealand agreed to accept 244 Ugandan Asians out of the 60,000 expelled from Uganda, as part of an 'Africanisation' policy. New Zealand had problems filling the Uganda-Asian quota due to immigration restrictions and imposed conditions, resulting from applicants not meeting occupational criteria, for example. Eventually, the category was broadened after the government became concerned about the programme's slow progress (Beaglehole, 2013).

The quota for refugees in New Zealand during the 1980s and 1990s was filled mainly by people from South-East Asia and the Indian sub-continent, only 375 black Africans were registered (Chile, 2002). Arrivals from the Middle East started in the late 1970s, with the first group from Iran fleeing religious persecution and war. More than 140 Iranian Baha'is settled in New Zealand under the refugee quota. Later, between 1985 and 1989, around 140 Assyrian Christians refugees from Iraq, who were living in camps in Greece, arrived in New Zealand. After 1992, violent events and political crises in Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Rwanda resulted in a higher quota of African refugees arriving in New Zealand. This is evident in the ethnic composition of refugee communities in New Zealand, largely formed by Africans from those countries.

However, the largest intake of refugees from the Middle East occurred during the 1990s and the beginning of 2000. By 2006, New Zealand had received 6,024

refugees from Iraq and 2,793 from Iran (Beaglehole, 2013). The most well-known case in New Zealand concerns the ‘Tampa Boys’, a group of 208 Afghan asylum seekers who were rescued from a sinking fishing boat in the Indian Ocean by the cargo ship *MV Tampa* on 26 August 2001, being accepted by the Prime Minister, Helen Clark (Shabnam, 2011). According to the UN (UNHCR, 2005), New Zealand accepted 208 Afghan refugees, including 131 people from the *Tampa*, and another 77 who underwent refugee status determination on Nauru by UNHCR.

From 2000 to 2003, around 1,800 Zimbabweans fleeing their country were granted permanent residence in New Zealand; by 2006, 1,857 Somalis were also accepted. Chile (2002) states that in 2000, ‘there were two African countries in the top six refugee communities in New Zealand, with Somalia in the top four. During the same period the number of Africans granted asylum in New Zealand increased quite significantly’ (p. 357).

1.3 Research Aims

This research seeks to study the most distinctive periods of forced migration in the Latin American region and the resettlement of Latin American former refugees in New Zealand, through analysing their living experiences during both the pre- and post-migration stages. Therefore, the study will explore the events that forced these people to flee their countries, as well as their resettlement experiences in New Zealand.

This is a qualitative research project that applies interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) to study the past and present experiences of nine former refugees from Latin America living in New Zealand, supplemented by opinions from four case and cross-cultural workers from resettlement agencies experienced in assisting this group. Data were collected through semi-structured

qualitative interviews conducted in English and Spanish between February 2016 and June 2016 in Auckland, Hamilton, Wellington, Rotorua and Napier. It was fundamental that this research developed a detailed analysis of participants' own world views, beliefs and identity. It was vital to gain rich information during the interviews. Data were analysed through an IPA approach, exploring participants' experiences case-by-case and developing themes clustered according to commonalities. The analysis divided the data into three stages of participant journeys: 1) pre-migration history and 'push' factors; 2) experiences during immediate resettlement in New Zealand; and 3) post-resettlement integration.

1.4 Researcher's Experience

I was born and raised in the capital city of Caracas in Venezuela, South America, where I developed my professional career as a journalist over almost one decade. At the beginning of my career I worked at the Ministry of Communication and the Ministry of Justice, writing stories about governmental policies, but the majority of my experience was gained working as a senior reporter for the biggest private TV channel in Venezuela, called 'Venevision'. I covered political and governmental news in the Miraflores Presidential Palace, the National Assembly, national and local elections and community issues. During that time, I had the opportunity to travel to more than 24 countries with the late Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez. I covered the signing of international agreements, presidential elections in South and Central American countries, Venezuela's efforts to help Colombia achieve peace agreements, as well as the release of high-profile political and other military and civilian figures kidnapped by insurgent groups in Colombia. In 2013, I won a Hubert Humphrey Scholarship—part of the Fulbright Program—to study in the US. This engaged me with academic studies at the University of

California in Davis and the University of Maryland, and professional experience working as an intern for the International Centre for Journalists (ICFJ) in Washington DC.

I then came to live in New Zealand in May 2014, to study a Master's in Conflict Resolution at the Auckland University of Technology (AUT), aiming to gain further academic knowledge about negotiation, solving disputes and dialogue-based approaches to managing and resolving conflicts in a global context, with a specific interest in the Latin American region. In 2015, I completed the training programme in refugee resettlement support provided by the New Zealand Red Cross, which covers a seven-week training period and a three-month placement. I worked in a team of two as a support volunteer for a family of former refugees from Somalia, helping with their resettlement. This included welcoming them to their new home and helping to move furniture, introducing them to their new community and the available local services, such as the public library and community centre. I also assisted with their English language course enrolment, finding and registering with a general practitioner (GP), showing them how to use Auckland's public transport system, accompanying them to complete formalities at Work and Income New Zealand (WINZ) and taking them on city trips to explore places of interest. The training programme offered by the Red Cross covered aspects such as understanding the refugee experience, the role of the refugee support volunteer, refugee health, wellbeing and education, culture, employment and support services available for former refugees.

During the second semester of my Master's at AUT, I helped produce a documentary about refugees, presenting the story of a former refugee woman from Afghanistan, and interviewing a number of people involved in refugee integration in

the process. Among these people were professionals from the New Zealand Red Cross and Refugee Education for Adults and Families (REAF). This was my first academic foray into field research about refugees, and the very first time I had had the chance to immerse myself in concepts and policies surrounding refugee issues. This involvement in the Red Cross volunteering programme and my earlier academic work on refugees at AUT awoke a huge interest to learn more about the current situation of former refugees from Latin America in New Zealand. Working as a journalist, I knew the causes and push factors that had forced many Latin Americans to leave their countries. I knew about dictatorships in the Southern Cone, wars in Colombia and Central America, and the drug-related violence that had claimed hundreds of innocent lives, but I did not have much information on the journeys of some Latin Americans to New Zealand, or the nationalities that had been accepted in the country. I was very surprised to see the relatively large number of Colombians who had made their way to such remote country as New Zealand in search of peace and security. I knew that refugees and migrants from Latin America were a very small minority in New Zealand, but I wanted to hear the stories of refugees and asylum seekers and explore their resettlement experiences.

Although I am not from a refugee background, I share cultural similarities with the group I decided to study, and having related professional experience in the field helped me to focus on this topic for my research. There is much more to explore in the Latin American former refugee population in New Zealand, but I hope this study marks a beginning.

1.5 Rationale and Significance of the Study

Little research on the experiences and living conditions of Latin American former refugees in New Zealand exists, alongside an absence of studies on

resettlement. The most relevant documents on the subject are a research paper by Smith and Espinoza (1988) developed for the National Conference in Refugee Mental Health held in Wellington. This work presents the results of a study on former refugees from Chile who had resettled in New Zealand. A research article by Mannion (1988) examines the effects of torture and exile through interviews conducted with Chilean political exiles living in New Zealand. Both studies are based on interviews with Chileans discussing their impressions before and after their arrival in New Zealand.

A few books have compiled the stories of Latin American refugees and migrants living in New Zealand, although they do not present in-depth research about their resettlement experiences, main challenges and needs. A publication by the Department of Labour (1994) presents stories of women from a refugee background, and this includes the experiences of women from El Salvador and Chile, detailing the reasons that forced them to flee their countries and their subsequent arrival in New Zealand. Jansen's (1990) collection of ten stories of migrant and refugee women includes the personal experience of a woman from Chile, who provides some details about her life back home and the challenges she faced during resettlement in New Zealand. Thomas and McKenzie (2005) compiled the stories of former refugees and migrants from Chile and Venezuela. Sandoval and Bidwell (2008) present the personal story of Jorge Sandoval—who was tortured severely and imprisoned during the dictatorship in Chile—and his eventual arrival in New Zealand where he was accepted as a refugee.

However, no in-depth studies exist about the resettlement in New Zealand of Latin Americans former refugees and their present situation in terms of education, employment, health, social networks or social integration. As Latin American former

refugees constitute a small minority in New Zealand, they are not easily distinguished in aggregate statistics, and often are grouped with other minorities as 'others'. To the best of my knowledge, this is the first academic research in New Zealand on former refugees from Latin American countries to explore the experiences and personal accounts from the participants' own perspective, considering pre- and post-resettlement periods while providing a detailed chronology of forced migration within the Latin American region. This study aims to contribute to the understanding of the Latin American community members from a refugee background and their experiences during resettlement, giving particular attention to their integration into New Zealand society. Through the outcomes of this research, the participants and refugee resettlement agencies, along with the wider community and government agencies, will have the opportunity to learn more about the challenges that former refugees from Latin America have experienced integrating into New Zealand society and their needs that require more attention. As such, this research will become a useful resource for those developing specific strategies to help Latin Americans achieve successful resettlement in New Zealand.

1.6 Research Questions

Research questions are defined as the foundation for a research project that provides direction for the study. Therefore, it is important to construct these questions appropriately (Kelly, 2012). Developing research questions helps researchers to avoid confusion and an overload of unnecessary work during the process (Punch, 2005).

This research aims to explore and analyse experiences from interviews based on past and present events that might have played a role in the resettlement of former refugees from Latin America in New Zealand. Consequently, the research questions

should explore those experiences and challenges, so analysing them and providing insight into these people's resettlement outcomes. The central research question is:

- What are the experiences and challenges that former refugees from Latin America have encountered during their resettlement in New Zealand, and to what extent has this varied across time, depending on the refugee wave to which they belonged?

Research questions help to organise and delimit the research project, give direction, and provide a framework for writing (Punch, 2005). To help achieve those outcomes, the specific questions of this project are:

- What historical circumstances forced people from Latin America to become refugees and how have these reasons changed over time?
- What were the experiences of former refugees before fleeing their country and after resettlement in New Zealand?
- To what extent have resettlement programmes helped former refugees from Latin America incorporate into New Zealand society, achieve self-sufficiency, and reunite with their families?

1.7 Thesis Structure

This thesis is divided into six chapters. This introductory chapter (Chapter 1) focused on the refugee problem from a global and local perspective, outlined a chronology of the waves of refugees arriving in New Zealand, discussed the research aim, detailed the researcher's experience, explained the study's significance, and outlined the research questions. Chapter 2 presents the research methodology designed to obtain and analyse data, including discussion of the research participants, recruitment process, methods of data collection and analysis.

Chapter 3 is a literature review divided into two sections. The first analyses the concepts and issues surrounding the definition of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants, resettlement best practices, and resettlement policies in New Zealand. The Refugee Resettlement Strategy was studied to understand how the country is helping refugees (once they have been accepted to live in New Zealand) to achieve a successful resettlement in terms of jobs, community integration and language skills. The New Zealand Red Cross Refugee Programme was incorporated to study the process by which former refugees must complete a six-week orientation programme at the Department of Immigration's Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre, before being resettled in five communities around New Zealand. The second section explores the resettlement practices and elements required for successful resettlement.

Chapter 4 provides a historical background of forced migration in Latin America, using secondary sources to study (in chronological order) the conflicts in Latin America that have caused significant waves of refugees and displaced people, analysing migration movements and push factors across time.

Chapter 5 contains the research findings, presenting a rich description and interpretation of the lived experiences of former refugees from Latin America. This chapter provides in-depth details about the past and present journey of nine Latin Americans from a refugee background from the two distinctive waves of forced migration in the region: three from Chile, five from Colombia and one from El Salvador.

Finally, Chapter 6 presents a discussion about the main challenges that former refugees from Latin America had to face in New Zealand during the resettlement period and elaborates upon recommendations based on the study's findings, supported by the opinions of four caseworkers used as secondary sources.

Chapter 2: Research Methodology

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) has been selected as the main methodological strategy to analyse the past and present experiences of former refugees from Latin America living in New Zealand, supplemented by opinions from case and cross-cultural workers from resettlement agencies. IPA has been selected as the appropriate approach to place individual experiences as the central element of the study and develop the analysis. This is appropriate, considering that the aim of this research is to present descriptive information of participants' personal accounts of their lives before and after being granted refugee status in New Zealand.

IPA aims to explore in-depth the way in which participants define and make sense of their own personal lives and social interactions. It focuses on particular experiences and events that are meaningful to them, involving 'detailed examination of the participant's lifeworld it attempts to explore personal experience and is concerned with an individual's personal perception or account of an object or event' (Smith & Osborn, 2007, p. 53). The IPA approach recognises that people struggle to tell their personal stories and express their feelings openly; hence, the researcher must connect with the participants and their world to interpret their mental and emotional state and considering their reactions when retelling stories. This was a very important element when selecting a methodological framework for this research, as the researcher has a cultural connection with the participants and can understand what they are referring to when retelling their stories. For example, I am familiar with the struggles of peasants living in rural Colombia, and how they are harassed daily by terrorist groups. I am also aware of the political persecution suffered by leftists in Chile. Hence, I was able to recognise and interpret references

that have emerged during the interviews, comments that may be meaningless to someone without this shared cultural knowledge.

Using IPA enables access to an individual's life world—where formulation of the meaning of daily experiences occur—and the researcher acknowledges that the product of this exploration of people's personal worlds is an act of interpreting and reconstructing the voice of participants (Griffin & May, 2012). Analysing the world according to an individual's meaning allows the informant to be the expert or the 'knower'. IPA tries to come close to personal accounts by careful attention to the elements told or shown during the conversation.

Therefore, it was possible to discover the challenges that Latin Americans from a refugee background have had to face before and after their resettlement in New Zealand. The approach enables this through the collection of qualitative data from in-depth interviews. The data have provided rich information about the current conditions of participants. Through using primary and secondary sources, I constructed a chronological order of the historical events about conflicts in Latin America that had caused these waves of refugees and displaced people, and their following resettlement in a third country: New Zealand.

2.1 Research Participants

The study comprises two groups of participants. Group 1 constitutes nine individuals from South and Central American countries, male and female, above 21 years of age, who were accepted in New Zealand from 1973 until 2015 under the quota refugee category, or under the refugee and protection status. Some of these interviewees may have been under 21 when they first arrived in New Zealand, but they were able to share their and their family's experiences since arrival. Four

participants were accepted between 1973 until 1993, and five participants came from the later wave, 1995 to 2015 (see Table 2.1).

Table 2.1

Participants in Group 1 Organised by Country of Origin, Gender, and Wave of Acceptance to New Zealand

Country of Origin	Gender	Wave of Acceptance
Chile	M	First wave
Chile	F	First wave
Chile	M	First wave
El Salvador	M	Second wave
Colombia	F	Second wave
Colombia	M	Second wave
Colombia	F	Second wave
Colombia	M	Second wave
Colombia	F	Second wave

Group 2 comprises four case and cross-cultural workers providing services for resettlement agencies with experience supporting former refugees from Latin America whose opinions have been used in this research to elaborate recommendations (see Table 2.2).

Table 2.2

Participants in Group 2 Organised by their Role in Social Agencies and Location

Role	Location
Social worker/caseworker	Auckland
Social worker/caseworker	Auckland
Migrant centre coordinator/social worker	Hamilton
Refugee centre clinical manager	Wellington

2.2 Recruitment Process

2.2.1 Group 1

Participants were selected based on three criteria: first, they were from South or Central America; second, they were above 21 years of age; third, participants had to have been granted refugee or protected-person status to be resettled in New Zealand. The first group of participants was recruited using volunteer sampling through advertising displayed in social media and community support groups. Volunteer sampling allows the recruitment of people with a desire to participate in research (Seale, 2012). Initial contact occurred when people who wanted to participate sent a message or made a call to my personal mobile number, enquiring about the study and indicating their intention to be part of it.

A second group of participants was selected based on the snowball strategy, which allowed access to potential participants who were friends or relatives of recruited participants and could meet the selection criterion. Seale (2012) explains that snowball sampling involves ‘obtained respondents through referrals among people who share the same characteristics and who know each other’ (p. 145), and relies on personal recommendations. Participants obtained through the snowball

strategy were referred by a contact from the Latin community, who called them first to ask if they wanted to participate in the study and then gave them details about the research. After their approval, I obtained their phone numbers and made phone calls. When they answered, they knew who I was and we agreed on a day and time to meet. The participants had two weeks to consider the invitation.

One problem with snowball sampling is the possibility of having participants within one network sharing similar experiences (Seale, 2012), although in the case of this research, I relied on two sampling strategies for the recruitment process, one volunteer and one from referrals, to minimise that problem.

2.2.2 Group 2

Members of six resettlement agencies and social organisations were initially contacted via email, after finding their email addresses on resettlement agency websites; this is public information and provides their names and contact details. The first contact occurred when I sent an email with a brief explanation about the research. After their response indicating an interest to participate, I sent them a second email with the information sheet and the list of possible questions. We agreed to meet in the agencies' headquarters. Participants had two weeks to consider the invitation.

2.3 Methods of Data Collection

Data were collected through semi-structured qualitative interviews to obtain and analyse the experiences from Latin American people from a refugee background living in New Zealand, and also from resettlement agency workers providing services for these communities. Qualitative interviews were the most appropriate method of data collection for this research, as they allowed exploration of emotional and cognitive experiences from the participant's perspectives, accessing information

about their values and attitudes. These elements cannot be observed if a different method is used, such as questionnaires.

Qualitative semi-structured interviews are the most widely used method for gathering data used when using IPA methodology. This is considered the most effective technique to access information on lived experiences and obtain data-rich stories (Griffin & May, 2012; Smith & Osborn, 2007). This form of interview also permitted re-examination of intriguing responses and exploration of in-depth vital details that drew the researcher's attention during the interview process. Byrne (2012) explains that qualitative interviewing allows researchers to obtain the participants' views in their own words, which helps gain a richer and more complex analysis. Semi-structured interviews are a 'particularly suitable method for accessing complex issues such as values ... [and] attractive to researchers who want to explore voices and experiences which they believe have been ignored, misrepresented or suppressed in the past' (Byrne, 2012, p. 209).

Face-to-face interviews were selected for this research, due to the flexibility they have in facilitating the gathering of sensitive information, and when the body language and emotional context of the respondents has great value for the analysis. Phellas, Bloch and Seale (2012) explain that some benefits of performing face-to-face interviews include the opportunity to allow explanation of the questions and to look in-depth at specific topics and more time flexibility when undertaking the interviews. This method also allows a bigger scope to ask open-ended questions (allowing richness of description) and a higher level of control over emotional situations that might affect the participants. All of these elements aligned with the aim of this research.

The interviews with Group 1 were made in participants' homes, community centres and public spaces in Hamilton, Auckland, Wellington, Rotorua and Napier. Participants decided on the location and time for the interviews. The data was collected between February 2016 and June 2016, and the interviews were conducted in Spanish, as this is the native language of the participants, and our shared language. Before the interview, participants received an information sheet in Spanish and a consent form, also in Spanish.

The interviews with Group 2 were completed with social workers and caseworkers in their own offices, located in agencies in Hamilton, Auckland and Wellington. The data were collected between February 2016 and May 2016, and interviews were conducted in English and Spanish. Before the interview, participants received an information sheet and a consent form in both Spanish and English, depending on their preferred language.

Audio recording was used to validate the information when the participant consented to be recorded. Some participants permitted the researcher to record during the interview, while others expressed their preference not to be recorded, as this made them nervous. It might also have reduced the possibility of a relaxed conversation, making it too formal. Participants decided when to stop the interview. Notes were taken during the interview detailing the participants' narrative. The required time for each interview was between 45 and 120 minutes.

Harrell and Bradley (2009) consider that an interview has been successful when the interviewer has accomplished many things, obtained useful information, and understands the answers provided. Such objectives were accomplished as the participants opened up to tell their personal stories and provided rich information for the analysis. To achieve this, Laforest and Bouchard's (2009) guidelines for

conducting semi-structured interviews were adopted. These divide the process into three stages:

1. Before the interview starts: provide an introduction to participants, explain the goals and the topics to be discussed, discuss how the participant's contribution is considered for the project, and provide a consent form.
2. During the interview: start with general questions heading towards specific ones, summarise each topic before moving on to another one, encourage respondents to express themselves, respect the respondent's pace, cover all of the pertinent topics and express the questions clearly.
3. Closing the interview: closing questions or statements indicating that the interview is over, explain if the results will be provided after the diagnosis is complete, summarise what the respondent has said and write down the impressions, which will facilitate analysis.

2.4 Data Analysis

Data obtained from the interviews were analysed to reveal the experiences from Latin American former refugees in New Zealand, and opinions from resettlement agency workers. In-depth qualitative analysis allowed the exploration of detailed information about the experiences of the respondents' world, either in the form of thoughts, words, beliefs or constructs suggested by their identity and expression. These are necessary elements when researching using the IPA approach (Smith & Osborn, 2007). Considering the small size of the sample and the need to provide rich and detailed information, the data were analysed without the use of computer-based analysis software.

To analyse the data, the IPA four-stage procedure recommended by Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) was followed: 1) close-reading phase; 2) description; 3) interpretation; and 4) working across cases if one more than one participant was involved. Consequently, the interview transcripts were used in stage one of the data analysis to determine themes. The conceptualisation process began with playing each voice recording repeatedly and reading each transcript several times to encourage familiarity with the data. Notes, thoughts, comments and preliminary codes were written in the left margin of the transcripts. The emotional breaks of some participants were noted at this stage. The transcripts were read again and emergent themes were recorded in the right margin, this time creating concise phrases to describe the essence of each topic. This process was conducted for each transcript.

In the second stage, all preliminary themes were listed in order in a separate document using a word processor, clustering themes according to commonalities in terms of meaning. The third stage involved gathering coherent themes, looking for connections between them, to compare and combine themes and create final ones. These were checked a few more times carefully against the transcripts, to ensure they represented participants' experiences adequately. After analysing each transcript, stage four began with writing up the information. To organise the analysis and facilitate the reading, I divided participants' journeys in two periods: pre- and post-migration. These periods constitute the history before coming to New Zealand and the experiences during and after resettlement. Each period has its own sub-themes.

The data provided information about migration history, family reunification, employment, education, housing, English language skills, gender roles, and community support. A moniker was assigned to each participant to classify them and

analyse their answers, while assuring anonymity. A moniker also helps readers to follow each case in Chapter 5, easing the narrative flow. Data from the interviews of participants in Group 1 (former refugees) were obtained in Spanish. Data from the interviews with Group 2 (caseworkers) were obtained from three caseworkers in Spanish and one participant in English. The author was responsible for collecting, processing, translating and analysing the data.

2.5 Ethics

The ethics application for this research was approved by the AUT Ethics Committee (AUTECH). This research protects participant privacy and confidentiality by not disclosing their identity or contact details. Their names, emails and addresses will be discarded after completing this research. Data obtained from the interviews will be stored in AUT premises, School of Social Sciences and Public Policy, for a minimum period of six years (until 2022), following AUTECH requirements, and after that it will be deleted permanently.

Chapter 3: Refugee Resettlement: A Literature Review

The literature informing this thesis is multidisciplinary, drawing on research in refugee and migration studies, sociology, psychology, peace studies, Latin American history and New Zealand policy studies. To achieve a holistic understanding of the forced migration and displacement problem, it is necessary to review relevant aspects related to definitions and categories of refugees and resettlement practices from a global and local perspective. This will provide a framework within the refugee experience can be studied and understood. This chapter is divided into two sections. The first covers universal and regional definitions of what constitutes a refugee, asylum seeker or migrant, and the type of international assistance they are entitled to receive. The second section studies best practices for resettlement in the global context and in New Zealand.

3.1 Refugees and Migrants: Definitions from a Global Perspective

Different reasons force people to abandon their homeland and migrate, either as a voluntary or involuntary decision. Among those reasons are political instability, religious conflict based on discrimination, and economic hardship that compel millions around the world to leave their home and resettle in a different society. The process of leaving everything behind and being resettled in a host country is likely to be difficult and challenging. Two main types of migrants cross national borders: immigrants and refugees (the latter also includes asylum seekers). These groups are linked by many commonalities and share similar struggles, although they are defined by distinctive characteristics that also determine what type of protection they can access.

Refugees are considered more disadvantaged than immigrants, due to the lack of decision and power they have when fleeing their homeland and the journey

they face before achieving a lasting solution. Therefore, it is important to define who is a refugee and who is a migrant. The legal definition of what constitutes a refugee was determined after WWII, achieving a universal understanding. This led to the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, which established a definition of refugees, their rights, and the legal obligations of states. The Convention was later amended by the 1967 Protocol, which eliminated geographical and temporal restrictions. Article 1A of the Convention (UN, 1951) defines a refugee as:

A person who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it. (p. 16)

This definition remains, at the universal level, the most widespread legally binding international instrument to define the treatment and rights of refugees. This legal document has helped to frame clearly who is a refugee and the type of protection and social assistance they are entitled to receive. To obtain refugee status, solicitants must justify the reasons that forced them to abandon their homeland on one or more of the five grounds (as listed in Article 1A of the Convention): race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion (UN, 1951).

A difference is apparent between a refugee and an asylum seeker: a refugee has already been granted protection, while an asylum seeker is still waiting for a

decision from a state. The time-frame for these decisions can vary depending on the laws and procedures of each country. Asylum seekers are defined as ‘someone who says he or she is a refugee, but whose claim has not yet been definitively evaluated’ (UNHCR, 2016a, para. 1). The UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2016) defines asylum seekers as:

People who move across borders in search of protection, but who may not fulfil the strict criteria laid down by the 1951 Convention. Asylum seeker describes someone who has applied for protection as a refugee and is awaiting the determination of his or her status. (para. 6)

Likewise, Mitchell (2006) classifies an asylum seeker as a person seeking international protection outside his or her country of origin, who has applied under the 1951 Convention, but who is waiting for a decision on the claim; therefore, if the protection is granted, he or she becomes a refugee.

For most countries, the difference between the two groups is related to the physical location of the claimant when asking for protection. This process will require different steps and has different categories in each country. In New Zealand, an asylum seeker is defined as ‘a person who fears returning to his or her home country and seeks refugee or “protected person status”’ (INZ, 2014, p. 3), which is decided according to the Immigration Act 2009. This Act clarifies that those seeking international protection have travelled to the country independently, claiming refugee status on arrival, or after having been in the country for some time. The country has the right to detain asylum seekers if they pose a risk to national security or if the country is suspicious about their identities. These claimants are entitled to receive protection from the state during the legal process and can be granted with work permits and emergency unemployment benefits. By the end of 2015, the UN

had registered about 3.2 million people waiting for a decision on their asylum application; Germany was the largest recipient of new applications, with almost 442,000 claims (UNHCR, 2015b).

The widespread literature on refugees and immigration (Beaglehole, 2013; Kushner & Knox 1999; Potocky-Tripodi, 2002; Seabrook, 2009; Tennent, 2013; UNHCR, 2016; Worster, 2012) agrees that a basic starting point to differentiate migrants from refugees is that the first group are more in control of their future and can decide when to leave their country, how to do this, and where to go. A high level of planning and organisation exists in this process. In contrast, refugees do not decide to leave their country and where to go: they are forced into this action. Refugees and asylum seekers are defined very specifically in international law and are entitled to receive particular treatment from states, while migrants must follow the immigration rules established in the countries to which they are moving. Kushner and Knox (1999) argue that as the definition of refugees has expanded and transformed over time, so it has also changed the distinction between refugees and migrants, considering that the particularities between the two groups are open to interpretation.

The UNHCR (2016a) distinguishes between refugees and migrants, especially with the increasing number of economic migrants who pose as refugees. It considers that even if refugees and migrants often travel in the same way, they are fundamentally different and should be treated accordingly under international law. Basically, for the UNHCR, migrants—mainly economic migrants—are seeking to improve their future and opportunities for their families, while refugees are trying to save their lives or preserve their freedom, and require international protection. The distinction between the two groups is also stated in the legislation of individual

governments, who have procedures and norms in place to deal with migration and refugees. The first group is subject to the immigration regulations of each state, and the second group is sheltered by international agreements and international protection, passing through very different processes. A legal conflict can exist if both definitions and norms are not clear. For Edwards (2015), 'blurring the two terms takes attention away from the specific legal protections refugees require. It can undermine public support for refugees and the institution of asylum at a time when more refugees need such protection than ever before' (para. 8).

A notable difference between refugees and immigrants are the push factors involved in their situation. Immigrants have choices, while refugees are motivated by events in their country that push them to abandon it, without having many alternatives. Kunz, as cited by Kushner and Knox (1999), suggests that the differences lie in these push and pull factors, as 'it is the reluctance to uproot oneself, and the absence of positive original motivations to settle elsewhere, which characterises all refugee decisions and distinguishes the refugee from the voluntary migrants' (p. 13). The ability to opt to return home when one pleases is another difference between the two groups. Kushner and Knox (1999) argue that 'for refugees, the possibility of returning home is less feasible' (p. 13). It is more likely that immigrants have control over the final decision of returning back home or moving to another country. They add that refugees face many obstacles that do not depend on their own decisions, such as the experience of being in refugee camps, danger when crossing borders, threats and bribery, family separation, lack of security, and most importantly, being forced to abandon their origins and financial assets. Similarly, Beaglehole (2013) considers that refugees are left without many options after fleeing persecution and conflict, while migrants choose to migrate in

search of new opportunities. They are more likely to have a set of options to consider and measure prior to their departure.

Refugees are recognised precisely for the danger they face in returning home, the often difficult border crossings involved in their escape from physical threats, and their desperate need of international assistance. In contrast, migrants have made a conscious decision to move:

not because of a direct threat of persecution or death, but mainly to improve their lives by finding work, or in some cases for education, family reunion, or other reasons. Unlike refugees who cannot safely return home, migrants face no such impediment to return. (Edwards, 2015, para. 6)

Potocky-Tripodi (2002) further argues that the distinction between migrants and refugees depends on the source of the definition, whether it comes from the social sciences, from a legal perspective, or from the self-definition that migrants and refugees use to categorise themselves. However, the fundamental difference between these groups is the way in which they leave their country of origin, especially if this was a voluntary or an involuntary action.

This debate around who is a migrant and who is a refugee has been particularly intense during the arrival of large numbers of people in Europe during 2015 and 2016, either by boat to the coasts of Italy and Greece, or crossing the land border from Turkey. As Edwards (2015) clarifies, they happen to be both and, in that case, 'at UNHCR we say "refugees and migrants" when referring to movements of people by sea or in other circumstances where we think both groups may be present' (para. 11). Once those people have been identified and verified, they can be registered and processed accordingly.

Finally, although each group has its own characteristics, they share many commonalities, as both refugees and migrants are more prone to be the subjects of racism and discrimination, have similar barriers in terms of language, disadvantages when looking for employment, and facing possible hostility from their settlement country in many cases.

3.1.1 Regional definitions of refugees

Changing realities have created more refugees worldwide; the 1951 definition of refugees can now be considered too narrow, restricted and outdated. Over time, the increasing global refugee population and the wide spectrum of conflicts from which individuals seek asylum has led to calls for a new definition of refugees. Kushner and Knox (1999) consider that the definition based on the 1951 Convention excludes people displaced by conflict and violence who have not left their home country. Similarly, Worster (2012) considers that traditional push factors have changed over time, observing an increasing flow of refugees fleeing civil wars, ethnic conflicts, natural disasters and famine, which obligates states to shift their response to those realities and broaden or transform their definition of refugees.

Therefore, regional organisations have recognised the importance of adopting a wider definition of refugees and have developed their own. Among these, the Bangkok Principles agreed to by the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organisation (1966) outline a set of non-binding principles regarding the treatment of refugees. The term 'refugee' is defined as in the 1951 Convention, but it explicitly covers:

Every person, who, owing to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order in either part or the whole of his country of origin or nationality, is compelled to leave his place

of habitual residence in order to seek refuge in another place outside his country of origin or nationality. (AALCO, 1966, p. 1)

This agreement is particularly important, as countries with large influxes of refugees, such as Syria, Iran, Pakistan, Jordan, PR China, Sudan, India, Nepal, Thailand, Yemen, Zambia, Egypt and Cameroon have adhered to it (Worster, 2012).

Likewise, the 1969 Organization of African Unity (OAU) Convention on the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa expanded the definition of refugee to include factors such as ‘external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order in either part of the whole of his country of origin or nationality’ (OAU, 1969). Similarly, the Organisation of American States (OAS) developed its own definition of refugees, attending to the dynamics of the region and the increasing refugee flows during the 1970s and 1980s, and maintaining the elements of the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol. It also includes this statement:

Among refugees are persons who have fled their country because their lives, safety or freedom have been threatened by generalized violence, foreign aggression, internal conflicts, massive violation of human rights or other circumstances which have seriously disturbed public order (OAS, 1984, p. 3).

3.1.2 Refugee status and categories

The main international body responsible for refugees is the UNHCR, one of the UN’s arms that provide protection for refugees. The UNHCR was established on 14 December 1950 by the UN General Assembly. According to the organisation, it has a staff of more than 9,300 people in 123 countries and attends to nearly 55 million refugees and displaced people (UNHCR, 2016b, para. 4). The organisation must ensure:

Basic human rights; that no refugees are returned to any country where they may be in danger; that refugees are given access to proper procedures; that refugees are recognised as such by countries in agreement with UNHCR; and that states provide protection to refugees, including the issuance of identity and travel documents (Tennent, 2013, p. 195).

The UNHCR seeks to provide international protection and solutions for refugees. Three durable solutions for refugees are provided by the UNHCR (UNHCR, 2016c):

1. Voluntary repatriation: the situation where refugees can return to their home country as their lives and liberties are no longer at risk. UNHCR works with the home country and host countries.
2. Local integration: it happens when host governments allow refugees to integrate into the country of first asylum or host country.
3. Resettlement in a third country: when there are no possibilities of repatriation and the first-asylum country refuses local integration. This alternative is possible through UNHCR determination process and signatory states of the Convention.

Yet, these durable solutions are not always successful and might take a long time to achieve. Former High Commissioner Ruud Lubbers (Lubbers, 2001) considers the long wait that refugees have to face in confined areas waiting for a durable solution as 'unacceptable'; their human rights are being denied and the 1951 Convention is not being fulfilled. This is common when refugees cannot return home, being settled in the country of first asylum, or finding a third country for resettlement. The 1990s is considered by the UNHCR as the decade of repatriation, when more than 9 million refugees decided to return home (UNHCR, 2006a),

although some questions have been raised about the real willingness and voluntary participation of those returnees who did return.

The UNHCR has established two types of refugees: mandate refugees and convention refugees (UNHCR, 2014). Therefore, the UNHCR determines refugee status by considering two aspects: whether the individual concerned falls within the established inclusion criteria in the refugee definition of the 1951 Convention; and, if this is not the case, whether he/she meets the criteria of the broader refugee definition under UNHCR's mandate (UNHCR, 2014, p. 82).

The UNHCR conducts a refugee status determination (RSD) to identify people of concern and provide them with assistance. This happens when individuals at risk are in states not party to the 1951 Convention or the Protocol, when the participant states have no asylum procedures, when states deny access to their asylum procedures, when refugees are unlikely to obtain the protection they need (UNHCR, 2014). It is a requirement of the UNHCR that all refugees be registered individually in camps or countries of asylum, although registration accuracy is not always possible and usually occurs in developed countries with more capacity to assess and organise claims. States are responsible for assessing and determining who is an asylum seeker once an individual submits an application asking for refugee status. The primary responsibility lies with states to determine if an individual is entitled to receive protection and establish the legitimacy of claims that his or her life will be at risk, or if they will suffer human rights violations if returned.

To help assess who fits into the refugee definition, the UNHCR developed the Handbook on Procedures and Criteria for Determining Refugee Status under the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees (UNHCR, 2014). This handbook guides understanding of the criteria that applies to refugees,

exclusion provisions, and standards of proof. A standard assessment form provides the structure for analysing the main elements of the decision and assisting officers in their decision.

3.2 Best Practices of Resettlement

Resettlement in a third country is one of the three UNHCR-approved durable solutions and is the primary focus of this research. Resettlement is a two-way process involving the refugee group and the host community, where both groups have expectations and responsibilities (Gray & Elliott, 2001). The success of resettlement programmes is linked closely to understanding the expectations and efforts around rebuilding refugees' lives. Government policies and the intervention of the wider community to support refugees and provide adequate access to satisfy their needs is key to resettlement. Some services are expected to be accessible for refugees, such as employment, housing, health, education, community support and programmes to empower them and encourage independence.

Resettlement is considered an expression of international burden sharing (UNHCR, 2010; Kushner & Knox, 1999) and a vital part of the international consultations regarding refugees' protection and their future. The Refugee Resettlement Research Project defines resettlement as a 'journey, a process of learning, adapting and understanding' (Department of Labour, 2004, p. 33), where the newcomers must learn a new culture, language, traditions and also face a process of adaptation to their new reality. Another definition (Gorman, 2000) links the term 'resettlement' with the movement of refugees or displaced persons from a temporary or transit camp to another. It considers the broader term referred to as 'settlement in a third country' for the purpose of a permanent residence.

Resettlement has been defined in the UNHCR Resettlement Handbook (UNHCR, 2014) as:

The selection and transfer of refugees from a State in which they have sought protection to a third State which has agreed to admit them – as refugees – with permanent residence status. The status provided ensures protection against refoulement and provides a resettled refugee and his/her family or dependants with access to rights similar to those enjoyed by nationals. Resettlement also carries with it the opportunity to eventually become a naturalized citizen of the resettlement country (p. 9).

To consider resettlement, the UNHCR requires that applicants fulfil two preconditions. First, the applicant must have been determined a refugee by the UNHCR and second, resettlement has been identified as the right solution after analysing other durable solutions (such as voluntary repatriation and local integration). Some factors determine the resettlement of refugees. The UNHCR Refugee Resettlement Handbook (UNHCR, 2014) identifies the following categories of resettlement factors:

- legal and/or physical protection needs
- survivors of torture and/or violence
- medical needs, in particular, life-saving treatment not available in the country of origin
- women and girls at risk, based on gender-related issues
- family reunification
- children and adolescents at risk.

Additionally, the UNHCR resettlement submissions have three priority levels: emergency, urgent and normal, depending on the type of risk and threat to the

applicant. The first, *emergency priority*, applies to cases that need action taken within a few days or hours, due to the high level of risk, and there is a seven-day maximum period between the submission of the case and the refugee's departure. The second, submissions of *urgent priority* applies to those refugees who require prompt resettlement but not urgently, and decisions are taken within six weeks of submission. Third and finally, *normal priority* is where the vast majority of cases fall, and it applies to all cases that do not need an expeditious process, with decisions being made within 12 months of submission (UNHCR, 2014).

3.3 Resettlement Policies in New Zealand

New Zealand is a signatory to the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol; it determines who is a refugee and the obligations of the state under the delimitations provided by these documents. The country has also protection obligations under the 1984 Convention Against Torture and the 1966 Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Tennent, 2013). New Zealand classifies forced migrants into three categories, depending on the way that the refugee status was granted. The first category are quota refugees comprised of those who have been recognised as refugees by the UNHCR after arriving in a UN refugee camp and have been approved for resettlement in New Zealand, according to the UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees 1951. Commonly, they are known as quota refugees. The second category are convention refugees or asylum seekers, and this includes those who have arrived in New Zealand and received protection in the country after claiming it. Finally, the third category is family reunification and this covers eligible family members who have come to New Zealand to join relatives who have received refugee status. These groups may have similar situations, but are

treated differently in terms of the application process and the access to government services.

3.3.1 Quota refugees—Refugee Quota Programme

New Zealand is one of 26 countries that takes an annual resettlement quota of refugees selected by the UNHCR. The UNHCR considers it a ‘traditional resettlement State’, due to its long-standing commitment to refugee resettlement. The organisation considers that in New Zealand, ‘the overall climate for refugee protection remained positive, with a modest but well-managed resettlement programme and consistent financial support’ (UNHCR, 2016, para. 6).

In 1987, the New Zealand government established a refugee quota of 800 (Saker, 2010; INZ, 2016a); however, currently the quota is 750 places per annum, divided into three sub-categories: Women at Risk (75 places), UNHCR Priority Protection (600 places including up to 300 for family reunification and 35 for emergency cases) and Medical/Disabled (75 places). The quota programme is geographically diverse, accepting refugees from the Asian-Pacific region, Africa, the Middle East and Latin America, but with the main focus on refugees located in the Asia-Pacific Region, up to 50 per cent of the total (INZ, 2016a). The Refugee Quota Programme is decided by the government in three-year cycles. The current government explains that the country’s policies are committed to respond to global humanitarian crises, prioritising the acceptance of refugees from nations facing major conflicts, which is clear in the intake accepted every year (INZ, 2016). In the case of the ongoing Syrian crisis, the government announced in 2015 that it would accept 750 Syrian refugees. Six-hundred of these places will be considered as a special emergency intake above New Zealand’s annual quota, and the remaining 150 places will fall within the quota. Over the 2016 to 2018 financial years, a

compromise has been made to accept a further 500 Syrians. These decisions are seen by the government as a gesture of humanity and support towards the global crisis, stating that ‘the quota and special emergency Syrian intake are a reflection of the Government’s commitment to fulfilling its international humanitarian obligations and responsibilities to provide protection to refugees’ (INZ, 2016a, para. 4).

Despite this, the government has received much criticism from advocacy groups in the midst of the global refugee crisis, criticism that has increased after events in the Middle East. Civil society, human rights organisations, and opposition politicians in New Zealand have been demanding that the National-led government double the quota of refugees, arguing that the current number of 750 is not high enough and the country could and should do more. The main argument is that the quota has not been increased for nearly 30 years, while the number of refugees and displaced people worldwide keeps increasing considerably, and has reached historic high numbers. Politicians have joined the discussion, prompting reactions from all sides and pushing John Key’s government to open the debate. Labour leader Andrew Little promised to double the quota if his party was elected to rule the country, and presented a petition to Parliament signed by 20,000 people demanding to raise the quota from 750 to 1500 during the next review (Little, 2016; Radio New Zealand, 2016). Little says that ‘New Zealand has not lifted its refugee quota in 29 years ... that’s not who we are and it’s not the kind of moral leadership we have been known for’ (Little, 2016, para. 4). ‘Double the Quota’ movement leader Murdoch Stephens has been running a national campaign to create awareness of the refugee problem worldwide and the responses that New Zealand should provide to assist them. International organisations such as the Red Cross and Amnesty International have been pushing to increase the number of refugees, explaining that New Zealand has a

long history of commitment to providing humanitarian assistance and these measures are needed immediately. However, despite these efforts, the answer from the National government has not been positive, and the last review in 2016 did not double the number and instead announced an increase to 1,000 people from 2018 to 2019. Prime Minister John Key argues that his government has done ‘a pretty good job providing those services to people when they come to New Zealand, from housing to welfare support to whatever they might be’ (One News, 2016, para. 4) and increasing the quota is a matter of providing quality services over the quantity of people accepted. Key defends the current allocation, saying that the priority is to provide a good service covering housing support, health, education, social integration, and a comprehensive induction programme in Mangere. He states:

We take nearly 1500 at the moment. If you think about all of the different categories in which we take refugees, 300 as part of family reunification and 125 to 175 that claim asylum so we’re pretty much at 1500 at the moment. We’re not ruling out that in the future we might take more. (Online News Team, 2016, para. 11)

However, this comment received a lot of criticism, as the asylum seekers and family reunification categories do not receive some benefits, such as the Mangere course and health, education and employment assistance.

INZ processes and operates the Refugee Quota Programme under the Refugee Quota Branch, which is determined by the government in cycles of three years, as explained previously. The ministers of Immigration and Foreign Affairs are in charge of deciding the composition of the quota annually. These people must be recognised as mandated refugees and referred by the UNHCR. All refugees accepted in New Zealand under the quota programme must complete a six-week orientation

programme at the Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre (MRRC)—part of the Department of Immigration—before being resettled in five communities around New Zealand; currently Auckland, Waikato, Manawatu, Wellington, Nelson and Dunedin (INZ, 2016a). The Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre was reopened in June 2016 in the middle of the controversy over quota increases. The centre was upgraded after an investment of almost 16 million dollars, presenting new modern facilities that replaced the original ones built during WWII.

The Refugee and Protection Unit manage and coordinate the quota programme, while the New Zealand Red Cross are contracted by INZ to work alongside families and support them for up to 12 months. Refugee Service Aotearoa became part of the New Zealand Red Cross in 2012, becoming the primary agency responsible for the resettlement of quota refugees. In this period, individuals and families received further community orientation programmes and services such as English language classes, housing, employment, and education, which have all increased over time. Quota refugees have permanent residency status and hold the same rights as any other New Zealand citizen in the areas of education, health, employment and social welfare (NZ Red Cross, n.d.).

The Refugee Resettlement Strategy (INZ, 2013) was established in July 2013, aiming to help refugees gain better integration once they had been accepted to live in New Zealand, coordinating responses to address refugee issues, and developing policies in refugee protection. The strategy was developed by INZ, along with the support and guidance provided by governmental and non-governmental agencies and refugee communities, gaining the biggest support at the National Refugee Resettlement Forum in 2012. The strategy has five goals: self-sufficiency, participation, health and wellbeing, English language skills and housing. It is

expected to increase the number of former refugees receiving paid employment, which will reduce reliance on unemployment benefits, and increasing the participation of adults in different areas of society once they gain English language skills.

Currently, the main Latin American group coming into New Zealand under the quota system are Colombians, with 582 people arriving from 2005 until 2015 (INZ, 2016a), followed by Ecuadorians (80) and just one from Peru in the same period.

3.3.2 Convention refugees

Asylum seekers are treated differently to quota refugees, first because they do not arrive after being referred by the UNHCR. They travel independently to New Zealand and claim refugee status on arrival or shortly after. An asylum seeker requesting protection must provide sufficient information to prove that he or she will be in danger and be subjected to torture or cruel treatment if deported from New Zealand (INZ, 2016a). The claims are assessed by a protection officer and the claimants cannot face deportation until a final decision is made. They are entitled to protection from the New Zealand government during the legal process and can hold a work permit for six months, which can be renewed. They do not have access to the same social services to which quota refugees are entitled.

Asylum claims in New Zealand are very low and the number of claimants has decreased considerably while the global numbers have increased, reflecting the geographical distance of the country in comparison to refugee-producing nations, the difficulties inherent in reaching New Zealand due to this isolation, and the development of measures to control border access (Mugadza, 2012). Between 2005 and 2015, New Zealand received more than 3,300 claims of asylum, and approved

less than 1,000 of those (approximately 26 per cent). Pakistan, Syria, Colombia, China and Iraq were among the top five approval-receiving nations between 2015 and 2016 (INZ, 2016a).

3.3.3 Refugee Family Support Category (replacing the previous Refugee Family Quota ballot system)

The Refugee Family Support category (INZ, 2016a) allows those who have been granted residence in New Zealand on the basis of refugee or protected-person status to sponsor family members to join them in the country. However, these family members are not entitled to receive the same benefits in terms of assistance or funding. It has been designed to meet family unification needs, one of the most crucial factors in resettlement. Up to 300 places are available each year for this category, operating in a two-tier registration system, where tier one has the highest priority corresponding to those who meet a high threshold of need. Registrations are selected from the tier one queue until the 300 places available each year are completed. If for some reason the places are not filled by people in tier one, registrations in the tier two queue are selected. As of April 2016, INZ was not accepting tier two registrations, as sufficient registrations from tier one have filled the available places for the foreseeable future.

The process works in three stages: first, the applicant in New Zealand must fill in a registration form as a sponsor; second, INZ selects the applications; third, family members can apply for residency. Applicants can sponsor only one family member and their partner and dependent children, and that family member must not be eligible for residence under any other category (INZ, 2016a).

3.4 Elements of Resettlement

Adequate services available in the host country will transform into better outcomes for refugees and their eventual independence and empowerment. Gray and Elliott (2001) discuss the practical needs that have a vital role in resettling refugees: housing, healthcare, mental health, financial assistance, employment and language. Likewise, other studies have highlighted the importance of similar elements in resettlement (Ager & Strang, 2008; Bierre, 2013; Beer & Foley, 2003).

3.4.1 Housing

A suitable space to live in and raise a family is vital to refugees' lives. Housing has an effect on refugees' physical and emotional wellbeing and it must be a place where they can feel safe, secure and at home (Ager & Strang, 2008). Indicators of good quality housing include physical size, facilities, safety, good ventilation and insulation, proximity to local services, and community links. Good quality housing is necessary to achieve appropriate family development and start the process of rebuilding a new life. A healthy and affordable place to live in for a long period is related to economic, social and health benefits, especially for children and the elderly (Bierre, 2013).

Refugees and migrants are more likely to live in deprived conditions. Beer and Foley (2003) state that housing plays a crucial role in the resettlement of refugees and immigrants and that a strong link between housing and successful settlement should be acknowledged. Therefore, housing should be affordable and secure to satisfy the needs of privacy, safety, hygiene and space. Families living in poor and overcrowded dwellings are more likely to develop mental, physical and social problems (Pearson, Barnard, Pearce, Kingham, & Howden-Chapman, 2014). Some the consequences of overcrowding include family conflict, reduction of

wellbeing, stress, sleep disorders, lack of privacy and health problems. Dampness, mould, bad ventilation, and the lack of thermal insulation are characteristics of poor-quality housing, threatening the environment for adequate family development (Pearson et al., 2014).

A main challenge that refugees face in their interaction with the housing market is the high risk of being discriminated against based on their religion, ethnicity or lack of knowledge of the host language (Beer & Foley, 2003). As part of the normal period of transition for refugees, it is expected that they will move several times until finding a place that satisfies their personal and social demands. Refugees and migrants will typically move from poor-quality housing to a more appropriate location after their post-arrival period lengthens (Beer & Foley, 2003). In most cases, refugees and migrants will stay with family members or friends before moving to their own home. Refugees are also more likely to find accommodation near their networks, enabling access to social support.

A study on multiculturalism in Australia (Joint Standing Committee on Migration, 2013) found that refugees and migrants can experience discrimination and racism when trying to access the Australian housing market. They can be discriminated against on the basis of their cultural background or poor English language, as these can be barriers for people negotiating leases or signing important documents. Similarly, many black African refugees in New Zealand tend to live in less affluent areas, as a result of previous accommodation decisions from family sponsors or due to the availability of state housing. They often reside in locations where people from their country of origin who arrived previously are already living (Chile, 2002). These areas have high incidence of social problems and more poverty than other city suburbs. As Chile (2002) states, 'In situations where the refugee gets

stuck in these communities, it becomes even more of a challenge to break through the cycle of disadvantage' (p. 362). This can unfortunately increase trauma, especially for those coming from a very vulnerable background, increasing the risk of developing mental health issues.

3.4.2 Family reunification

When fleeing their homeland, refugees are forced to leave everything behind. All their belongings remain in their home and they are also usually forced to flee without family members, which has a significant impact on a refugee's wellbeing. Some cultures are more attached to extended families and community, where every member plays a vital role in feeling secure and safe. Research by Mugadza (2012) on quota refugee resettlement in New Zealand analysed the impact on refugees of coping in a new country without family members for support, especially when they have come from a culture where support from an extended family is crucial in the upbringing and development of children, or for single mothers. The study notes that women coming to New Zealand without family highlighted the necessity of increasing reunification as a way to empower communities. One participant expressed the particular impact that family reunification would have on reducing mental breakdown and depression. One of the study's conclusions identifies family reunification 'as a major component of refugee resettlement with refugees feeling disempowered by worry about the welfare of their relatives in their countries of origin' (Mugadza, 2012, p. 140).

The same situation affects refugees and migrants from Latin America, as Latin societies are also marked by tight family networks, and the participation of extended family is important for the development and upbringing of children, with a strong presence of the mother figure. Research published in Canada by the Latin

American Research Group (2005) explored the experiences of Latin American families forced into separation and reunification during their migration process to Canada, through the lived experiences of 40 mothers and how their relationship with children was affected. The research explains that Latin American families have particular characteristics, with the mother figure as the strongest key in the family dynamic. This 'devotion' towards Latin American mothers has been celebrated and stereotyped. This situation raises problems when the composition of the family is affected during the migration and resettlement period. The report examined social and psychological problems related to changes in the family unit during transition. An interesting conclusion of the study found feelings of anger, guilt, depression and hopelessness present in the mothers during separation, with children suffering emotional problems and ending up distant from their mothers or upset with them. In periods of lengthy separation, the research found estrangement after reunification.

Research from Joudi (2009) on the resettlement of Arab Muslims in New Zealand shows that the nuclear family was an important source of resilience for participants and taking care of the family was a reason to remain strong. Family presence was identified in the study as an essential element to rebuilding former refugees' lives and creating social stability in the new country. Mental concerns are often associated with family separation, isolation and depression, feelings that can be eliminated with family reunification. The majority of participants did not have extended family in New Zealand, and the wellbeing of those left behind was a source of emotional stress, as:

refugees may also experience a sense of guilt in being the only member of their family to be able to enjoy a peaceful life far away from the conflict.

This 'survival guilt' can cause many psychological problems for refugees

who are trying to resettle and re-establish themselves in New Zealand. (Joudi, 2009, p. 19)

This research considers that family reunification policies in New Zealand are not clear cut, with success and failure rates depending on whether the family meets the criteria and the availability of the applicant in providing some documentation.

This issue is highlighted by Nash and Trlin (2004) in their research on refugees and asylum seekers in New Zealand, considering that the family reunification process allows just a small number of places and the random selection criteria leaves many feeling hopeless. The authors believe this is a cause of depression and a negative influence on resettlement. The latest report from the Refugee Protection Unit (INZ, 2016a) shows that 1,627 people were accepted under this category between July 2010 and March 2016, the largest groups originating from Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Somalia, Iran, Iraq, Myanmar and Vietnam. Official statistics (INZ, 2016a) show that only 11 approvals were granted to Colombian applicants, but they do not indicate how many requests were received. Another problem is the financial capacity that a former refugee must meet to be a sponsor for his or her family. This is a significant challenge in the majority of cases, as former refugees are more likely to depend on social welfare and have limited financial access to cover travel expenses.

Resettlement is more successful and has better outcomes when former refugees are reunited with their families. It is expected that having family members in the country will contribute towards the final resettlement of former refugees, increase their community bonds, strengthen their feelings of belonging and release the stress caused by worries about their family lives' being at risk in their country of origin. Choumanivong, Poole and Cooper (2014) conducted research on family

reunification in New Zealand as a priority for people from a refugee background. They analysed the relationship between family reunification and mental health or resettlement outcomes. The research involved 46 participants from refugee backgrounds, and 85 per cent of those reported that issues surrounding family reunification were the main obstacle in their successful resettlement; they also reported feeling constantly unsettled without having family members.

Family is the most important and central element to peoples' lives and is where the process of socialising, teaching and surviving starts. McDonald-Wilmsen and Gifford (2009) state, 'An almost universal consequence of the refugee experience is the destruction of the family unit. Family members may be forced to follow different routes or to flee based upon available opportunities or resources' (p. 2). Even when families are separated, the meaning of family remains unaltered, and after achieving safety in another country, the first desire is to be reunited with family members. Therefore, protection of the family as a unit is part of protecting the interests of both refugees and states (McDonald-Wilmsen, 2009).

The EU Family Reunification Directive has encouraged the right for refugees to be reunited with their families. Member States are obligated to:

Provide for the right of long-term migrants to be reunited with their spouse and minor children. It also allows Member States, if they so wish, to provide for these migrants to be reunited with first-degree ascendants in the direct line (father and mother of the foreign national), unmarried children above the age of majority as well as unmarried partners. (Papadopoulou, Treviranus, Moritz & Fandrich, 2013, p. 22)

3.4.3 Healthcare

As a result of problems in the home country related to poverty, exclusion, torture and displacement, refugees frequently face a wide range of health issues that must be addressed during their resettlement. Refugees arriving at the Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre have immediate access to health services to evaluate their physical wellbeing and mental health. Refugees As Survivors New Zealand (RASNZ, 2014) considers that:

[The] effects of post-traumatic stress disorder are only one dimension of experience for many refugees from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Others often experience grief, depression, anxiety and complex mental health issues which may sometimes be related to physical and medical problems such as head or body injury. (para. 2)

RASNZ is based at the Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre and is the main mental health provider for quota refugees and asylum seekers in New Zealand. It offers counselling services for refugees and asylum seekers, victims of trauma or torture. It works in teams of psychologists, psychiatrists, physiotherapists, interpreters and cross-cultural workers to evaluate incoming refugees and develop appropriate treatment. The Auckland Regional Public Health Service is a provider of public health services and has a medical clinic at Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre, offering medical screening and referral services for quota refugees and asylum seekers living at the Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre. The service is free for protected persons.

After a time living at the Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre, former refugees must be enrolled with GP services in the local communities where they are being resettled. Red Cross volunteers help them to do this. When facing medical

appointments, people from a refugee background find it very challenging and difficult to explain their needs, due to barriers, such as language, lack of familiarity with the process of requesting appointments, and difficulty in trusting in a foreign doctor. It is extremely uncomfortable for them to discuss their physical or mental health issues to a doctor through an interpreter. Some former refugees in New Zealand have expressed they are unaware of their right to receive healthcare, or difficulties accessing these services and experience problems finding an interpreter to assist them (Bloom & Udahemuka, 2014).

Pahud, Kirk, Gage and Hornblow (2009) consider that the burden of mental disabilities affecting former refugees who resettle in a third country is difficult to interpret due to conflicting findings resulting from methodological errors and limitations, as well as cultural differences when interpreting emotional suffering. Pahud et al. (2009) explain that social support in the host country can help to promote self-esteem, confidence and a sense of guidance in refugees. Research on refugees from Chile and the Middle East in Sweden (Hjern, Angel, & Jeppson, 1998) showed that participants had poor mental health as a consequence of political violence in their home countries. Family problems and high rates of divorce were particularly high among Latin Americans former refugees, creating a huge burden for mental health. The research found that Chilean children in particular had experienced raids in their homes, separation from their parents, interrogation and physical assault. Participants experienced sleep disturbances, poor appetites, hyperactivity, anxiety, dependency, depression and engaged in aggressive behaviour.

3.4.4 Education and employment

Education and employment are key factors in refugee resettlement of as it can provide them with the skills and means to achieve independence and

empowerment. Labour market integration of refugees is an indicator of successful integration. Refugees usually refer to economic outcomes such as employment as a very important step in their lives in the host country (Ott, 2013).

Refugees in New Zealand are provided with income support from the government to cover their expenses until they find a job and are able to provide for themselves. This can sometimes signify an eventual shock for many refugees who do not have to worry about gaining their own income until they must join the labour market. Then they face many challenges, such as discrimination, no recognition of their previous qualifications, and anxiety over their financial future. Quota refugees are eligible to receive emergency unemployment payments on arrival, the same system that protects any other resident or citizen, and are provided with a special grant to help them become established in their new communities (Department of Labour, 2004).

A difference also exists between the opportunities for employment for refugees and other migrants. Chile (2002) argues that discrimination against black African refugees in New Zealand affects their employment and community relationships, and this population has been marginalised and excluded from participation in social and economic activities based on their race. 'Access to employment is hindered because they look different, dress differently and speak differently' (Chile, 2002, p. 362), affecting mostly African women, as they constitute the majority of the black refugee population in New Zealand. For Latin Americans from a refugee background, the challenges are very similar and they often experience discrimination when seeking well-paid jobs. Similarly, data on resettled refugees in Australia shows a gap when compared to other immigrants, with refugees having lower participation in the labour market, especially during the first years of

resettlement (Ott, 2013). A similar pattern exists in Canada, Norway and Sweden, with lower employment rates than other immigrants and native-born individuals (Ott, 2013).

3.4.5 Language barrier

Acquiring the language of the host country is part of the broader process of integration of refugees into the new society, and is a fundamental step towards their empowerment. Language is considered an entry point into the new society and a necessary tool to make daily living tasks manageable (Sorgen, 2015). Language also helps to develop a sense of belonging and cultural connection with the new environment, impacting integration in both the emotional and practical context (UNHCR, 2001). Many factors can affect the ability to learn a new language, such as previous education, age, past experiences and mental health; these must be recognised and considered when developing resettlement strategies (Sorgen, 2015). Nevertheless, facing the necessity of acquiring the language of the host country implies new challenges, pressures and stress for refugees, people who in the majority of the cases are already facing emotional constraints.

The lack of language ability and poor or no access to learning centres can affect refugees' independence and self-sufficiency, pushing them to find other sources of support to meet their needs. Family and community with similar cultural connections are usually these sources of support. Within the family structure, a new challenge may arise, along with a new structure defined by language proficiency. Children learn the new language easily and their resettlement is usually quicker than that of their parents or grandparents. In many families, the traditional parent-child relationship is inverted, as children act as translators for the family, helping in tasks such as shopping, medical appointments, school meetings, payments; this can create

identity confusion and cause conflicts between generations (McBrien, 2009). Parents often do not feel in control of many activities and have to rely on their children for support, which puts pressure on both children and adults. This language barrier affects refugees' opportunities for employment or access to higher education.

Depending on the stage of resettlement, some former refugees will prioritise English language learning and others will prioritise finding a job (Department of Labour, 2004).

Chapter 4: Forced Migration in Latin America

Political instability in Latin American countries, the rise of *coups d'état*, and civil wars marked important periods of forced migration and the violation of human rights in the region. As explained in the introduction, the Latin American and Caribbean regions did not register significant numbers of refugees and displaced people until the beginning of the 1980s. Events in Haiti and Cuba from the early 1960s onwards, the military coups in Chile (1973–1995), Uruguay (1975–1976) and Argentina (1976–1983), and repression in Bolivia (on and off from 1966 until 1982) and Paraguay (1966–1969) did lead to an increase in refugee numbers within the continent. Yet refugee and displaced people numbers really began to increase from the 1980s, affecting Colombia, Peru and Central American nations in particular. The Latin American and Caribbean areas registered (at the end of 2015) over 7.6 million people of concern for the UNHCR (UNHCR, 2015b, p. 60). These included refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced and stateless persons. Colombia is Latin America's largest source-country of refugees and displaced persons, with more than 340,000 refugees and 6.5 million people displaced internally (UNHCR, 2016).

New Zealand has taken only a small cohort of Latin American refugees. This is mainly due to New Zealand's geographical location. The majority of Latin American refugees have found protection in neighbouring nations such as the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Ecuador and the US. Latin American refugees have arrived in New Zealand in two distinctive waves. The first wave comprised Chileans fleeing dictatorship in the 1970s; this wave was New Zealand's first experience of Latin American refugees. The second wave began in the 1990s, mainly consisting of Colombians and people from Central America affected by drug cartels and violence. Colombians are currently the main—and almost only—nationality

from Latin America accepted in New Zealand under the refugee quota. They form an important part of the population from the Latin American region.

This chapter will examine the most significant events in Latin American countries and the push factors that forced people to leave their homeland, seeking refuge and international protection. Particular attention will be given to the military dictatorship in Chile and the civil war in Colombia, as these events triggered the biggest waves of refugees and displaced persons in the region, resulting in large numbers of civilians who were tortured, disappeared or killed. Analysing the situation in Chile and Colombia is particularly relevant to this research, as the majority of Latin American former refugees living in New Zealand come from these countries.

4.1 Push Factors of Forced Migration within Latin America

The push factors that contributed to the forced migration and displacement of people in Latin America include poverty, corruption, social inequalities, discrimination, failed land reforms and the uprising of armed movements. The most relevant events related to this research will be discussed in the sections that follow, starting with events in the Southern Cone of Latin America and then moving northward to Columbia and Central America.

4.1.1 Civil-military dictatorships in the Southern Cone (1973–1995)

Civil-military dictatorships in the Southern Cone instigated important waves of refugee movements and displacement during the 1970s and the 1980s. Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay and particularly Chile suffered the consequences of repressive regimes that implemented systematic plans for violating human rights, erasing and silencing all voices opposing their practices and socioeconomic models. The Chilean dictatorship is perhaps Latin America's most emblematic example, and probably the

most well known internationally, due to its level of violence and because it affected a country considered one of the most democratic and stable in the region.

On September 11, 1973, Chilean President Salvador Allende died during a powerful military coup organised by General Augusto Pinochet, who attacked the *La Moneda* presidential palace in Santiago, the capital. Suspension of civil liberties, imprisonment, detentions and brutal violence followed. Chilean society had not anticipated these events, as the country had a history of democracy and political stability. As Meller (2000) states:

Much of the population did not conceive of the possibility of a coup, because, as was popularly believed, Chile's military are different—constitutionalist rather than coup-plotting. But on 11 September 1973, Chilean democracy collapsed like a house of cards, and the democratic myth was replaced by a brutal dictatorship. (p. 61)

The 1973 Chilean coup surprised the world with its level of brutality and the high number of political disappearances, especially during the first three years when new policies were implemented. It is estimated more than 1,000 persons were killed during the dictatorship (Chilean National Commission on Truth and Reconciliation, 1991) and more than 38,000 were recognised as direct victims of torture or cruel treatments not resulting in death (Comisión Nacional sobre Prisión Política y Tortura, 2004; Comisión Asesora Presidencia para la Calificación de Detenidos Desaparecidos, Ejecutados Políticos y Víctimas de Prisión Política y Tortura, 2010). The high number of victims gained international attention and obliged the UN and the OAS to set up special human rights monitoring processes. The Chilean coup also challenged for the UNHCR; considerable waves of refugees were now occurring due to the torture, disappearances and killings that had spread rapidly during and after

the military attack (Cutts, 2000). After the coup, the UNHCR urged the new government to honour its obligations and protect its people. Religious organisations, social groups and individuals provided refuge for thousands of persecuted citizens. Twenty-six refugee centres were established with the support of churches and voluntary agencies. Mandated refugees in these centres were assisted with their documents, and arrangements were made to transfer them to resettlement countries. By the end of 1973, more than 2,000 people had registered as refugees with the UNHCR (Beaglehole, 2013). Embassies also protected people, including the Swiss Embassy, which provided asylum to UNHCR mandated refugees released from detention. In 1974, more than 2,600 people were resettled in 40 countries (Cutts, 2000).

Initially, many people also fled to neighbouring Latin American nations to seek protection—especially Argentina—but the political situation across South America and the lack of employment forced many to resettle in more distant places such as Canada, Australia and New Zealand. These humanitarian operations were the first major undertakings in Latin America for the UNHCR, and it is estimated that as many as 200,000 people left Chile (UNHCR, 1996). In 1994, the UNHCR announced the Cessation Clause for Chilean refugees, as there was no further need for assistance after the country's transition to democracy in 1990.

The first official account of victims came in 1991 after investigations undertaken by the Chilean National Commission on Truth and Reconciliation. This was instigated by President Patricio Aylwin and presided over by Raul Rettig, with seven other representatives from different areas of Chilean society. The report concluded that 1,068 people were killed by government agents or persons at their service, the majority of them through executions and deaths by torture. In total,

2,279 people were victims of violence. A set of measurements was proposed for compensation and reparation (Chilean National Commission on Truth and Reconciliation, 1991). The Rettig Report (as it was known) was the first investigation of the violations against human rights committed during the military dictatorship. The report gave priority to ‘revealing the truth about the fatal victims of political violence: victims of assassinations and “disappearances” committed by agents of the government but also political assassinations committed by rebel groups’ (Chilean National Commission on Truth and Reconciliation, 1991, p. 9). The Rettig Report also determined that President Allende committed suicide, a theory rejected by some political and social groups in the country. The same decision was announced by a Chilean court in 2012 that authorised the exhumation and autopsy of Allende’s body. The court concluded that he had shot himself with an AK-47 assault rifle as troops attacked the presidential palace, closing the case (Restos de Salvador Allende Fueron Exhumados, 2011; Castillo, 2012; BBC News, 2011). The Rettig Report (Chilean National Commission for Truth and Reconciliation, 1991) accounted the violence lived during that period:

In the first few days after September 11, 1973, some people were killed in armed clashes, as well as through political violence perpetrated by both sides. Several hundred political prisoners were then executed. Bodies were often left abandoned, or they were hidden, thus bringing about the first cases of disappearance. There was no legal investigation of, or punishment for, these events. (p. 22)

President Aylwin apologised to the nation for the crimes committed by governmental agents. The Commission named the victims but not the perpetrators,

mentioning the responsible armed forces but without attributing guilt to individuals.

It is documented that:

The method of 'disappearances' was systematically applied during the first four years of military rule. Detention of the victims was not acknowledged. They were kept in clandestine detention, subjected to torture and eventually summarily executed. Their bodies were disposed of in secret. This report documents close to 1000 such cases. During the first months of military rule these 'disappearances' were not centrally coordinated. But with the establishment of DINA, the regime's secret police, toward the end of 1973, 'disappearances' became a carefully organized method designed to exterminate opponents considered dangerous and to avoid accountability for such crimes. (Chilean National Commission for Truth and Reconciliation, 1991, p. 8)

Nevertheless, the Rettig Commission was only allowed to investigate crimes resulting in death or disappearance, but did not investigate human rights violations that did not result in death, such as torture and unlawful detention. The military presence was still embedded inside political and governmental institutions and minimal punishment was meted out to perpetrators, who still held a vast amount of power.

Deeper investigations started some years later with the National Commission on Political Imprisonment and Torture, created in 2003 by the former President Ricardo Lagos and headed by Bishop Sergio Valech. This commission further documented and investigated abuses during the dictatorship (from 11 September 1973 to 10 March 1990) that had not necessarily resulted in death as such cases were not covered by the Rettig Report. This commission was another attempt to identify

human rights violations committed in Chile during the dictatorship, acknowledging victims who had received neither recognition nor reparation.

The investigation lasted six months. The conclusions presented in the initial report were based on testimony given to the commission, assessed independently during interviews, and supported by documentation. The commission certified the existence of 33, 221 detentions but recognised 27, 255 as direct victims; 94 per cent of these said they had been imprisoned based on political grounds and tortured (Comisión Nacional sobre Prisión Política y Tortura, 2004). An updated report added 1,204 new cases, bringing the total number of victims to 28,459. In 2010, a new commission was created by former President Michelle Bachelete, certifying 30 additional cases of people assassinated and 9,795 as political prisoners and victims of torture (Comisión Asesora Presidencia para. la Calificación de Detenidos Desaparecidos, Ejecutados Políticos y Víctimas de Prisión Política y Tortura, 2010).

4.1.2 Long-standing War in Colombia (early 1960s–ceasefire June 2016)

Colombia has registered almost 86 per cent of the total number of refugees from Latin America; most refugees and displaced persons in the region originate from this country (UNHCR, 2016). A long history of rural conflicts, illegal armed groups, social inequalities, disputes over land, and weak governmental forces in rural areas have ensured Colombia's viability for drug production and trafficking, and leading to significant internal displacement and refugee flows. According to the UN (UNHCR, 2015), as of June 2015, more than 6.5 million people have been internally displaced in Colombia since the 1960s and more than 346,000 Colombians are currently refugees. The number of asylum seekers and refugees has increased over the years due to political vulnerability and the lack of long-standing peace agreements. The number of children forcibly recruited and vulnerable to sexual

abuse has increased since 2012; therefore, this group remains the highest concern for the UNHCR. The long-standing conflict has left more than 63,000 registered cases of disappearances, and an unofficial death toll of between 240,000 to 600,000 people since the 1960s (Drake, 2014). The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Ecuador are the main host countries for Colombians (UNHCR, 2015).

The origins of armed conflict in Colombia can be traced back to the 1920s, with the failure to introduce land reforms and the consequences of the Great Depression, characterised by high levels of unemployment in the cities and economic hardship (Meacham, 2014). Colombians began migrating to the countryside to work in coffee plantations, the core of the nation's economy at the time. However, increasing international demand for Colombian coffee caused land values to rise. The government took advantage of opportunity presented by this, appropriating land and selling to wealthy entrepreneurs. The majority of people who had abandoned the city to work in coffee plantations were unemployed again; they could not afford the new market prices of land. The situation's unjustness was felt acutely; people were removed from the land quickly as it was sold to the new owners. From the 1930s onwards, these wealthy landlords, supported by governmental power, bought vast areas of land, while smaller farmers had no access. These events marked the beginning of rural conflicts in Colombia.

In 1948, the assassination of Jorge Eliecer Gaitán, a leader from the Liberal Party, triggered an uprising of supporters from urban and rural areas. This period, known as *La Violencia* (The Violence), lasted for a decade and was characterised by conflicts between the Liberal and Conservative parties, with the emergence of self-defence groups acting under the name of the Liberal Party (Smith, 2001). Violence and repression resulted from the Conservative president Laureano Gómez, who was

overthrown by a military coup in 1953. General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla took power and issued amnesties to armed peasants. The Office of Rehabilitation and Relief was created as a response to urgent calls for an agrarian reform (Meacham, 2014). However, the agrarian problem was not solved and armed peasants were not quelled. In that moment, guerrilla and paramilitary groups played a decisive role in the Colombian conflict.

Guerrilla activity emerged between the 1950s and 1960s. Peasant populations played active roles in the conflict, as both victims and as actors (Meertens, 2004). During *La Violencia*, peasants who suffered injustices caused by the government organised themselves into subversive groups. The first was the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia—*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (FARC), a group that originated informally in 1961 when peasants from all over the country met in the town of Marquetalia to create a peasant guerrilla group. Later in 1964, Manuel Marulanda, FARC's leader, founded the group officially, one day after the attack known as *Operación Marquetalia*, launched by the government to weaken the insurgents (Meacham, 2014). In 1965, the Ejército de Liberación Nacional—ELN (National Liberation Army), was created. Its origins are also related to *La Violencia* and this group has much in common with FARC. During this time of social inequality and political exclusion, some 2 million peasants were forcibly deprived of their land by powerful landlords (Esthimer, 2016). The Marxist ideology promoted by FARC and ELN contributed to the situation detonating into war after the Colombian army's attacks on several communities that had already been deprived of their rights.

Originally, FARC and ELN acted as rural revolutionary guerrilla forces to support the struggles peasants were facing; however, later during the 1970s and

1980s they transformed into violent and murderous groups. The confrontation changed over time, evolving from ‘an ideology-based conflict to one driven by territorial control and economic interests’ (Bérubé, 2005, para. 3). Armed groups now had a strong presence in illegal activities such as drug trafficking, kidnapping and terrorism. Groups like the ELN have abused rural populations through taxation, extortion and kidnapping, and both groups have targeted journalists, human rights activists and political officials (Drake, 2014). Yet the forces of ELN have declined in the twenty-first century: from 4,000 to 1,500 members (Meacham, 2014).

As a response to these revolutionary armies, paramilitary groups appeared in the 1980s, with the original goal of defending rural areas from the insurgent actions of FARC and ELN. However, these groups also converted rapidly into criminal organisations themselves, committing the same crimes and horrors as the left-wing guerrillas. In 1997, the paramilitary groups joined to become the *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia*—AUC (United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia). This group intended to defend conservative principles and combine forces with other organisations to defeat FARC and ELN. They numbered about 6,000 members at their height (Meacham, 2014). Paramilitary groups are responsible for a long list of atrocities, targeting civilian populations and committing ‘mass executions, enforced disappearances, mass displacement, and torture’ (Drake, 2014, p. 132).

The war between left-wing guerrillas, the national military and paramilitary forces escalated rapidly during the 1980s and 1990s, with the transnational cocaine trade and drug-related organisations rushing to expand their scope of action (Korovkin, 2008). Poverty, high levels of unemployment, and a lack of security have characterised rural Colombia. This situation has been used by criminal groups to offer money to peasants or force them to increase the production of illegal crops to

satisfy drug dealers and drug cartels' demands. Colombian drug lord Pablo Escobar Gaviria industrialised the production of coca leaves, transforming drug trafficking into a business of colossal proportions. His organisation, the *Cartel de Medellín*, started as a small alliance that expanded quickly due to the high demand for cocaine in the US. Along with the growing business and flow of money came improvements in the techniques and mechanisms used to export drugs to North America. Larger planes were being used and coca-production technology was intensified. Meacham (2014) notes that 'at his peak, Escobar oversaw more than 80 percent of the drug trade to the United States, transforming drug trafficking from a street crime to an organized transnational business' (p. 10).

During this period, Drake (2014) explains that FARC was able to increase control over rural lands using a system of extortion and taxes, offering protection to the coca territory. This led to a permanent territorial occupation that operated in about one-third of the country. Bérubé (2005) explains that these crimes constitute a continuous violation of international humanitarian law and human rights, where violence was no longer a consequence of the conflict, but a strategy to generate terror, threaten innocent people, and undermine rural populations. Colombians from deprived areas with no security or protection were the main victims of the conflict. Between 1985 and 1996, more than 920,000 people were displaced by violence, representing one in every 40 Colombians (Kirk, 1998).

The civil war was also catastrophic for children, who were often orphaned, sexually abused, or forced to join subversive groups (Kirk, 1998). The Colombian National Centre of Historic Memory (cited by Meacham, 2014) reported 27,000 kidnappings between 1979 and 2010; FARC and ELN were responsible for some 24,000 of these. Victims also suffered torture under captivity and inhumane

conditions. About 150,000 murders were committed during the last 30 years by these organisations. In 1997, the US government declared FARC and ELN foreign terrorist organisations (Drake, 2014).

The civilian population are not just the victims of terrorist groups. They have also lost their lives due to failed governmental policies. An example of this is the 'false positives', the extrajudicial killings of civilians by military forces reported as 'combats killed in action'. These killings began when Colombian President Alvaro Uribe offered money and rewards to soldiers for their performance combating insurgents. This led to the assassination of innocent civilians who were killed and then dressed in guerrilla uniforms, portrayed as *guerrilleros*. The International Federation of Human Rights (Meacham, 2014) reports over 3,000 killings between 2002 and 2008 related to false positives, driven by Uribe's policy based on rewards.

The expanding internal conflict has affected not just Colombian society, but also neighbouring nations. Ecuador has suffered the biggest effects of refugee flows from Colombia. In general, South American governments have failed to provide adequate strategies to stop the increasing expansion of these groups, but have also failed to improve defence and security policies to stop these groups from controlling more areas (Gottwald, 2004). Most refugees have managed to move to other nations, bypassing security points despite having no regular migration status, making it difficult to resettle properly into society. It is estimated that from the late 1990s until 2005, between 300,000 and 1 million Colombians fled their country illegally to Ecuador, Panama and Venezuela (Gottwald, 2004). One main challenge that internally displaced people still face is guerrillas blocking international assistance. The presence of armed groups along Colombia's borderline with Venezuela,

Ecuador and Panama remains strong, making it very difficult to gain access or deliver aid.

In January 2016, the UN Security Council approved the creation of a UN mission to monitor and verify the bilateral ceasefire and cessation of hostilities between Colombia's government and FARC rebels over a 12-month period. This may represent the end to the longest war in Latin America (Frank & Vargas, 2016). In June 2016, the Colombian government under President Juan Manuel Santos and FARC's top leader Rodrigo Londoño (alias Timochenko), signed a historical bilateral and definitive ceasefire in Cuba, ending more than 50 years of armed conflict. The Secretary-General of the UN, Ban Ki-moon, and five Latin American presidents accompanied the agreement that resolves FARC's demobilisation. This includes more than 6,800 troops and 8,500 militia distributed in the country (*The Economist*, 2016, para. 3). The national and international media reported 'tears of happiness and joy', not just in Colombia, but all over Latin America (Frank & Vargas, 2016).

4.1.3 Wars in Central America and drug cartels in Mexico

Political instability, violence, governmental repression against indigenous and peasant communities, and counterinsurgency wars created a significant number of refugees and displaced people in Nicaragua, Guatemala and El Salvador from the 1980s onwards. Violence in Central America has resulted in around 2 million refugees (Ferris, 1985). The UN is concerned about the increasing violence and refugee flows in the Americas, stating that "the violence being perpetrated by organized, transnational criminal groups in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and certain parts of Mexico has become pervasive" (UNHCR, 2015, para. 2).

4.1.3.1 El Salvador

El Salvador has produced the second highest number of refugees in Latin America (after Colombia), with 11,120 refugees and 21,000 asylum seekers registered by the UNHCR as of June 2015 (UNHCR, 2016). In 2015, El Salvador had a homicide rate of 90 per 100,000 people, and is referred as the ‘murder capital of the world’; August 2015 was the deadliest month since peace agreements had been made in 1992 (Watts, 2015). It is not surprising that Salvadorians keep fleeing their country to seek refuge in safer countries. El Salvador had six times as many refugees as Nicaragua. These refugees have been recognised by human rights organisations, particularly those critical of the US foreign policies and their impact on the region (Radosh, 1987).

The forced migration of significant numbers of Salvadorians is a result of several factors. These include inequalities in land distribution and rulings by repressive governments—supported by the US—that have benefited oligarchies while oppressing the most deprived communities (Schmeidl, 2001). Social inequality has fostered the evolution of armed rebellions and the rising of politically opposed armed movements, such as the *Frente Farabundo Marti para. la Liberación Nacional* (FMLN) and the *Frente Democrático Revolucionario* (FDR). These movements were considered by the US government under Reagan’s administration in ‘terms of the Cold War’. As such, the Salvadoran government received extensive support to defeat them (Smith, 2001, p. 131).

El Salvador was a major producer and exporter of coffee during the nineteenth century, similar to Colombia. The related economic boom led to the expropriation of indigenous land for coffee plantations, creating imbalanced land distributions and a vulnerable economy dependent on fluctuations in the

international market. Economic hardship due to reductions in coffee prices in the 1930s and the general financial crisis in the country weakened the government, which was overthrown by military regimes. This began five decades of authoritarian governments supported by wealthy landlords, a period marked by violent clashes between leftist political groups and governmental forces.

The historical roots of the deadly civil war can be traced back to this time. The peasant population was involved in a violent rebellion, alongside the uprising of Salvadoran Communist Party leader Farabundo Martí. Martí was executed along with 10,000 other Salvadoran citizens during a massacre in 1932 (Cale, 1996). During the 1970s and the 1980s, left-wing political groups (backed by Cuba) were united into one organisation called FMLN. The civil war officially began in El Salvador in 1980. It was one of the most intense civil wars in Latin America, with difficult and destructive battles between subversive groups and the Salvadoran government troops (these were trained and supplied by the US). El Salvador boasts over 6,600 School of Americas graduates since 1946, who committed human rights atrocities, such as tortures, massacres, rapes and murders, either personally or instructed them (Quigley, 2005).

A massive exodus of Salvadorans was registered between 1980 and 1985. This resulted from the conflict's significant violence. Up to 500,000 people were internally displaced and more than 1 million refugees escaped to Mexico and the US (Smith, 2001). During this time, the innocent civilian population had to face military raids in the countryside in search of *guerrilleros*, death squads operating in urban areas to eliminate rebels, and peasants caught in the crossfire. By 1985, between 20 and 35 per cent of the Salvadoran population was displaced (Smith, 2001). The US played a major role in inducing this migration and contributed to the uprooted

population of Salvadorans fleeing illegally to the US. Many were never officially recognised as refugees. The lucky ones fell into a hybrid category somewhere between economic migrants and formal refugees who had to prove they had been a victim of persecution (Smith, 2001).

The UN played a major role in peace-building operations, starting in 1991 with a preliminary peace agreement between the Salvadoran government and the FMLN. This was signed by both sides in January 1992 at the Chapultepec castle in Mexico City. After 20 months of negotiations, the peace agreement known as the Chapultepec Peace Accord ended a decade of civil war and achieved a ceasefire, disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (UN, 1992), consolidating democratic institutions (Smith, 2001). This is considered the starting point in the transformation of the country's political life and the official transition from war to peace. It provided for the establishment of the FMLN as a political party, reintegrating its combatants into society and incorporating human rights measures (Studemeister, 2001). The FMLN transformed into a legal political party at the end of the civil war, confining its political ideas to the electoral arena. The party had its biggest victory in 2009 after winning the presidential election, taking control of the Salvadoran government for the first time (Smith, 2001). Its candidate, Mauricio Funes, gained 51 per cent of the vote, and was in office until 2014.

4.1.3.2 Nicaragua

Nicaragua has had a violent history (similar to that of El Salvador), based on political disputes, subversive group action, and the military and financial involvement of the US supporting and training armed militias. These events triggered refugee flows during the 1979 revolution, as well as during the subsequent

clashes between the Marxist government and the *contras* (who were backed by the US and its foreign anti-communism policy) (Schmeidl, 2001).

The Sandinista National Liberation Front (*Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional* [FSLN]) took power from 1979 until 1990, after ousting Anastasio Somoza's dictatorship. In 1981, the US provided financial and military support to insurgent groups organised to defeat the Sandinista revolution, which led to the Contra War between *contras* and the FSNL, leaving large numbers of refugees and displaced people. In December 1985, the UNHCR assisted 24,195 Nicaraguan refugees in Honduras; between 30,000 to 100,000 unregistered Nicaraguans fled to Honduras the same year. Costa Rica was also affected by the situation, registering almost 22,000 refugees from Nicaragua and unknown numbers of people who crossed the border illegally. A study conducted in the late 1980s (Radosh, 1987) showed that Nicaraguan refugees living in a refugee camp in Costa Rica were victims of bombing raids, air attacks, and destruction of their houses and religious sites as part of *Operation Bambu*, which consisted of air strikes carried out by the Sandinista army to neutralise the *contras*. Meanwhile, other groups of refugees explained that while they were not victims of infantry attacks, the government persecuted them for religious or political reasons (Radosh, 1987). By June 2015, the UNHCH had registered more than 1,400 refugees and 860 asylum seekers from Nicaragua (UNHCR, 2016).

4.1.3.3 Guatemala

Guatemala experienced Central America's longest and most violent civil war from 1960 until 1996, a result of the brutal confrontation between left-wing insurgents and governmental armed forces (Caston, 2013). Political instability and violence date back to the coup d'état in 1954 carried out by the United States Central

Intelligence Agency (CIA), although large numbers of refugees started to arise during the 1980s (Schmeidl, 2001) as a reaction to the long-standing civil strife, socioeconomic problems, violence, and the lack of central and local policies targeting those issues.

Guatemalans have been victims of drug traffickers' violent operations, organised crime, gangs, and clandestine paramilitary organisations. Since 2000, the country has had one of the world's highest rates of femicide, often accompanied by rape, torture and bodily mutilation. It is estimated that more than 6,500 cases were reported between 2000 and 2011 (Jonas, 2013). Neighbouring countries such as Mexico permitted the presence of UNHCR refugee camps in the 1980s for Guatemalans, but since the early 1990s, the country has deposed massive numbers of Guatemalans (Jonas, 2013). As of June 2015, the UNHCR had registered 7,467 Guatemalan refugees and more than 19,500 asylum seekers (UNHCR, 2016).

4.1.3.4 Mexico

Mexico has a history of conflict based on social inequalities, poverty and drug production. This situation is similar to that in Colombia, but has developed more recently. As Colombian drug cartels had to transport their supplies to the US, this fostered a network in Mexico, which increased the drug trade and its consequences in that country. The five main cartels in Mexico are the Sinaloa, the Gulf, the Juárez, the Familia Michoacana, and the Tijuana; they have a strong presence in the whole country and are involved in violent disputes over territory (Drake, 2014). In 2006, the newly elected president Felipe Calderón ordered the militarisation of strategic areas and increased the budget for national security, actions that triggered violence from the drug lords. Drake (2014) estimates that 14,096 drug-related murders were committed between 2007 and 2009; 2009 was the

most violent year. Moreover, the Mexican military has participated in torture, illegal detentions and extrajudicial killings. Since 2011—due to the increasing violence—115,000 internally displaced persons have been created, and millions of illegal migrants have entered the US (Drake, 2014). According to the UN (UNHCR, 2016) as of June 2015, 10,664 refugees and 35, 276 asylum seekers were recorded from Mexico.

Women and children are the main victims of crimes related to this violence, suffering rape, assault and threats by street gangs, with minors being forcibly recruited by those groups. The UNHCR called all upon nations in Central and North America to “recognize a growing refugee situation in the region, and establish an adequate capacity at borders to ensure the identification of persons in need of international protection” (UNHCR, 2015, para. 4). Neighbouring countries such as the US and Mexico do not recognise the people in these migration movements as refugees and therefore they have no protection or assistance. El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras are among the most violent countries in the world, forming what is known as the Northern Triangle region that continues to be of high concern for the UN.

4.1.4 Peruvian Civil War (1980–2000)

The civil war in Peru from 1980 to 2000 was ‘the most intense, extensive and prolonged episode of violence in the entire history of the Republic’ (Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación, 2003, para. 3). It was the second longest civil war in the history of Latin American countries since European colonisation (Caston, 2013). Over 69,000 victims died through violent acts, outnumbering the casualties registered in 182 years of independence wars (Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación, 2003, para. 4). An estimated 500,000 people were displaced in Peru

during the 1980s and 1990s (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2013), a result of the brutal clashes between Peru's Shining Path guerrillas and national security forces (Brooke, 1991). This crisis was considered at the time as 'the worst refugee problem in Latin America' (Kirk, 1991), emerging right after civil wars in Central America. The conflict created half of the global disappearance cases recorded by the UN from 1987 to 1991, with more than 3,000 victims (Kirk, 1991).

The internal conflict in Peru is considered part of the political movements in Latin America that support left-wing ideas and a socialist revolution to claim justice, equality and freedom for the most oppressed people (Aguero, 2011). Decades of economic and political instability in the country and the marginalisation of indigenous populations (and their exclusion from the political arena) created the conditions for the rise of an insurgency led by leftist movements and fuelled by people's eagerness for change.

In the late 1960s, the Maoist-inspired guerrilla movement called *Sendero Luminoso* or Shining Path was founded in the Ayacucho department, one of Peru's poorest areas (Degregori, 1994; Kirk, 1991). This was the ideal place for establishing the Shining Path's ideology, as it lacked governmental policies, was impoverished and totally neglected (Malone, 2010). Its founder was philosophy professor Abimael Guzman, also known by his *nom de guerre* Presidente Gonzalo and Comrade Gonzalo (Caston, 2013; Malone, 2010). He found support among many provincial students, along with the daughters and sons of peasants who felt excluded by white-dominant society (Kirk, 1991). Other groups of the first followers came from the educated elite of *mestizos* and professors of indigenous descent, who had knowledge of world events, such as the Maoist revolution in China, and felt inspired to replicate that doctrine in Peru (Malone, 2010).

The Shining Path arose in a context of governmental failure to meet promised land reforms, extreme poverty, and racism against Quechua speakers and indigenous people in general, referred to by the derogatory term *cholos* (Kirk, 1991). State aid and support did not reach the country's poorest areas, where the Shining Path started to provide medical assistance (Kirk, 1991) and created the so called "people's schools", along with their doctrine. New recruits had to go through extensive political indoctrination and paramilitary training (Switzer, 2007). The Shining Path was able to recruit people by exploiting the harsh economic conditions that were affecting mainly indigenous and peasant populations (Switzer, 2007), convincing them to use arms and engage in a fight against the government. This was quite an easy task, considering that those populations had been neglected and ignored by the government (Malone, 2010).

The Shining Path appeared publicly in May 1980 after burning election boxes and hanging dogs on the street (Switzer, 2007), but those events and the ones that followed were practically ignored by the government. This enabled the group to become established around the department of Ayacucho. Senderistas cadres started recruiting young men and women and executing local officials (Kirk, 1991). They proposed a political scenario in which the party decided everything, violence being the essence of their revolution (Degregori, 1994). Guzman attempted to create a centralised regime to replace the Peruvian government and refused to work with the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA), the second most powerful group in Peru.

The level of brutality in the armed strikes surprised the nation, and the group's members developed almost a religious identity. "Shining Path leader Guzman stressed the need to prepare cadres to kill in a depersonalized, quasi-

scientific way. Between 1980 and 1981, guerrillas carried out more than 1000 attacks on government offices, high tension towers, and police posts” (Kirk, 1991, p. 8). The group assaulted a maximum-security prison in Ayacucho, releasing over 240 inmates, including over one hundred suspected guerrillas (Switzer, 2007).

The organisation was able to finance the insurgency using money from the drug trade; it provided protection to coca farmers and narcotics traffickers located in the Upper Huallaga Valley (Switzer, 2007) and even undertook contract killings for them (Roberts & Escalante, 2009). Shining Path was also producing its own coca crops and processing the leaves in clandestine laboratories.

Due to Ayacucho’s remote location, the government ignored the first signs of Shining Path growth (Aguero, 2011) and reacted too late to the violence that was unfolding. Finally, when the government decided to take action it was too late, and it was obliged to launch a counterinsurgency campaign, forcing it to declare an emergency zone after 1983 and giving control to the military (Switzer, 2007). However, this plan was seen as a failure as it was proposed as ‘reactive rather than proactive in which the ineffective counterinsurgency efforts to suppress Shining Path’s initial stages of mobilization in Ayacucho led to an escalated and aggressive counterterrorist plan imposed by Belaunde and Garcia’s administrations’ (Malone, 2010, p. 74).

This escalation of violence represented the beginning of chaos and horror for the indigenous peasant population, as soldiers seeking terrorists burned entire villages, raped and beat innocent people, and left multiple mass graves that were found years later (Switzer, 2007). The creation of an emergency zone suspended basic personal rights and police forces had the power to search people’s residences without warrant (Malone, 2010). Reports of murders, repression, disappearances and

tortures carried out by police and military forces started to increase rapidly during this time (Kirk, 1991).

An important relationship existed between poverty and social exclusion and the probability of becoming a victim of violence. More than 40 per cent of the deaths and disappearances reported to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación, 2003) occurred in the department of Ayacucho. Almost 80 per cent of the victims were peasants living in rural areas and 75 per cent of those who died spoke native languages, mainly Quechua (Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación, 2003). The years 1984 and 1990 were the most violent, registering the highest numbers of civilian deaths, totalling over 3,300 victims, the majority Quechua speakers (Kirk, 1991).

Political violence was the fundamental cause of the mass numbers of refugees and displaced people. Innocent civilians were caught in the conflict and fell victim to *guerrillas* or to military repression. The first refugees and displaced people started to flee in significant numbers in 1983 (Kirk, 1991). The majority of victims escaping violence were young people afraid of being forcibly recruited to serve as *guerrillas*. Refugee camps were created in the country, and illnesses and starvation started to impact upon victims, mainly children. The conflict also affected the national economy and infrastructure significantly. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación, 2003) reported massive economic losses, devastation of the national infrastructure, and the decline of productive capacity.

In 1992, police forces arrested Guzman in the city of Lima after an intense intelligence investigation that gathered much national and international attention (Malone, 2010). Two years after this, the government offered amnesty to insurgents

willing to drop their arms and cooperate with the government, proposing that they would not face charges in military courts. This initiative achieved a significant reduction in violence, as only 150 persons were killed that year, down from 516 in 1993 (Switzer, 2007). During the following years, military and intelligence forces continued to capture remaining Sendero leaders, and in 2000, the majority were imprisoned with sentences of over 30 years.

4.1.5 The Concept of Refugees within Latin America

All these events in the Latin American region generated questions about the real capacity of states to deal with growing number of refugees, especially during the refugee number peaks during the 1970s and 1980s. The type of refugees in the region changed, shifting from political leaders with some sort of wealth who were facing political prosecution, to a growing number of people seeking refuge due to democratic instability, violence and armed political movements. A large number of those forcibly displaced people were from very poor and deprived areas of the region, mainly Colombia.

Reed-Hurtado (2013) argues that the lack of action from regional bodies in reacting to the situation pushed regional experts to create a political space to examine the crisis and propose solutions. During the early 1980s, the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights, IACHR, showed special concern for the situations in Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, Cuba, Chile, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Nicaragua, Paraguay and Uruguay, and therefore recommended the development of a regional instrument to protect and shelter refugees (IACHR, 1982). In 1981, with the support from the *Universidad Autónoma de México*, a group of professionals came together in Tlatelolco, Mexico, to address the protection that Latin American refugees needed and analyse the gaps between regional and global experiences. They

agreed on an urgent need to extend protection to those people fleeing their country based on aggression, occupation, domination and human rights violations. This 1981 Colloquium in Mexico, and the recommendations from the IACHR, set the ground for a new debate on the protection of refugees in Latin America, pushing for a response to unprecedented refugee flows. In 1984, ten countries in Latin America met in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, and agreed to discuss refugee protection and provisions (Esthimer, 2016). They also adopted an alternative definition of refugees:

In view of the experience gained from the massive flows of refugees in the Central American area, it is necessary to consider enlarging the concept of a refugee, bearing in mind, as far as appropriate and in the light of the situation prevailing in the region, the precedent of the OAU Convention (article 1, paragraph 2) and the doctrine employed in the reports of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. Hence the definition or concept of a refugee to be recommended for use in the region is one which, in addition to containing the elements of the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol, includes among refugees persons who have fled their country because their lives, safety or freedom have been threatened by generalized violence, foreign aggression, internal conflicts, massive violation of human rights or other circumstances which have seriously disturbed public order. (Cartagena Declaration, 1984, p. 3)

The Cartagena Declaration is considered a response to the political events that affected the region in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The OAS has adopted this definition of refugees ever since. The OAS comprises 35 independent states and constitutes the main political, juridical and social forum for American countries, being the oldest regional body of the area (OAS, 2016).

Even though the Cartagena Declaration is not binding in law, it constitutes an important document to analyse the issue in the Latin American region and has been adopted for most states to frame their legislation related to refugees. Reed-Hurtado (2013) explains that at the time when the Declaration was incorporated, most Latin American States did not have the national legal structures to deal with refugee issues and did not have a RSD system in place. Countries such as Ecuador have adopted the Cartagena definition into their law, despite not having participated in the original colloquium:

Ecuador's tradition of generosity in welcoming refugees began with its incorporation of the Cartagena Declaration refugee definition into domestic law in 1987 and inclusion of the 1951 Refugee Convention provisions in a presidential decree the same year. In 2008, Ecuador enshrined its commitment to refugees in a new Constitution instituting the 'principle of universal citizenship,' which removed entry visa requirements and recognized mobility, citizenship, and the ability to safely seek asylum as fundamental human rights regardless of migration status or nationality. (Esthimer, 2016)

The value of this document is that it provides a framework and establishes practices and principles to respond to the region's refugee crisis. Worster (2012) highlights the value of the Cartagena Declaration for endorsing regional organisations. It is recognised by the UNHCR Executive Committee, and is cited in the Brasilia Declaration on the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons in the Americas. Similarly, Esthimer (2016) considers the agreement as ground-breaking because it went beyond expanding the definition of refugee, emphasising

humanitarian law, human rights, and refugee rights, while promoting the practice of sharing burdens through resettlement.

Likewise, the interest in implementing a broader definition of refugees has been discussed by member states of the sub-regional platform *Mercado Común del Sur* (MERCOSUR) in the Rio de Janeiro Declaration on the Institution of Refuge. MERCOSUR is formed by Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay and Venezuela, some of the countries that have suffered the consequences of military dictatorships, political disappearances and economic hardship. The Rio de Janeiro Declaration addresses the “importance of implementing the broader definition of refugee, provided in the III conclusion of the Cartagena Declaration of 1984, as a broader inclusion clause than those established in existing international instruments” (MERCOSUR, 2000, p. 5). The Declaration states that:

Refugees will not be returned, deported or expelled to territories where they can be submitted to persecution or their lives, physical integrity or freedom are at risk due to their race, religion, nationality, social group, political opinion, generalized violence, foreign aggression, internal conflicts, massive human rights violations, or other circumstances that disturb the public order. (MERCOSUR, 2000, p. 3)

4.2 Conclusion

During the 1960s and 1970s, most Latin American countries faced political turmoil. This varied in form from intensive protests to military strikes and sociopolitical revolutions, with a tendency towards Marxist groups or left-wing ideas seeking social justice and equality to benefit the most deprived populations of society, mainly peasants and indigenous groups. US fears of communism becoming established in Latin America and the Caribbean region led to the development of

foreign policies to finance and provide training to defeat left-wing armed organisations, while supporting repressive governments to overthrow them. The result for some countries, especially Peru and those in Central America, was the massacre of peasants and the destruction of entire villages in the search for rebels. In other areas, such as the Southern Cone, the wave of military coups was used as pretext to prevent communist takeovers, creating large numbers of victims of political persecution who were killed, tortured or imprisoned. The long-standing war in Colombia is still creating the greatest number of refugees and displaced people in the region. It is expected that those numbers will start to decrease after the peace accord that finally seems to have opened the doors to end the decades of violence. Many countries have created truth commissions to investigate atrocities committed during violent times and compensate the victims. Nevertheless, many are still fighting to have justice, while the shadows of the past and the events that occurred are almost impossible to eliminate, as this research shows.

The analysis of the sociopolitical situation in Latin America shows a shift in forced migration patterns over time. A change has occurred between the first refugee populations from Chile, Uruguay and Argentina. The first was made up largely of young students, professionals and union leaders with education and who were engaged in politics. The latest wave of refugees has mainly comprised peasants from rural areas and indigenous populations who were economically deprived, oppressed, marginalised and discriminated against socially and politically. The next chapter explores the experiences of participants from the Southern Cone and later refugees from El Salvador and Colombia, where it is possible to identify this shifting pattern of forced migration.

Chapter 5: Research Findings

This research analyses the experiences of former refugees from the Latin American region living in New Zealand, and the impact of forced migration on individuals, families and the wider community involved in their resettlement. The process of migration and resettlement lived by participants has been gathered through qualitative interviews and the results are presented in this chapter. To analyse the data, I applied the IPA four-stage procedure recommended by Smith (2009), which involves a close-reading phase, description, interpretation and analysis across cases. Themes emerged first from the interview transcripts and notes, thoughts and comments; preliminary codes were made in the left margin of the transcripts. After reading the transcripts again, new emergent themes were written in the right margin to create brief phrases describing the essence of each topic. All the preliminary themes were clustered according to commonalities in terms of meaning, creating final themes.

The research findings are divided into the three main themes that emerged after the analysis, constituting the three stages of the participants' journey. The first theme comprises participants' experiences through the recollection of past events that forced them to become refugees. The sub-themes include sociopolitical problems present in their country, being a victim of political persecution and violence, fear of being killed or tortured, the impact of civil war and dictatorship, and the final decision of abandoning home and resources to leave their country.

The second theme includes experiences while fleeing their homeland and reaching the first destination. The sub-themes analysed in this category are related to the first destination reached after fleeing home, being illegal, requesting international protection, living in a refugee camp, and awareness of the refugee label.

The third and final theme discusses participants' experiences when arriving in New Zealand and the subsequent resettlement process. The sub-themes that emerged are the expectations, knowledge about and perceptions of New Zealand, living in the Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre, becoming settled in a new home, the English language barrier, community support, jobs and employment, impact on family roles and problems related to family reunification.

5.1 Theme One: First Stage of Participants' Journey: Push Factors for Becoming a Refugee

The first stage of the participants' journey will analyse participants' lived experiences and recounting of the past to explore the reasons that forced them to flee their home country and request international protection. To maintain the chronological consistency of historical events, participants' stories are organised by first presenting the accounts of former refugees from the Chile, second the participants from El Salvador and third, those from Colombia.

5.1.1 Events that forced them to flee

Participants from Chile lived under Pinochet's dictatorship and they experienced either persecution, torture and cruel treatment, or the disappearance or assassination of family members or close friends. Political persecution, violence and the fear of being killed were the main reasons that forced them to abandon their homeland. The push factors for Colombians and Salvadorans relate to the civil wars in those countries. The participant from El Salvador lived through a massacre in his hometown conducted by government forces against peasants, and he was part of a political armed movement organised to defeat government forces in rural areas. Participants from Colombia lived through a violent civil war, suffering the

assassination of family members or close friends, and clashes between military forces, guerrillas and paramilitaries in their hometowns.

Participants from Chile and El Salvador had left their homeland three or four decades ago but provided a high level of detail when talking about their pre-migration life, despite some being very young at the time. All their narratives are extremely vivid and rich in content, and they were very open to discussing the details of their memories. Even when the events they faced were traumatic at the time, they explained that they had had the opportunity to heal after being in New Zealand for several years.

Participants from Chile referred to feeling scared, unsafe, and being threatened by secret police. Some of them were direct victims of inhuman treatment and torture. They fled their country due to persecution based on political ideas, as they or their parents were Allende supporters, left-wing militants, or active participants in attempts to defeat the dictatorship. Rodrigo and Claudia recount the events of 11 September 1973 when military forces assaulted the presidential palace:

I was 13 years old when the coup against President Allende happened. I lived with my family in Santiago de Chile, the capital city. My memory of the coup is very alive because my brother and I studied a couple of blocks away from *Palacio de La Moneda*, the presidential palace where Allende was killed. We were students at a Catholic school. When we went to the school that day we found the huge and antique wooden doors closed and all the students outside. We could hear bullets and ... smell ... tear gas. Our school was across the police station and we saw police officers leaving the station with heavy armament[s]. We did not know what was happening. Crowded buses were passing by and people [in] despair [were] trying to get on board.

You could see the horror in their faces. We saw planes with bombs coming down. (Rodrigo, Chile)

That day the country stopped. Nobody could believe what was happening. I was very small but I remember my parents, uncles and aunties saying that Chile was a democratic country and a military coup was not part of our beliefs. Even when some aunties and my mum did not support Allende, they defended democracy and rejected violence. I did not know what a coup was. I had no idea but I knew something sad was happening outside and I remember people in my house gathering around the radio listening Allende's speech and crying (Claudia, Chile).

Participants like Rodrigo and Claudia were children when the coup occurred, but they retain a sensory memory of that day. Their accounts of the events during the coup are very vivid. Rodrigo closed his eyes as he became teary. He rubbed his arms feeling goose bumps as his emotions grew. Claudia held her breath and tried to explain what happened:

I remember the sounds and the smell[s] still. I will never forget the smell of that day; I have [it] marked on me forever. (Rodrigo, Chile)

We left home and tried to reach my grandparents' house. On the way, I saw when a woman walking down the street was killed with a gun. She had a baby in her arms. I tried to see if the baby was alive but my vision was totally blocked from the tear gas. I was lost and disoriented. I had cold sweats and my legs were very weak. I was fainting and do not remember anything else. My mum carried me in her arms and we had to stop on an alley. I remember the colour of the sky and the screams. (Claudia, Chile)

Participants from Colombia referred to the fact that they decided to leave their country after being victims of constant confrontations between the leftist guerrillas in FARC, governmental forces and paramilitary groups. Families were often trapped in the middle of the conflict, suffering the clashes of those groups and terrorist actions. Participants from this group said they had fled Colombia after being victims of continuous terrorism or after a family member was killed. Participants came from a rural background, where guerrillas and paramilitary groups battled to keep control. Participants from Colombia were trapped in crossfire, extorted, threatened and forced to abandon their land. Colombians in this research were more reserved when discussing the past, as they had been living in New Zealand for less time and the pre-migration events that affected their lives were more recent. Some of them had been in New Zealand for only a couple of years and the emotional wounds were very open. The accounts of Lucia, Fernando, Ana and Paz refer to the fear they felt living in rural areas under attack:

We had to flee Colombia because of ... terrorism and the activities of armed groups. Terrorism is everywhere. They wanted to kill my son and I was very scared. (Lucia, Colombia)

We were *campesinos*, we had nothing to do with guerrilla[s] or violence. We worked the land to support our families and communities. We just wanted to live in peace but days in Colombia were hell. Every day and every night we feared for our lives and the *guerrilleros* were everywhere trying to do bad things. *Guerrilleros* and *paramilitares* do not care about people, they killed children and women; they have no soul. We were poor, we were workers, we could not give them more money and they killed my son. (Fernando, Colombia)

All participants had common experiences of hardship and difficulties that forced them to abandon their countries. In all cases, the fear of being killed was the decisive trigger for fleeing. All participants had a close experience with violence that was highly traumatising and led to their forced migration. Armando from El Salvador lived in the department of Chalatenango located in the country's north. Chalatenango became well known after the Massacre of Sumpul or *La Masacre de Sumpul*, which occurred on 14 May 1980 at the beginning of the Salvadoran armed conflict. The name comes from the river Sumpul, which divides Honduras and El Salvador; here, armed forces murdered hundreds of men, women and children who tried to cross the river seeking refuge in Honduras. Military forces, the National Guard and the paramilitary National Democratic Organization (ORDER) attacked the town, claiming the lives of at least 600 peasant noncombatants (Zamora, 2014). Chalatenango was one of the departments most affected by the war and almost all of its inhabitants fled after the assault. The Truth Commission revealed that during those days, soldiers committed brutal assassinations, especially against children and pregnant women, who were killed with machetes, knives and machine guns. Many who managed to cross the river to Honduras were captured by the Honduran army and handed over to the hands of the Salvadoran military, who then killed them (Zamora, 2014). Armando lived the events of that day and the previous attacks during which his brother was brutally killed by the National Guard:

I was a very active person in social and political organisations formed mainly by peasants, teachers, students and we were demanding our rights. The first time military forces came into my village firing and killing everybody ... myself, my family and some comrades managed to escape and [we] fell into a ditch where we spent the night hiding. My brother was found [by] the

guards trying to flee and he could not escape. I heard the cries of my mother begging for his life but he was put on his knees and executed. The strong burst of fire ripped his cheeks, fingers and legs. Some friends collected the body of my brother, who was 17 years old. That was the beginning of terror and fear and the army forces treated us as terrorists. A couple of years after that—in the 1980s—they came and killed many innocent peasants and massacred people in my community. Women and children were lying face down when they were killed or while trying to escape Chalatenango to reach Honduras [by] crossing the Sumpul River. After that day, everybody fled the villages. They were ghost towns. All municipalities of Chalatenango were abandoned. Many people went to the border with Honduras to find refuge. That day [May 13] it rained the whole night and [in] the first hours of the morning, we heard the sound of mortars and the helicopters started to arrive. The level of the river was very high due to the heavy rain but despite that people jumped to the river to save their lives but they died, among them two second-cousins of mine, and many friends. There was no salvation as the military from the other side were also killing people. It was a dead end. I jumped to the river and started to swim but could not find my partner or my daughter. I reached a high point where the army was not located and stayed there for a while. At that point, I was in Honduran territory and could see my village being destroyed. (Armando, El Salvador)

Participants from Colombia were victims of terrorism and constant violence. They lived for many years under the intimidation of guerrillas and feared for their lives. All the Colombians participating in this research had lost at least one family

member or close friend during the war and had received death threats themselves.

Ana and Paz related their experiences:

My father was kidnapped, threatened with death and the guerrillas destroyed our small business. We had been suffering extortion from the guerrillas [for] many years. My mother had a stroke. We lived in fear of new attacks.

Guerrillas took over our farm and I said, 'here I am, kill me if you want, we have nothing else to give you'. We had violent attacks at home and in my microenterprise. (Ana, Colombia)

I was born in Chiquinquirá in an agricultural area. My family's farm was taken by the guerrillas. My father and my uncle died. In 1988, my family tried to recover the farm and two uncles were killed. The political situation and the fear of losing my life forced me to leave Colombia. (Paz, Colombia)

5.1.2 Victims of human rights abuses

One participant from Chile was a direct victim of torture and imprisonment. One participant lost a parent during the events that unfolded during the dictatorship. They related how political persecution was conducted by secret police, threatening people and knocking at the doors of Allende supporters' homes at night to take them prisoner. The fear of being 'disappeared' and eventually killed was notable. Carlos from Chile was a victim of political persecution and imprisonment. Claudia's father was jailed and tortured, and died after that. She explained:

I suffered the first arrest on December 10, 1978, during a political rally in a public square in Santiago. We were marching to celebrate International Human Rights Day. We [were] living under the dictatorship and there was no permission to hold public meetings. About 67 people were arrested that day. I was the first one and immediately the others were arrested too. It was a mass

arrest and I was accused of being the organiser of the march. I was on the floor of a police bus and I could see the back seats of the bus when a police officer started hitting a woman who was detained. I tried to defend her and started to shout. When we arrived [at] the police station and all of us [were] coming down the bus, I [was] the last one to walk and a police officer hit me really hard. I was put into a cell with three others and accused of being responsible for the rally. They charged me with violation [of] the state's security law and left me in jail. I was badly beaten and imprisoned in the public jail of Santiago for a week and was moved twice to tribunals. During the second time, they granted us immediate release. That was the first incident of many that I suffered. (Carlos, Chile)

Secret police agents knew that my father was a strong Allende supporter. He never denied his political views and was very open talking about it. That cost him his life. He was jailed and we did not know where he was. My mum cried every day and tried to make public calls to find him. We were scared [of finding] his body on the streets one day. People used tell my mum to leave the country because she would be next. One day the horrible news came from a friend who said my dad had been killed. (Claudia, Chile)

We were kids and we managed to get on the bus and return back home. My parents were leftists and were willing to go outside to defend Allende. They heard [Allende] on the radio (what would be the last speech of Allende) asking people to not take to the streets because they would be killed. He asked them to be calm and not to fight. He spoke of the perpetrators of the coup and the violence of that day. Curfew was [in] place and there were food shortages. After a week, everything seemed to be back to normal but there

were corpses on the streets and corpses floating in the Mapocho River. The bodies had their hands tied and bullet marks. Once I saw a head floating in the river. People were very scared. (Rodrigo, Chile)

Our parents feared we would be killed or disappeared. It was public knowledge that officers from the dictatorship would arrive in the middle of the night knocking at the door and detaining people who were Allende's supporters or disagreed with the dictatorship. There were 'matones' whose job was beating people for having leftist ideas. The Communist Party was in retreat and almost the entire leadership of the Communist Party had been killed. There was a social terror and it was not easy to break that. I studied in the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy in the Catholic University of Santiago. In private Catholic schools ... we had a bit more freedom of speech than state schools. One time, death squads from the secret police killed a leader of the revolution who was a cousin of mine, and when we went to the funeral somebody took a photo of me carrying the coffin and later tried to kidnap me in the cemetery, but I managed to escape [by] running. It was the secret police. (Carlos, Chile)

People did not want to speak out because they were afraid of being killed or disappeared. It was a sad time. My father was a strong Allende supporter and very active [politically]. He tried to help as much as he could, but he had three daughters to look after and he was very scared. Despite that, he kept helping MIR ... to defeat Pinochet. (Claudia, Chile)

5.1.3 The final decision to abandon home

All participants expressed feeling unsafe in their countries, especially after being direct victims of threats, torture or violence. Participants and their families

lived under emotional and physical stress and feared for their lives. This led them to abandon their countries as a survival decision, despite the fact that they became refugees. Participants who experienced the execution of family members or friends expressed strong feelings recounting those episodes, but decided to continue as a way to honour those who had died and keep their memories alive. Those who were tortured or imprisoned feared being subjected to that cruel treatment again and their families were pushed to flee the country. All of them expressed—with deep sadness—that the hardest part of leaving their countries was abandoning the political fight and not seeing a better future arrive. This was especially the case for those with extreme political views; the process of being a refugee and requesting asylum was the equivalent of being defeated. Participants left all their possessions behind, as well as their extended families, and experienced great fear and anxiety about living in another country. They did not know what to expect and expressed feeling overwhelmed. As Rodrigo from Chile recounts, political persecution was the main fear at the time, as those who were not Allende supporters would provide information about the location of union leaders or university leaders who were active members of left-wing political parties:

My dad was a union leader of a copper company and the neighbours knew that [he] was [a] leftist and ... a strong Allende supporter. They came to the house threatening him. The neighbours who were not Allende supporters accused him of being an agent of the dictatorship and we knew they would come after us soon. My father decided that night that we had to leave or they would kill us. My uncles had been imprisoned and subjected to cruel torture. We were afraid and we had to leave everything behind. (Rodrigo, Chile)

I had to go and pick up a truck from a neighbour to move a stove from my mum's house to my place. I called my neighbour who was also a friend and a leftist militant and the phone was answered by the maid. She said he was not there, and I let her know that I needed to pick up the truck. Later, a workmate gave me the newspaper and on the front page was a photo of that neighbour. [The] headline said that he was an extremist involved in crossfire with security forces and that he ran away badly injured. Immediately I knew that police officers must have been at his house and heard when I called. That evening I had to go to eat with my mother and I cancelled all [of] that. I went home with my partner and we started to destroy all [the] documents we had, but we forgot to remove a big poster of Allende. In the evening, my brother called and told me that police officers were looking for me and asking for me around my mum's home. He instructed me not to go there. That night my brother was detained and my mum's house was searched. About 30 armed men broke through the windows. They were from the Central Information Agency. My mum was detained and later my father when he returned home from work. They were forced to say where I was. My mother told them where I was living to save themselves. Three cars came with four men in each. They took my brother with them and led us to the house of my mother. A neighbour realised something was wrong and called the Bishop of the Catholic Church and told him what was happening, as I was a student of the Catholic University. The Bishop went to the house and saw when I was handcuffed and pulled out of my mother's house. In the house of my mother, they found a box with pamphlets against the dictatorship and that was used as

evidence. The Bishop saw when they put a hood over my head, and thanks to his actions, I was not disappeared. He was a valuable witness. (Carlos, Chile)

Chileans in particular were victims of torture and other cruel, degrading or inhuman treatment. Carlos's experience clearly explains the political persecution that Chileans suffered during the dictatorship:

They took me to Cuartel Borgoño, the secret service agency's centre of detention and torture during Pinochet's dictatorship in the centre of Santiago. There I was badly tortured, hanging off the roof, [and receiving] electric shocks on a metal grill called a *parrilla*, a sort of metal bed where I was tied to receive electric discharges into my body. They thought I was a key guerrilla leader but I denied any involvement with opposition, as I had already a child. The Bishop who saw everything called the Cardinal of the Catholic Church, who was the symbol of defence of human rights in Chile, and the Cardinal made a public call through the only Catholic radio demanding my appearance ... because the government had refused my detention which ... was the preamble to [a] disappearance. The day after the plebiscite, they threatened to execute me and told me to decide where I wanted to have my body dumped. I told them that in a place where people who knew me would be able to find me. I knew they were playing with me psychologically and then they took me back to the house, but I was in a very bad condition. I had burns all over my body, I could not walk, my internal organs were swollen and I was urinating blood. They told my parents to take me out of the country or next time they would kill me. (Carlos, Chile)

We knew my father was badly tortured and died after several electric shocks.

My mother never wanted to know more about how he died. [Neither did I].

We [did] not want to know details because for sure he suffered. (Claudia, Chile)

It was absolutely painful. Very, very painful. Leaving my country was even more painful than the pain I suffered in torture. I was detached from my nation, my mother, but the saddest part was [being] unable to contribute further to the cause against the dictatorship. It was too difficult to [take] that step. (Carlos, Chile)

5.2 Theme Two: Second Stage of Participants' Journey: Fleeing the Homeland

Out of nine participants in this research, seven began their refugee journey by seeking asylum in a neighbouring country before being granted refugee status for resettlement in New Zealand. Two participants from Chile fled to Peru, the participant from El Salvador fled first to Honduras and then to Guatemala, before crossing to Mexico, and four Colombians crossed the border to reach Ecuador. The two remaining participants had a different start to their journey. One Chilean received protection as a political exile and one Colombian requested asylum in New Zealand while under a visitor visa. The experience for some included using false documents or applications, living in a refugee camps, being undocumented while waiting to be recognised as refugees, lying so that they could travel to New Zealand and request asylum, and fleeing in the middle of the night without possessions or a plan for the immediate future.

5.2.1 First destination reached after fleeing home

Rodrigo and Claudia left Chile with their families in the middle of the night and travelled to Peru, where they requested international humanitarian assistance at UNHCR offices. Because of the political crisis in Chile, assistance was given relatively quickly, and they were approved as refugees in New Zealand, as part of the Chilean quota that was in place:

We took a bus to Peru, my mum, dad, my sister and my brother, and requested refuge in the office of the United Nations. We lived in Peru for a year. The life of a refugee was not pretty, no money and not a lot of food but I'm grateful to the Peruvians and the United Nations that helped us. We used to eat beans and rice every day, and I did not like it but now I understand it was nutritious food. (Rodrigo, Chile)

A family member helped us to reach Peru, where we asked for humanitarian assistance. Everybody knew about the coup and the suffering of Chileans. My mother was a widow alone with three small children. They gave her priority and offered us help. We were very sad, struggling with my dad's death and leaving our country. We left everything behind; we carried just one [piece of] luggage with clothes for all of us and another bag with some cans of food. I remember saying goodbye to my bedroom and all my toys and books. I loved reading at night and could not take my books, they were too heavy and we did not know anything about our destination. (Claudia, Chile)

The day of the Sumpul Massacre, Armando from El Salvador fled his village swimming the river and managed to cross to the Honduran side. He was forced to abandon his home immediately due to the brutal violence of that day. His family went to the refugee camp Mesa Grande in Honduras that hosted over 30,000

Salvadoran families fleeing the armed conflict (Lanchin, 2004). The camp was administered by the UNHCR and it was one of three facilities available to help refugees from El Salvador. After a few years, Armando decided to travel to Mexico, where he received assistance and from where he was sent to New Zealand:

After I crossed to the side of Honduras, I found my partner and my child as they [had] managed to cross the river with help from people from our village. My daughter was saved by a child from the village and I could not believe it. That was three days after the massacre. We had not had any food, but suddenly some aid from the church and nearby communities started to arrive. The hope was gone for us and the village was empty, even the animals were left abandoned. We were peasants and could not return home. The first person [who] helped us was a priest; [he] gave us a hand and hosted us in a home. My partner and our daughter were to live in a refugee camp in Mesa Grande and I started to work illegally in another community, but was discovered and had to go to the refugee camp, [which I snuck into] illegally in the middle of the night. (Armando, El Salvador)

5.2.2 Discrimination and the refugee label

Participants who fled to a neighbouring country expressed feeling powerless and highly dependent on others to survive and felt the refugee label was a huge burden to carry. They explained that being a refugee was not part of their normal lives and suddenly they were forced to be in a situation they were unable to manage. Participants expressed an unexpected shift from being active individuals in a society where they had roots and cultural links, to becoming refugees without control over their future. They recalled being valuable people in their communities where they had employment, academic commitments, political roles and families; but above all,

they had never intended to leave their homes. They felt they had been forced to become refugees and had no power to avoid it.

The label 'refugee' was also identified by participants as the first sign of being out of their homeland and depending on humanitarian assistance. Some participants said it was a shocking moment when they had to identify themselves as refugees, or when UNHCR officials identified them as refugees. They refer to this as the final acceptance of being in someone else's hands, waiting for a decision to change their lives. Words like 'powerless', 'strange', and 'dependent' were commonly referred to during the interviews. They believed their identities and personalities had been shaped after being declared as refugees:

My mother was very sad during all the interviews and appointments with UNHCR. It was very sad when we had to describe ourselves as refugees. My mum did not even know which words to use to explain our situation, as we felt we still had a home and a country, but soon realised we had lost everything and we did not know when or how we would be able to return.
(Claudia, Chile)

They made everything so difficult for me in Ecuador. I had to fight [for] a lot of my status. It was very sad and I was desperate to receive assistance. (Ana, Colombia)

Armando from El Salvador recounted the death of his mother in the Mesa Grande refugee camp in Honduras, as she was too sick to handle the trip they had started from El Salvador and cross the border to Honduras. After her death, he decided to cross the border to Guatemala to reach Mexico, which had been his destination prior to New Zealand:

Around 1986, I requested permission to my unit to go Mesa Grande but they did not want to approve it. I gave everything to the political and military organisation and they did not help me when I needed [it] the most, especially to move my mother from her village to Honduras. I needed to live in peace, I was tired already and my youth was gone. They finally gave me the permission to go Mesa Grande and my sisters were repatriated already in different countries. I did not know what to do. So I decided to go Mexico and I promised [to go with my family to] UNHCR ... to become legal and take them with me. I went to Mexico illegally with a little money [that] I had and my sister gave me a little bit more. I got two [pairs of]pants, three shirts and my ID card. I crossed the border to Guatemala and saw a group of people and there was a 'coyote' taking six people to the United States. I asked him if he was passing through Mexico and he said he would pass through the capital. He asked me for some money and I decided to leave with him. I arrived in Mexico City and had a phone number of a cousin who worked as a housekeeper in a home. I had [not seen that part of my family for about 18 years] and they welcomed me in their home where I stayed for a while but eventually had to leave because they could not afford to have me there any longer. They lived [as] financially deprived as I did ... and two or three months were more enough. It was very hard being a refugee. (Armando, El Salvador)

The Colombians in this research reported that, after leaving their country, they had to live illegally for many years in Ecuador until the UNHCR had approved their refugee status. Ecuador and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela were the main destinations for Colombians fleeing violence, where they usually faced

discrimination and lived for many years without being recognised as refugees and therefore without appropriate assistance. All participants reported feeling discriminated against and being victims of unfair treatment in Ecuador. Here, they were forced to accept underpaid jobs and live in overcrowded places:

We left Medellín, Colombia, in March 2007. We had many problems getting humanitarian assistance and an officer delayed my process on purpose. I fled first with my son who got sick in Ecuador. Ecuadorians do not like Colombians. There is a lot of discrimination and racism against us. I struggled a lot to get shelter. I worked at a burger business and the owner was very rude [to] me and tried to hurt me. (Ana, Colombia)

We did everything ourselves without making payments to cross the border and it was relatively easy. We went to Ecuador, where we had to suffer a lot. People in Ecuador are very racist and do not want to see more Colombians there. They did not like us and it was very hard. There were many social problems affecting us and we were discriminated against. We arrived first to the house of some friends who helped us with a room. (Lucia, Colombia)

Participants explained that contact with UNHCR and organisations helping refugees was traumatic and difficult, as they were categorised on paper as refugees fleeing conflict or persecution. They also expressed the difficulty of having to go through their personal stories many times to validate their status:

We lived illegally for a long time until finally we received protection. We had to explain everything about our personal lives and it was not easy. We were not used to talking to each other about our issues. We had to go through our story over and over again and we had no papers to prove anything. They knew we were Colombians because of the accents but they had doubts.

Finally, we managed to get some birth certificates that [our] family sent to us and we could prove who we were. We also received some photos to show [that] our small farm [had been] destroyed. (Fernando, Colombia)

5.3 Theme Three: Third Stage of Participants' Journey:

Resettlement in New Zealand

This section explores participants' views and opinions when they received humanitarian protection in New Zealand. The sub-themes that arose during the interviews were related to their expectations, knowledge and perception of New Zealand, if they had a different option for resettlement in another country, the type of protection they received in New Zealand, and their first memories of arrival in New Zealand. None of the participants in this research had New Zealand as their original resettlement destination. Participants from Chile confirmed that New Zealand was not their main destination. Instead, they expected to reach Canada or the European countries providing assistance to Chileans. However, when the opportunity of New Zealand was presented for resettlement, most participants said that they or their parents agreed out of desperation and in attempt to be resettled as soon as possible:

There was a list of countries receiving refugees from Chile. Among those were Canada, Australia, Switzerland and New Zealand. New Zealand ... needed labourers. A family was offered a place [in] the Chilean quota refuge in New Zealand, but did not accept it. [I]mmediately my dad took it. We knew nothing about the country, or where it was located. We did not speak English and were very anxious. (Rodrigo, Chile)

We [did] not even know where New Zealand was located. My mother knew a little bit of English but [it was] very basic. We received some booklets about the country and the photos looked amazing, but we were too depressed to

dream about starting a new life. She was offered to go Europe but something happened and at the end, she was offered the opportunity of [going to] New Zealand. (Claudia, Chile)

Carlos was a political exile who received protection in Chile after suffering torture and persecution. His case was approved by the New Zealand government, and the Consul of New Zealand in Santiago de Chile called him to have an interview and announce the news. He had to marry his partner to bring her to New Zealand with their son. The Catholic Church was involved in his case and provided evidence to show that he would be killed if he stayed longer in Chile:

The day after I was tortured, I went to see a doctor who took photos of the injuries all over my body. The vicar of the Catholic Church recommended that I leave the country urgently and offered four countries in Europe for me. My brother [had come to New Zealand in 1974] as a refugee and he was [already] resettled in Auckland. I asked them for the possibility of New Zealand and [the] vicar knew a Bishop from New Zealand. After two days I was put in touch with the Embassy of New Zealand in Santiago ... the Consul knew who I was and she was waiting for me. She had instructions from Wellington to send me to New Zealand. My baby, my wife and I got the tickets and travelled in March 1981. We spent that last Christmas in Chile as a farewell to our family and friends. (Carlos, Chile)

Participants expressed their fear of dealing with an unknown future in a remote land. The majority did not even know that New Zealand existed. When they were told about the option of being resettled in New Zealand and had access to more information about the country, they thought it was too remote and extremely different from their culture:

While living in Mexico I contacted an organisation helping refugees with money to start a small business and being independent. I started a tailoring business with a second cousin, but it was [robbed] a little while after and all the equipment was stolen. I had to start over again and they helped me again doing my own business fitting pants and curtains. The manager of that organisation asked me if I was willing to be resettled in another country as they were [organising] a group to travel there. I [didn't] even know where New Zealand is and I [did] not even have a passport. My only advantage was that I was already legal in Mexico after being there three years. I requested a book or something to see what was New Zealand like. He made a list of families but months were running and I did not get a call and thought it was a lie. After a year all [of] a sudden he told me to be ready to leave the next day. I got my passport and did not even know anything when I went to the airplane. I did not trust at all and thought that probably something mysterious was happening. It was ALAC helping Latin Americans living in Mexico as refugees. I was alone. I couldn't understand how we [could leave] Mexico on the 10th and arrive in New Zealand on the 12th. It was the year 1991. A bus was waiting for us at the airport. I saw everything so pretty and perfect, but I did not know anything. We arrived in Mangere and were received with the Haka welcoming us. Everything was extremely pretty, not many people have that luck. ALAC workers were there helping with the language. They selected the people to travel to NZ and supported them. (Armando, El Salvador)

After a lot of suffering in Ecuador, we finally got refugee status in New Zealand. We did not anything about the country and we did not speak English. We had no idea what to expect. (Lucia, Colombia)

I never thought I would come to New Zealand; it was not something we planned. In 2011, we received the notice of refugee status to live in New Zealand and we arrived in Mangere on January 18th. I came with many fears because my child has special conditions and depends on me and I depend on him. It was very difficult to make decisions and we were highly traumatised. (Ana, Colombia)

However, Paz requested a visitor visa to travel to New Zealand while living in Chile and claimed asylum afterwards. She paid a considerable amount of money to an organisation providing services to refugees and migrants that had promised to help her with her case, but later she discovered that it was illegal to charge service fees:

I arrived in New Zealand in 2001 with a tourist visa and applied for asylum. My daughter was five years old when I came to New Zealand. I left her in Chile while I organised my documents here to be able to bring her. My first asylum claim was denied. Everything was very difficult and costly. The process of review of my case took three years. An organisation working for immigrants and refugees asked for a lot of money to help me with the legal paperwork and they did nothing for me. Then they had to return what I had paid as it was illegal to charge for services for asylum claimants as they receive financial support from the government. The services should have been free but they took advantage of me and I was not sure about anything and told them I had some money with me that I brought from home. Through

another lawyer, my case was finally approved and the status approved. (Paz, Colombia)

Two out of nine participants in this study had had a basic idea about New Zealand. The others were surprised to know the country had a resettlement programme and that it was available for them. Six participants said they did not receive any pre-orientation programme prior to arriving in New Zealand and everything took them by surprise. For some, the approval of their status happened unexpectedly and they did not have time to plan their trip. They stated that the lack of information about the host country created a lot of anxiety and worry for them, principally concerning the language barrier. The majority expressed feeling overwhelmed and stressed prior to their departure.

All participants expressed that New Zealand was a remote land and the geographical distance from their homeland was an important factor that added extra stress, as they worried about their families and friends back home. A common reference for all participants was the long flight they took to reach their final destination and the never-ending hours on the plane. One referred to the fact that she could not even understand what the flight attendants were saying or explaining during the flight:

We saw the map and it was too far, extremely far. A tiny island in the middle of nowhere we thought, but my mum really wanted us to have a future and decided to come here. (Claudia, Chile)

When they said we had to take a flight, I panicked. I [had] not seen an airplane in my life, I had [not travelled] on trains either. We were poor farmers and had horses and bikes to move around [on]. I could not move

during the flight, it was horrible. I spent the whole time praying [to] God and Mary the Virgin. (Fernando, Colombia)

Not all participants in this study arrived at the Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre. Participants from Chile came before the beginning of the official quota programme in 1987. They were part of the Chilean quota that came during the 1970s and 1980s. They were received by the churches and allocated different houses. Rodrigo and Claudia were among the first families to arrive in Auckland. They related their experiences:

When we arrived in New Zealand, we were received by the churches. We arrived first [at] a large house in Auckland that had been a house of orphans. It was huge and beautiful, like a park. We stayed there for a month. My parents had to start working immediately and we went to school. My mum worked in a garment factory and my dad in an engineering company. The house where we lived first had two bedrooms but we were five people. There was no comfort or privacy whatsoever. (Rodrigo, Chile)

I remember everything being so beautiful and green. Everything looked clean but we were tired and stressed. It was a long journey and we could not think clearly. (Claudia, Chile)

Carlos arrived as a political exile, and his brother who had been accepted previously as a refugee in New Zealand helped him with resettlement:

I arrived in New Zealand on 17 March 1981. I saw my brother, who introduced me to different Chileans who had arrived as refugees. I brought Cuban revolutionary music with me: Silvio Rodriguez and Pablo Milanés. Later on we formed a band playing in events of solidarity and musical activities, and we raised funds to send support for the Communist Party in

Chile. We created our own identity in exile and established links with the people of the MIR in Chile. We sent financial aid monthly to support human rights and opened a human rights office for political prisoners of the armed struggle. (Carlos, Chile)

5.3.1 Living in the Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre

Since 1979, the Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre in South Auckland has been operating as an immigration reception centre receiving quota refugees. Newcomers stay at the centre for six weeks as part of their arrival orientation programme. This centre constitutes the first contact that former refugees have with their new society, and reflects New Zealand's culture. While in the centre, newcomers have access to a variety of services, including medical check-ups, therapeutic massages, English language classes, translators, caseworkers from resettlement agencies, accommodation and meals. The experiences that former refugees have in the Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre can determine their resettlement experience, as it is the first impression they have of New Zealand society and the country.

Participants who had arrived in Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre discussed their experiences during the six-week programme and the main challenges they had to face. Four out of five of Colombian participants lived in the centre, as well the participant from El Salvador. All expressed being mentally stressed when they reached the centre, battling to overcome traumatic experiences. All had a common feeling of being too controlled while staying in Mangere, as the policies of the centre made them feel restricted with its very strict routine and rigid programme. They explained feeling a high level of discomfort walking in the centre as they looked too different to other people and spoke Spanish, not a common language at

the centre. The more recent refugees from Colombia felt that people from a Muslim background, mainly males, looked and 'stared' at them because of their clothing.

The food issue and lack of Spanish interpreters was a common element revealed during the interviews. Some participants complained about the poor quality of the food and the lack of options, which forced them to either not eat or limit their meals to a piece of bread. Some would buy food in the nearby shops, which affected their already restricted budget. Another common issue was not having a Spanish-speaking case or social worker available to help them. The majority believed the programme needed more focus on relevant skills, such as English training and job opportunities:

I had no idea about New Zealand. My first 'slap' was the food, I was used to eating different things but here food did not even [have] salt and it was terrible. Nothing familiar to me. (Armando, El Salvador)

I've been living in New Zealand six years with my husband and children. Living in the Mangere Centre was very very difficult. We did not speak English and there were no workers to assist us in Spanish. We could not speak to anybody and we really needed help. Everything in this country was very different but we ... adjusted to living here. (Lucia, Colombia)

Our arrival at Mangere was very difficult. We tried to start to talk to people but it was very complicated because of the language barrier. We tried to make the best of our experience in Mangere but that place is a Babel tower. It's crazy to live among so many ethnic groups and that represented a huge problem for us. The most difficult process was to [adapt] to the food. The cooks and kitchen hands [were] very good people but they only cook[ed] Indian food and we were not used to that type of food. It was spicy. We never

[became] adapted to the food. We come from a country where we [used] cutlery to eat with and the people with whom we shared the table ate with their hands. It was terrible. We would only take coffee and bread for breakfast and eat in our room. I was lucky because I was sharing the room with my son. We used to go outside to eat and what we found was chicken and fries. I focused on learning English, and tried to know more about the country and the culture. There are psychologists, dentists and massage therapy in that centre. But dental care was very poor. They mocked us in the midst of a personal situation when my son needed dental care. The dentist told us that we would never be able to pay a treatment in a dental centre outside Mangere because we were refugees. They should not destroy the expectations that everyone brings and being a refugee does not mean that we have nothing. I wanted dental care for my son and we were humiliated because I requested a specific treatment. (Ana, Colombia)

Mangere was a difficult experience for us. We know they tried to do their best but there [was] not much support for people coming from Latin America, everything [looked] very Asian and we were lost. The food was the worst part. We could not eat as the flavours were ... different to what we knew. My woman was sad and she fell ill. She had a trauma [experience] and she could not sleep. (Fernando, Colombia).

I was very sad in Mangere due to the lack of privacy. We had to share [a] room and toilet and it was not easy. The food was not the best but I cannot complain, it was food and it was hot on the table. We never went hungry. The worst part was to get medical assistance as I did not know English at all and wanted to talk to a doctor to check myself but it was difficult to have an

interpreter. It [was] not easy to talk about our problems in front of a translator because we were not able to express ourselves openly. (Rafael, Colombia)

The case of Paz from Colombia was different, as she claimed asylum in New Zealand. She was not entitled to receive the same support as the quota refugees:

I did not receive any support for housing or anything. At that time, it was not like nowadays [where] people arriving on humanitarian grounds have access to everything and [are supported]. I received emotional support from the government the first three months, but I did not want to be a burden for the government. (Paz, Colombia)

5.3.2 Getting settled in a new home

After completing the six-week orientation programme in Mangere, former refugees moved into their own spaces, assisted by governmental agencies and Red Cross volunteers. Housing New Zealand Corporation (HNZC) acted as the primary housing agent, providing affordable accommodation for former refugees after they had to move out of Mangere. Red Cross volunteers played a major role helping families to settle. Their job started with picking up families or individuals from the Mangere Centre and taking them to their new home, which had been checked to verify that all services are working. Volunteers helped them receive new furniture, show them public transport options in the area, supermarkets, pharmacies, medical services, as well as introducing them to other local services. Arrangements for accommodation were undertaken while the refugees were in the orientation programme at Mangere; usually the houses were in areas where groups of similar ethnicity were already established. It was expected that this would help with social connections.

Participants in this research who had arrived through Mangere were resettled in different regions of New Zealand, mainly Wellington and Hamilton. Some explained feeling disappointed after arriving at their arranged accommodation, as they felt their opinions had not been considered in the final decision. They expressed feeling upset, as HNZC had made decisions without considering their particular situations and acted on behalf of the family. Some participants complained that they were sent to live in deprived areas with a high amount of gang activity and delinquency. In particular, one participant from Colombia felt her family was under threat living in a very rough area of Wellington where gang members lived. In other cases, the experience was more pleasant and positive.

Moving into a new house represented a big challenge for participants who had to start a new life in a totally unknown city. Some expressed feeling overwhelmed by the amount of things they had to face and the process of living in a new neighbourhood where they were expected to become active members:

I had to go and live alone in Otahuhu, but the financial benefit was not set up before leaving Mangere and I had no idea how to go to WINZ [Work and Income New Zealand] offices and ask for help, [I] did not even understand the letters I received and my benefit was cancelled several times. I felt I was facing a different type of war here, not a civil one but a psychological. One time I had to live in a garage I rented. During winter, you can imagine the cold inside there. (Armando, El Salvador)

We had support when we arrived in Wellington. We received a two-bedroom house with a large and very good living room, but I never liked the place. It was not [in] a good area. Refugees in Wellington [were] always located in an area with high presence of gangsters and it is very dangerous. We [be]came

tired of seeing violence and what we found at that place was more violence. My house was attacked on one occasion and Housing NZ approved to give us another house. Refugees ... being so vulnerable should be located in places with fewer problems ... where we can feel safer. (Ana, Colombia).

We were sent to live in Hamilton and had received a lot of help from the government and resettlement agencies. I like where we live and we feel safe.

We do not complain at all. (Lucia, Colombia)

5.3.3 Language barrier

A common subject among participants was frustration due to the language barrier, especially during their first year in New Zealand. Out of nine participants, just one had basic English language knowledge and was able to express things and understand simple sentences. The majority of participants did not have English language proficiency before coming to New Zealand. They agreed this had affected their resettlement, including their opportunities to gain employment and socialise.

Participants who lived in the Mangere Refugee Centre expressed feeling lost and facing a lack of support, as they did not have enough interpreters to assist them. One participant complained about the lack of trust felt towards the interpreter, as both were from the same country of origin, and the participant felt she could not rely on the interpreter during a legal appointment. Interpreters were contracted by Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre to help newcomers at the centre. This free service was offered to refugees who required translation, especially during medical or legal appointments.

Participants who did not live in the Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre noted they had to find their own ways to learn English. English proficiency affected their social integration and their opportunities to find well-paid jobs:

I came to New Zealand as a resident and had the same rights as a national. I did not know any English though and I had to study it. It was very hard.

(Carlos, Chile)

When we arrived in New Zealand, we did not know any English. It was horrible. My mum tried to go to the supermarket the first time and came back home in tears, empty handed. She could not understand the labels and had no idea about what to buy. [The] food was ... different. It was very hard for me at school and I had no friends. It took me quite a long time to learn English, now I even dream in English after being here for so long. (Claudia, Chile)

I was coming from a country where I had many problems and where I could not even study. I never had education and now I had to study English. I could not understand a word, and the teacher was from Cambodia and I did not understand the accent at all. After a week, I told ... one of the social workers that I was considering [returning] to Mexico as English was too hard for me and the stress was dragging me down. They told me not to feel overwhelmed and be patient. That made me feel better [but] after six weeks of being in Mangere I left even worse, I did not learn anything and had even more complications. It was way too hard and complicated. I could not find work at all because without the English it was impossible to communicate.

(Armando, El Salvador)

I never had access to English language classes sponsored by the government. When I started to work in New Zealand, I had to face the language barrier. It was not easy. (Paz, Colombia)

I have been offered many opportunities to learn English, but at my age, it is very difficult to learn a new language. Still, I can hardly communicate with people because of the language barrier. (Lucia, Colombia)

5.3.4 Social support

Some participants felt they could have had a better and brighter future if they had had the opportunity to stay in their home country. Some of them believed they were unable to achieve much personal success in New Zealand due to their refugee label. Some participants agreed that they had no preparation in dealing with the impact of being a refugee, which ended up causing complications in their lives. They agreed it took quite a long time to adjust mentally and to understand that they had come from a refugee background. When exploring what that label meant to them—and how it affected them—some participants felt isolated, regarded as strangers, and were discriminated against. The majority of participants agreed that even when New Zealanders were friendly it had been very difficult to make new friends or establish long-term social connections. Some participants thought that the society was too closed towards newcomers, which translated into isolation and loneliness:

If our family had received more social and emotional support, everything would have been different for us. I did not start to play my music at the beginning in New Zealand because I felt cultural shame, and did not know the country yet, but if I had started with my music from the very beginning, I would not have made the mistakes I did nor had bad and harmful friends. When I realised I could make people happy with my culture, everything changed. The Latin American [culture] is very open and New Zealand accepts the Latinos because we are a culture that wants to be appreciated

unlike other cultures that are much more closed. Here you feel welcome.

(Rodrigo, Chile)

One of the hardest things was losing the level of political meetings I had in Chile and the cultural life that was much broader than what we found here. There is some discrimination, especially based on the lack of English, but also social fear towards us, as they did not know who we were. I have always been involved in social causes in New Zealand. After a week of being here, I went to support a Maori rally against the occupation of some lands in Mission Bay. I started to have my own voice and make friends. I felt closer to Maori and Pacifica culture. Kiwis are respectful but not very open to [having] new friendships. (Carlos, Chile)

The lack of social services and community support was also mentioned by participants as the cause of divorces and family ruptures, as they could not deal with the amount of pressure and altered gender roles. One participant from Chile said that:

In the community of Chileans ... problems began between couples and most marriages ended up in divorce. Out of the ten families in the group that came to New Zealand with us, none of them was [still] together. All got divorced. We came from a society where the man works and the woman is in charge of the house and the children. Here, women got jobs and consequently more independence. That brought many family conflicts that ended in rupture. My parents were also victims of that and after two years of being in New Zealand, they got separated. We had no support to overcome the situation or work around it. So I began to live alone and became a street child. (Rodrigo, Chile)

For some participants, widening their social connections helped them to feel welcome in the country, as did the support they found during their resettlement:

I got support from friends [who] knew some Spanish and helped me a lot and some work mates that knew Spanish too. I do not play my music anymore, I had good and bad times; I married a Kiwi woman and had a child and could understand her. My son [is] 21 years old now. She met me in the restaurant where I used to play but things went wrong and we split up. The culture is too different. (Armando, El Salvador)

The discrimination and negative labelling appeared stronger among participants from Colombia than those from Chile. Some Colombians referred to being discriminated against and stigmatised because of the drug cartels in Colombia, explaining that they had to endure jokes comparing them with drug lords. Stereotypes affected some participants and made it difficult for them to be accepted socially. One female participant expressed feeling labelled as an 'easy woman' for being Colombian; she was told that Latin women were assumed to have sexually open lifestyles:

There is a clear lack of support for Latinos in New Zealand and we are discriminated against in various services. There are many problems and some people always want to associate us with drugs or make jokes about Pablo Escobar. I have always wanted to have my own food company and be my own boss. I have great ideas and work hard but I have been facing [many] obstacles stopping me from developing my company. They demand that I have to have a kitchen with certain characteristics to open my own business. I feel it is unfair, I have never asked for anything in this country to the

government, as I like to win things for my own work but they put too many obstacles in front of me. It is discriminatory. (Paz, Colombia)

5.3.5 Employment and education

Employment is a key factor in resettlement and one of the most important areas in relation to achieving independence and empowerment. As with any other New Zealander, former refugees are entitled to receive employment and social welfare benefits from the WINZ, described by many as a humiliating experience. All three Chileans in this research were employed, two of them running their own business and one being the founder of a human service organisation dedicated to helping migrants and refugees. They were successful and financially independent. Two had higher education degrees and all had high proficiency in the English language. In contrast, two out of six participants from the second wave were employed, and the others received a benefit from WINZ. Some noted the difficulties of finding a well-paid job due to the lack of professional experience, academic background and very limited English language skills.

Participants from the first wave found it easier to find a job, even when this was not related to their previous experience. Some had been very active in politics in Chile and had to start jobs in New Zealand that were not related to their personal preferences or professional experience, but for them it was important to start contributing with the new society and fulfil their obligations. In many cases, the frustration was related to undertaking a non-professional job, while knowing the opportunities that were left behind when they were forced to abandon their country:

I got a job in a fibreglass factory and also worked for six months in a paper factory. I hated it. I had all sort of jobs, from picking rubbish to construction.

I joined the university but I was very unsuccessful, as I did not know English.

(Carlos, Chile)

Participants from Chile learned English as children at school, and after gaining a qualification, they found jobs. One of them described going to school as a very frustrating experience due to the discrimination he had to face. Some of these participants had long periods of self-employment doing activities related to their culture:

It was very frustrating not [being] able to speak English at school. We were put in a class with children from the Pacific Islands and India who did not speak English either, and the other kids named us 'the fools' class'. They bullied us a lot because we did not speak English. They made fun of us and that led to great frustration in me, as I had to fight to defend myself. I went into a lot of trouble for that and felt ... isolated. Other children in the classroom were so traumatised that they decided not to talk never again. I learned English on the streets; it was written in my DNA that I would do well in life despite the circumstances. (Rodrigo, Chile)

I learned English eventually and was able to study and find a job. It was not easy at the beginning but after a few years, I had enough money to buy a home and have a better life. It is impossible now, but back then, it was easier. (Claudia, Chile)

For the new waves of refugees, it has been more difficult to join the labour market, principally due to the lack of English language and little or no education or qualifications from their home country. The majority of participants from this wave came from rural areas and their knowledge relates to working the land, which they found impossible to do when placed in urban areas. One participant explained that he

had decided to leave Auckland city to work on the land in a rural area, where he did not have to prove any English proficiency or previous qualifications to find a job:

Some people told me to go to Napier to work in apple picking ... I did not need to know English to do that and I decided how many hours [I would] work. I started making a living and got a contract to do more picking. I learned very quickly and made good money, it was all going well for me, as I did not have to speak or to write. When the season was over, I started to play Mexican music with a friend in bars and restaurants for about nine or ten years and my English was a little bit better, I could have a conversation asking about a contract to play or something. I never had a real youth due to the war, never went to have a glass of wine or go to a restaurant so I decided to start a new life here. (Armando, El Salvador)

I have been working cleaning a school during the last three years; a friend helped me to get the job, as I don't know much English. (Lucia, Colombia)

It has been very difficult to get a job here because I don't know English and it is even a problem to go to an interview. I have done mainly jobs cleaning homes and offices but they were just temporary. I have worked also as a kitchen aid doing dishes but couldn't continue because I was covering the night shift and didn't have a car to go back home after midnight. I couldn't afford to pay transport so I quit. (Fernando, Colombia)

5.3.6 Family reunification

Being reunited with the family is one of the main goals former refugees have when starting their new life. As explained in previous chapters, family reunification helps refugees to feel protected and secure, as having family members around

provides a sense of belonging. In addition, it helps to have a supportive environment where successful resettlement is more likely to be achieved. Latin American cultures are family oriented; this includes not just the immediate members of the family but the extended ones. Therefore, Latin American families are large and its members remain extremely close to each other. There is also a sense of responsibility towards other members of the family, where those who achieve financial success always help the less fortunate ones. There is no doubt that family reunification is at the top of the priority list for former refugees once they have received protection in a resettlement country. The dream is to share that safety with their family and ensure that the family does not remain in a dangerous place.

Participants in this research mentioned how important it was to be reunited with their families in New Zealand; this would help them overcome feelings of isolation, sadness, stress, and concerns about the fate of those remaining in the homeland. They were worried about how costly it was to bring family to New Zealand, as they would have to sponsor them and provide evidence for their financial situation, which in many cases was not possible. Participants also referred to needing their family to help raise their children and reinforce their own cultural values. The long wait to be reunited with family members was identified as a major trigger of emotional stress and a source of problems. Even though this problem was not exclusive to Latin American former refugees, participants felt that other ethnicities had more opportunities to reunite their families and they believed some policies were discriminatory towards those cultures, giving priority to refugees from the Middle East and Africa:

I tried to do that twice and had to pay a lot of money to immigration. They told me that it was very difficult, as my dad and my sisters were accompanied

already and were not directly dependent on me. My daughters are living in the United States but I wanted to bring them here with me, but the applications were too complicated and the requirements almost impossible to meet, it was too difficult and I could not bring them here. (Armando, El Salvador)

I felt very isolated when I started to live here. The family reunification process has failed and I could not bring my brother because there is no category for him. Refugees need more support to be reunited with our families because that helps in our resettlement. I try to help Latin Americans who come to New Zealand as refugees and need support and do not have family here. (Paz, Colombia)

I keep asking, why are there so many problems and complications for family reunification? It is ... unfair. It is important to consider the views of refugees in that sense. We want to be reunited with our families, and bring them here to be with us, and we cannot do it. It has been a struggle to be reunited with our family and that has brought a lot of pain and stress for us. It is ... unfair. (Ana, Colombia)

Some participants also stated that their lack of skill in English was a problem when trying to understand the New Zealand immigration website; they could not obtain all the information they needed in relation to family reunification. For others, the impossibility of sponsoring family members was the reason they could not organise their visas.

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the in-depth personal experiences of nine former refugees from Latin America, divided into two distinctive waves to assist the analysis and make comparisons across cases. It is clear that all these former refugees have faced difficult situations that forced them to abandon their homeland. In some cases, the stories of torture and cruel treatment are surprising in the level of detail provided, even when those events had happened up to four decades ago. The stories tell us about the deep scars and the suffering that some participants have endured. In other cases, the accounts of participants who lived through violent and long-standing civil wars provide a good picture about life in rural areas of Colombia and El Salvador, especially during the 1980s and 1990s.

The stories share common elements, as Latin America is united by similarities in the political and economic events that have affected the area. The escalation of events in one country often motivated similar events in neighbouring countries. These included political struggles, domination, armed movements, left-wing organisations trying to empower the most underprivileged and discriminated members of society, land reforms, involvement of external governments (mainly the US) to shape Latin American policies, financial and political support from Russia, Cuba and China, and a huge gap between the rich and the poor. However, the transformation over time of some armed political movements originally formed to help rural and poor people turned out to be the cause of thousands of deaths and huge financial losses for the countries affected.

For former refugees from the first wave, it became easier over time to be resettled in New Zealand. Their outcomes were highly positive in comparison to those from the second wave, although it is important to consider that the second

group had been living in New Zealand for less time. One reason for the difference between the groups is that the majority of those who arrived from the Southern Cone possessed more of the elements necessary for achieving a better resettlement, as they were the sons or daughters of people with formal education, or they themselves were young professionals, in contrast to participants from the second wave.

For example, Chileans had access to a different lifestyle and could adjust better to living in another country, despite the struggles they had endured. They adapted to learning a new language and immersing themselves into the new society. All Chilean participants in this research came from the capital city of Santiago de Chile, while the majority of Colombians and the participant from El Salvador came from rural remote areas. The majority of these participants had had no access to formal education and were mainly peasants or lived in small towns. They found all the aspects of living in a new country very challenging, and were not used to living in a city.

At this point, it is appropriate to remember the main research question and conclude that it has been answered after analysing participants' opinions. The question is: what are the experiences and challenges that former refugees from Latin America have encountered during their resettlement in New Zealand, and to what extent has this varied across time, depending on which refugee wave they belong to?

Chapter 6: Discussion and Recommendations

The aim of this research was to explore and analyse the personal experiences of former refugees from Latin American countries that had been resettled in New Zealand. Data gathered from the interviews with caseworkers and social workers are used in this chapter to supplement the findings and develop recommendations that may further assist Latin American refugees in New Zealand.

Family reunification was identified as the major concern of all participants. Clearly, information about the options they had for bringing their families to New Zealand is vital. Participants commonly noted they would like more support through receiving services in Spanish, as they had limited access to interpreters. This research identified discrimination as a problem more likely to affect Colombians than other Latin American ethnicities in this research. All participants agreed that having more information on, or receiving an orientation before coming to New Zealand could have affected their first contact with the country in a more positive way, providing a better understanding of what to expect. Some participants felt that their opinions were not considered when housing arrangements were made, and they complained about being sent to live in deprived areas just because they were refugees, without consideration of their high levels of fear and stress. The lack of professional jobs was a common problem among participants from the second wave, due to their lack of formal education, training and the language barrier. The following discussion covers these issues in detail, and will help answer the key research questions, as well motivate new research in areas not covered by this study.

Due to the cultural differences between Latin American countries and New Zealand, it is important to consider providing pre-orientation programmes prior to refugees' departure, which will help newcomers become familiar with their new

society and have a more realistic view of what to expect. Some participants came with the idea of finding a magic solution to all their problems in New Zealand, and were not told that resettlement would be a long and continuous process that required time, support and patience. Therefore, after a few months participants felt disappointed when an instant solution did not appear, finding themselves struggling to make sense of their lives and trying to understand the process they were going through. One caseworker based in Hamilton explained that most clients from Latin America had high expectations of the country and the opportunities they would find there. When reality intervened, they felt defeated, abandoned and desperate. Many psychological problems started to emerge, and these were usually not addressed promptly.

People in refugee-like situations need to receive information about what to expect before arriving in the resettlement country to help them gain more familiarity with the immediate changes they are about to face. The same caseworker from Hamilton referred to the fact that despite the number of Colombian refugees in Ecuador, no orientation programme or services existed there to help them understand the meaning and complexities of resettlement in another country.

It would be ideal to incorporate more case and social workers with knowledge of the Spanish language and Latin American culture into resettlement agencies to provide culturally appropriate services. One caseworker based in Auckland mentioned that 'behind every story there is a painful trauma', acknowledging that the person who has been uprooted wants to tell his or her story in their own language, without the need for an interpreter. Another social worker advised that responsiveness levels in the Mangere Resettlement Centre had decreased and more workers in Spanish were needed to help those from Latin

America. Caseworkers agreed that more funding was needed to address this issue. Two caseworkers believed the resettlement programme needed to be reviewed and updated to cover new migration realities. One caseworker pointed out that the budget for English language training had been cut by the national government over the last couple of years and that more interpreters were required, especially to support medical appointments.

Approving more funding to provide English language training is important to help newcomers become active members of society and achieve better outcomes related to employment and financial independence. Yet the strategy must be adapted to provide support, especially to those who are illiterate in their own language or who have never had formal education. These people will not be able to learn a second language at the same speed as someone from a more educated background; this is the case with the more recent Colombian refugees. The specific needs of former refugees who either come from rural areas or are older and will have more difficulties facing the stress and challenges that come with learning a new language must be considered.

Caseworkers are especially concerned about how the language barrier is affecting the family structure of Latin American former refugees, as children learn the language easier and more quickly than their parents are able to, effectively becoming the heads of their household. This situation is particularly difficult when the children are the only ones able to communicate to the external world, and end up participating in activities and assuming responsibilities that their parents should be doing. This can create disruption in the hierarchy or composition of family roles. One caseworker referred to clients suffering cultural clashes in the house, as the children do not want to follow instructions from their parents. This is because the

children feel empowered from being in charge of household responsibilities for so long. Another identified issue relates single mothers becoming extremely dependent on their children, due to their (the mothers') lack of English skills.

Another related issue analysed in this research is the fragmentation of the family unit. This has affected the majority of couples who had arrived in New Zealand as refugees and who had decided to separate after a few months. This situation was commonly noted during interviews with participants from Chile, who came from a traditional society where the woman was in charge of household duties and raising the children, while the father was the bread winner. Once in New Zealand, wives started to work, which represented a huge challenge for the family. The problem was not addressed in time and the majority of marriages were dissolved.

A caseworker from Auckland referred to the fact that some families could not handle the emotional stress and the financial constraints they experienced. He explained that resettlement programmes did not have a strategy designed to address those issues; the pressure that families felt led to couples separating. Another caseworker based in Wellington explained that parenting skills needed to be addressed properly and support provided to families dealing with violence and the presence of abusive members at home. This research also identified a different cultural understanding of raising children using corporal punishment. Caseworkers identified situations of family violence involving children; this was more related to recent refugees with less education. A caseworker mentioned that Latin American clients believed it was normal to educate their children using corporal punishment and they did not perceive it as violence. However, children who had been raised in New Zealand with local friends have complained about being victims of family

violence. Families end up trapped in a situation that it is not ideal, with many parents called in to review their behaviour, adding more pressure to home life. One caseworker believes that families need to have information about what violence means in the New Zealand context, and how to deal with their own set of values.

The style of the resettlement programme in New Zealand has been criticised by both former refugees and caseworkers, who believe the design follows a 'very Kiwi' approach, one that does not consider ethnic differences among groups and proposes a 'one solution fits all' view. Some believe that the current resettlement programme caters to recent refugees from the Middle East and Africa, leaving small communities such the Latin American with less attention. This situation was reflected during the interviews; the majority of participants expressed feeling lost during their first year in New Zealand without any support to link them to their culture. Encouraging the development of social networks and organisations aimed at helping Latin Americans is recommended. This will help the group to feel protected and to be close to their culture.

More information should be provided in Spanish to explain the regulations governing family reunification. Policies should also consider that the family members left behind have lived through the same persecution and have been victims of the same treatment; therefore those given refugee status should be reunited with their families and have the opportunity of starting a new life in New Zealand, without feeling worried or stressed thinking about the safety of those who still remain in their home country. Immigration policies should be flexible enough to allow extended family members to be reunited, understanding that the concept of family in Latin America goes beyond direct nuclear family members and comprises

other individuals who play a vital role in the upbringing of children and balancing the family unit.

The majority of former refugees from Latin America have found support in religious groups, mainly Adventists and Catholics. Leaders of these groups organise activities to bring families together for sports and social activities. Some groups meet every weekend to read the Bible and study. This activity was greatly appreciated by some participants in this study, as they felt they were part of a bigger community. The vast majority of Latin Americans are religious individuals, with the Latin American region home to nearly 40 per cent of the world's Catholic population. It is important that former refugees have the space and means to celebrate their culture, as the biggest social support is usually connected to religious-oriented organisations. Some of these groups also collect donations to help newcomers with household appliances, clothes, bedding and other items.

Further, this study recommends that financial support is provided to these religious-oriented organisations, and encouraging them to continue their work with Latin Americans. It is more likely that Latin Americans from a refugee background would seek emotional support within these groups and receive advice that was close to their own value system, rather than exposing their personal issues to a non-Spanish-speaking caseworker. One social worker based between Auckland and Hamilton, who manages a Seventh Day Adventist group, mentioned receiving frequent calls from people facing emotional problems, citing the example of one person who called asking for help because a man was trying to commit suicide after feeling under financial and emotional stress.

This Seventh Day Adventist group has been helping young Colombians in the Waikato-Hamilton region who have been involved in gang-like activities after

feeling they did not belong to the new society. This is a new and interesting area to explore that is related to resettlement issues. There is enough material available to develop new research exploring the involvement of Latin American youth in delinquency in New Zealand, as they struggle to adjust to the rapid changes in their lives. Thus, this study recommends strongly that governmental organisations and policy makers conduct further studies into this issue.

The majority of caseworker and social worker participants in this research agreed that although in general, Latin Americans have been well received and welcomed by New Zealand society, Colombians faced more discrimination than other Latin American ethnic groups. Citizens from the Southern Cone were more likely to be accepted, as more positive information about those countries has been spread over time. One caseworker explained that more stigma exists around Colombians due to misinformation about drug cartels, prostitution and guerrillas in Colombia. As such, this study recommends the creation of information campaigns and positive messages of support, and the use of community spaces and social media to spread the information. This could be concentrated in schools or areas with high concentration of Latin Americans. In addition, building stronger connections between migrant communities, social agencies and the host society would be beneficial. A good starting point would be to organise seminars and workshops to create awareness of different ethnicities arriving in New Zealand, and the positive aspects of each one, including interesting information about newcomers' country of origin, their traditions, religion, food and values. Governmental and non-governmental agencies should promote and stimulate this communication and integration.

Resettlement is affected largely by previous education and former experiences. This research found that people coming from an academic or professional background were more likely to find well-paid jobs, achieve financial independence, own a property, and learn a second language after a short time. This was the case for participants from the first wave of refugees. Individuals coming from a rural background (as in the second wave) struggled more to access the job market, find appropriate housing, make social connections and learn a second language over the same amount of time. The great majority of participants in this research from the second wave were unemployed, had no (or restricted) access to education and could not change their daily reality, due to logistical problems such as a lack of transport, childcare and financial resources.

A caseworker explained that some Latin American clients were illiterate in their native language and had come from very deprived areas, which was a significant obstacle to their resettlement. Therefore, they needed access to social services for much longer. In some cases, they never achieved independence. Their likelihood of having a job, obtaining an academic degree, or being in control of their lives was very limited. The development of appropriate policies is vital to help these individuals with their resettlement, as a standard programme will not fit them. Different strategies must be implemented to provide specific services to these populations, and offer more support. It is important to remember that refugees have different needs and characteristics. Solutions should be developed in accordance with these differences. More services to fund employment strategies are needed, as these can provide extensive support and advice to former refugees who are applying for jobs.

A common issue mentioned by participants who lived in the Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre was the lack of privacy. It is expected that the newly refurbished centre (opened recently) will provide more culturally suitable services to former refugees and the new space will reduce problems related to privacy.

This research has found that psychological problems are more likely to be found in women from a refugee background than in men. A worker from an agency providing mental health services to refugees stated that many female clients from rural Colombia had been raped, either by members of subversive groups or national security agents. This had resulted in mental issues such as depression, suicidal ideas, and a lack of trust. The majority of clients in that agency were from Colombia and post-traumatic stress disorder was one of the most common problems among that group, after their ongoing experiences of violence and abuse. The caseworker referred to the fact that some clients had been exposed to mental and physical trauma from an early age and that their problems were more complex to treat. These types of clients take more time to recover and their resettlement is slow and difficult. Some participants in this research referred to knowing close friends who had been victims of sexual abuse or ongoing violence, but could not find help as they did not want to use an interpreter to access professional services. Communication while accessing medical services has been identified by participants and caseworkers as a persistent problem.

This study also recommends further funding be made available for agencies dealing with mental issues related to forced migration, as these problems take more time to resolve. It is important to direct specific policies and programmes towards female former refugees and provide services in Spanish. This is a sensitive issue that

requires immediate professional support, as being a victim of sexual abuse should not be discussed with an interpreter due to privacy and trust issues.

The historical peace agreement reached in Colombia after decades of civil war is expected to reduce the numbers of Colombian refugees and displaced peoples. So far, Colombia has been Latin America's largest producer of refugees and the tenth largest source-country in the world, with more than 340,000 refugees and 6.5 million people internally displaced. As explained in previous chapters, New Zealand does not receive a significant number of Latin American refugees. Currently, Colombia is perhaps the only country of origin of refugees from the Latin American and Caribbean region being accepted in the quota programme in New Zealand. The financial resources that will not be required for newcomers from Latin America can be redirected to support those who are already in the country in the process of resettlement.

This research found that Latin Americans from a refugee background were more likely to struggle and face challenges than other immigrants from the same cultural background. Caseworkers with experience of immigrant clients from Latin America mentioned that former refugees were less willing to adapt to their new society and fought more to keep their identities intact. They avoided close contact with elements of New Zealand's culture, such as food, celebrations, social traditions and language. They tried to live within their homes, as if they were in their home country and were afraid of welcoming new changes. This behaviour resulted in social exclusion and isolation.

Giving a louder voice to participants has been the core of this research. This study hopes to do this through allowing them to recount their experiences and share their struggles with the wider community. Not much information about Latin

Americans in New Zealand exists; therefore, it has been extremely important for me to present this research as a way of creating awareness of and support for these communities. By exploring their refugee journey through their own words, this thesis has provided insight into this community and the policies it requires. The findings presented here have expressed participants' bravery, courage and resilience.

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