

Representing Refugees: Canadian Newspapers' Portrayals of Refugees of El Salvador's Civil
War, 1980 – 1992

By

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Abstract

Beginning in 1979 and officially ending in 1992, the civil war in El Salvador displaced over a million people, both in Central America and throughout the world. Of the thousands who fled, approximately 38,000 Salvadorans came to Canada, making them the largest group of Latin American migrants to Canada in that era. The arrival of these Salvadoran refugees, however, has received limited academic attention, and is somewhat representative of the general dearth of historical writing on immigrants to Canada in the late twentieth century. My thesis examines how Salvadoran refugees to Canada were portrayed in Canadian newspapers during the Salvadoran civil war. I specifically examine how Salvadorans were written about in the *Globe and Mail*, the *Toronto Star* and Montreal's *Gazette*; I focus on three eras: 1980 to 1982, 1986 to 1987, and 1991 to 1992. In the early 1980s, most of the Salvadorans who appeared in Canadian newspapers were portrayed as distant and largely nameless. By 1986 and 1987, newspapers paid more attention to this group, and some individual Salvadorans were mentioned in Canadian newspapers, but the majority of articles dehumanized Salvadoran refugees. In 1991 and 1992, more individual Salvadorans were featured in Canadian newspapers, but these stories still suggested that Salvadorans were not wholly incorporated into mainstream Canada. I argue that, throughout these years, Canadian newspapers acted as discursive gatekeepers to the "imagined community" of Canada. Salvadoran refugees moved closer to this community, but were not granted full admittance.

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Introduction

Salvadoran Refugees come to Canada

The civil war in El Salvador unofficially began in 1979 and officially ended in 1992. It was rooted in the unequal distribution of resources and wealth in that country, and their long-time control by a corrupt oligarchy. In the 1970s, Salvadorans engaged in several strikes, demonstrations and other acts of civil disobedience to protest these disparities. Many in the Catholic Church, which was highly influential in El Salvador, were motivated by liberation theology and encouraged Salvadorans to demand social justice. The Sandinistas of Nicaragua and the Cuban Revolution also inspired many Salvadorans. In October 1979, a military-civilian junta overthrew the violent government of General Carlos Humberto Romero, but this group's reforms were limited and few were ever enforced. Over the next three years, three junta governments tried unsuccessfully to enact reforms.¹

Meanwhile, El Salvador's central intelligence agency and its affiliates – often referred to as “death squads” – tried to eliminate rebels and dissenters. In 1980, over 8,000 civilians were killed, and a national state of emergency was declared. Leftist reformers and revolutionaries formed various guerilla groups, which united under the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (*Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional* or FMLN) in 1981; the FMLN called for a general insurrection that same year. Following this, the U.S. administration of President Ronald Reagan began providing weapons to the Salvadoran army and training soldiers. Hard-liners in the Reagan administration portrayed the war in El Salvador as part of the struggle

¹ Maria Cristina García, *Seeking Refuge: Central American Migration to Mexico, the United States, and Canada* (Ewing, NJ: University of California Press, 2006): 20 – 22; Liisa North and CAPA (Canada- Caribbean-Central America Policy Alternatives), eds., *Between War and Peace in Central America: Choices for Canada* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1990), 73 – 75; Anjali Sundaram and George Gelber, eds, *A Decade of War: El Salvador Confronts the Future* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1991), 11 - 13.

against communist expansion, and the United States eventually provided over \$6 billion in economic and military aid to the Salvadoran state during the civil war. The war raged on throughout the 1980s. By 1989, U.S. Congress began to reconsider its position. Both sides of the conflict in El Salvador soon approached the United Nations for help in negotiating a peace settlement. The United Nations sponsored talks, which culminated in the signing of the Chapultepec Peace Accords in Mexico City in January of 1992. These accords were generally successful and remain in place to this day.²

Canada played a lesser role than the United States in the Salvadoran civil war and also interpreted the conflict differently. Canadian government officials generally viewed the escalating crisis in El Salvador as home-grown, rather than the result of Cuban or Soviet influence. In 1980, Canada supported the United Nations resolution that condemned human rights abuses in El Salvador and called on governments not to give military assistance to the Salvadoran regime. In 1981, Canada suspended aid to El Salvador. Nevertheless, during the governments of Prime Ministers Pierre Trudeau (1968-79, 1980-84), Joseph Clark (1979-80), John Turner (1984) and Brian Mulroney (1984-93), the Canadian government never formally criticized U.S. involvement in El Salvador. Canada supported U.S.-backed elections in El Salvador, and, following the election of José Napoleón Duarte, Canada restored aid to El Salvador in late 1984. The United States never officially chastised Canada for its policies concerning El Salvador, likely because Canadian policy generally did not run counter to U.S. interests.³

² García, *Seeking Refuge*, 22 – 26; North and CAPA, *Between War and Peace*, 75 – 78; Sundaram and Gelber, *A Decade of War*, 13 – 14; Reg Whitaker, “‘We Know They’re There’: Canada and its Others, with or without the Cold War,” in *Love, Hate and Fear in Canada’s Cold War*, ed. Richard Cavell (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 37 – 38.

³ García, *Seeking Refuge*, 126; Jonathan Lemco, *Canada and the Crisis in Central America* (New York: Praeger, 1991), 16, 69.

Opposition within Canada to providing aid to El Salvador diminished somewhat after the country was struck by a devastating earthquake on October 11, 1986. In 1987, External Affairs Minister Joe Clark toured Central America and announced that Canada planned to increase its diplomatic presence there, adding new field offices in El Salvador. Canada had committed itself to the Contadora peace process and, in 1988, established the House of Commons Special Committee on the Peace Process in Central America. This Committee increased development aid and peace-keeping services in support of the Esquipulas II accord. Canada played an important role in relief efforts, as well. Funds from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) were directed to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Red Cross and Canadian non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to provide food, medicine, clothing and assistance in relocation.⁴

Canadian assistance arrived to a Salvadoran population that was devastated and displaced by war. During the conflict, government forces deliberately terrorized civilians. Open military confrontation and covert repression were both employed. Massacres of civilian populations, aerial bombings, the rape of civilians, forced relocation and the dumping of mutilated bodies in public areas occurred. By 1992, over 80,000 Salvadorans had died, and over a million had been displaced, both within El Salvador and around the world. Most Salvadorans initially fled to Honduras, Guatemala, Costa Rica or Mexico. Many of these people traveled overland to the United States and eventually applied for asylum in Canada. Other Salvadorans traveled directly from El Salvador to Canada. Canada granted asylum to over 80% of applicants in the 1980s; this compared favorably to the 3% success rate of Salvadoran applicants in the United States, which considered most Salvadorans to be “economic migrants” rather than refugees. Over 38,000

⁴ García, *Seeking Refuge*, 128; Lemco, *Canada and the Crisis*, 72 – 73, 109.

Salvadorans came to Canada over the course of the civil war, making Salvadorans the largest immigrant group to come to Canada from Latin America in the 1980s.⁵

Salvadorans who came to Canada, or who wished to come to Canada, encountered a complex and changing immigration system, which was structured by Canada's 1976 *Immigration Act*. This Act outlined three broad groups of prospective immigrants who were eligible for admission to Canada: independent immigrants, family members and refugees. Independent immigrants were selected on the basis of their education, age, skills, work experience and language proficiencies. Family members were sponsored by their relations who were either Canadian citizens or permanent residents, and who were willing to assume financial responsibility for them after their arrival in Canada.⁶

Most Salvadorans who came to Canada were admitted as refugees.⁷ Some Salvadorans qualified as "Convention" refugees, as defined by the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. Signed by the Canadian government in 1969, this United Nations Convention defines a refugee as someone 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 to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country.⁸

⁵ García, *Seeking Refuge*, 34 – 35; Patricia Landolt, Lilian Autler and Sonia Baires, "From Hermano Lejano to Hermano Mayor: the dialectics of Salvadoran transnationalism," in *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 22 no. 2 (March 1999): 290 – 291; Marta Y. Young and David R. Evans, "The Well-being of Salvadoran Refugees," *International Journal of Psychology* 32, no. 5 (1997): 289.

⁶ The Canadian government drew a distinction between the "family class," which referred to members of one's immediate family, such as spouses and children, and the "assisted family class," which encompassed extended family such as siblings, grandparents, aunts and uncles. Gerald Dirks, *Controversy and Complexity: Canadian Immigration Policy during the 1980s* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995), 19 – 28.

⁷ For example, in 1985, of the 2881 people admitted to Canada for whom El Salvador was identified as their country of last permanent residence, 2491 were admitted as refugees, 142 fell under the family class, and 115 fell under the assisted class. Canada, Immigration Statistics: 1985, Planning and Program Management, Employment and Immigration Canada (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1987).

⁸ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, "Who We Help," *The UNHCR: The UN Refugee Agency*, Accessed May 23, 2014, <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646c125.html>

Many Salvadorans who did not meet this definition were admitted under broader categories implemented by the Canadian government during the Salvadoran civil war.⁹ Salvadorans could apply for admission to Canada as refugees from abroad or upon their arrival in Canada. In the early 1980s, it was difficult for Salvadorans to apply for refugee status from abroad, as there was no Canadian consulate within El Salvador at which they could apply. Instead, they were required to go to Costa Rica or await the next visit from Canadian consular officials. Once Canadian field offices were established in El Salvador later in the decade, screenings were often lengthy and irregular.¹⁰ The second method, “inland” or “landed” refugee status determination, became the more popular method for Salvadorans during the civil war.

Throughout the 1980s, the Canadian government increased its quota for the number of Latin American refugees who could be admitted to Canada under government sponsorship. This was done largely to accommodate more Central Americans, and the number of refugees admitted frequently surpassed the official quota. Refugees could also be sponsored by private groups, such as community organizations and churches, who assumed financial responsibility for these refugees upon their arrival.¹¹

During the 1980s, Canada received an unprecedented number of inland refugee claims. The 1976 *Immigration Act* was ill-equipped to handle this volume of claims, and, by 1984, a

⁹ Salvadorans who did not meet this definition could be considered for admission to Canada as members of a “designated class” of “oppressed and persecuted persons.” For example, Dirks writes that in 1984, 294 Salvadorans were released from incarceration in El Salvador and brought to Canada in this way. Kelley and Trebilcock add that in 1981, the Canadian government also enacted a variety of “humanitarian” measures to enable Salvadorans to be more easily admitted to Canada. In 1982, these measures were extended to Salvadorans in the United States who were faced with deportation to El Salvador. Canada also enacted a moratorium on the deportation of Salvadoran students and visitors in 1981. There is limited attention paid to the arrival of Salvadorans in the existing literature, however; this, combined with the confusing and ad-hoc nature of Canadian refugee policy, does not enable me to shed much additional light on Canadian policy towards Salvadorans during this era. Dirks, *Controversy and Complexity*, 72, 74; García, *Seeking Refuge*, 123; Ninette Kelley and Michael Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic: A History of Canadian Immigration Policy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 409 – 410.

¹⁰ Dirks, *Controversy and Complexity*, 72; García, *Seeking Refuge*, 129.

¹¹ García, *Seeking Refuge*, 123-124, 129.

huge processing backlog had developed. The arrival of a few groups of refugee claimants garnered particular attention from the Canadian press: These included the Tamils who landed on the coast of Newfoundland in August of 1986, the Sikhs who arrived in Nova Scotia the following summer, and the thousands of Turkish and Portuguese people who filed inland refugee claims in the 1980s. Salvadorans received particular media attention when thousands of them, along with Guatemalans and Nicaraguans, arrived at the Canadian border in the winter of 1986 – 1987 to claim refugee status; the passing of U.S. laws designed to punish undocumented workers and their employers had motivated many Salvadorans to seek refuge in Canada.¹²

The Mulroney government introduced a number of bills designed to expedite the refugee claims process, including Bill C-55 in 1985, another Bill C-55 in 1987, Bill C-84 in 1987, and Bill C-86 in 1992. Amendments to the refugee claims process permitted most of the administrative backlog to be addressed by the early 1990s. With the end of the Salvadoran civil war in 1992, the number of new Salvadoran refugee claims decreased and those that were submitted were held to stricter standards. It is unclear how many Salvadorans chose to emigrate or repatriate after the signing of the Peace Accords, as Canada does not keep detailed records of these movements.¹³

The 1980s marked the emergence of immigration as a prominent issue in Canadian public discourse. This discourse expanded when the number of refugees and immigrants grew beyond what was familiar to Canadians. Following the 1973 overthrow of the Allende government in Chile, Canada was, for the first time, confronted with the prospect of accepting large numbers of refugees from Latin America. By 1976, some 4,000 Chilean refugees had come to Canada. (Thousands more refugees came to Canada from places such as Haiti, Uganda and South-East

¹² Dirks, *Controversy and Complexity*, 78 – 89; García, *Seeking Refuge*, 130 – 131.

¹³ García, *Seeking Refuge*, 154 – 155.

Asia in the 1970s and early 1980s.) The Canadian left and humanitarian lobby groups became more interested in Latin America. The outflow of refugees from El Salvador and Nicaragua in particular contributed to Central America becoming associated with human rights issues in many Canadian eyes.¹⁴

Activist groups benefitted from the ideological and judicial context of the 1980s, which led to increased recognition and protection of civil rights and the emerging definition of Canada as a multicultural country within a bilingual framework.¹⁵ Advocacy networks employed a variety of tactics learned from previous social movements, such as the civil rights, labor, student and environmental movements of the 1960s. Concerning Central America specifically, Maria Cristina García writes that international non-governmental organizations and grassroots organizations in Canada, the United States and Mexico were integral in making North American states address the refugees fleeing from El Salvador and elsewhere. These small, vocal and influential people – who included students, academics, lawyers, trade unionists, journalists, religious and secular aid workers – organized transnational networks in support of Central American refugees. Such activism was interconnected with protests against the state policies that helped to create these refugees. García argues that Canadian advocacy groups were instrumental in shaping Canadian foreign policy and weakening restrictive refugee legislation.¹⁶

¹⁴ Jack Lawrence Granatstein and Robert Bothwell, *Pirouette: Pierre Trudeau and Canadian Foreign Policy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 272 – 273.

¹⁵ Dominique Daniel, “The Debate on Family Reunification and Canada's Immigration Act of 1976,” *American Review of Canadian Studies* 35, no.4 (2005): 697.

¹⁶ García, *Seeking Refuge*, 2 – 5, 144 – 152.

Writing about Salvadoran Refugees

My thesis considers the history of Salvadoran refugees to Canada by examining how Salvadorans were portrayed in a selection of Canadian newspapers from 1980 through 1992. At present, there is limited scholarship on the movement of Salvadoran refugees to Canada. This gap may in part be reflective of what some historians have considered to be the general omission – not just of Salvadorans and not just in the Canadian context – of refugees from historical writing. British historian Tony Kushner has gone so far as to suggest that professional historians have by and large “actively forgotten” the history of refugees.¹⁷ María Cristina García’s book, *Seeking Refuge*, is one of the few examples of a historical monograph that examines the movement of Salvadoran, along with Nicaraguan and Guatemalan, refugees to Canada, as well as to the United States and Mexico, from circa 1974 to 1996.¹⁸

Most historical writing about Salvadoran refugees pertains to those who traveled to the United States during and after the Salvadoran civil war. Susan Mahler’s 1995 work, *Salvadorans in Suburbia*, was among the first to address the challenges encountered by Salvadorans in the United States in the 1980s and 1990s. These challenges included Salvadorans’ often dubious legal status and the resistance and prejudice of their new American neighbors.¹⁹ Cecilia Menjívar’s *Fragmented Ties* questions the conventional image of immigrant solidarity by showing how the struggles encountered by Salvadorans in the United States often impinged on their ability to help each other.²⁰ In *Legalizing Moves*, Susan Bibler Coutin focuses on the

¹⁷ Tony Kushner, *Remembering Refugees: Then and Now* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 47. See also: Christiane Harzig and Dirk Hoerder with Donna Gabaccia, *What is Migration History?* (Cambridge: Polity, 2009); Katharine Knox and Tony Kushner, *Refugees in an Age of Genocide: Global, National and Local Perspectives during the Twentieth Century* (Abingdon, UK: Frank Cass, 1999).

¹⁸ García, *Seeking Refuge*.

¹⁹ Sarah Mahler, *Salvadorans in Suburbia: Symbiosis and Conflict* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1995).

²⁰ Cecilia Menjivar, *Fragmented Ties: Salvadoran Immigrant Networks in America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

strategies that Salvadoran immigrants used to gain citizenship rights in the United States.²¹ Nora Hamilton and Norma Stoltz Chinchilla's *Seeking Community in a Global City* describes how Salvadorans and Guatemalans in Los Angeles have created community since the 1980s.²² More recent works have considered Salvadoran- Americans in a transnational context. David Pedersen's 2013 book, *American Value*, examines the relationship between the Salvadoran town of Intipucá, known for its remittance wealth, and Salvadorans living in Washington D.C., home to the second-largest population of Salvadorans in the United States.²³ Robin Maria DeLugan's 2012 *Reimagining National Belonging* considers El Salvador's post-conflict nation-building. DeLugan writes that Salvadorans outside the political boundaries of El Salvador, particularly those in the United States, have been incorporated into El Salvador's twenty-first century concept of nationhood.²⁴

A few studies have focused on the experiences of Salvadoran refugees in Central America and elsewhere. Among these is Tanya Basok's *Keeping Heads Above Water*, which examines the experiences of Salvadoran refugees in Costa Rica in the 1980s. Basok addresses the success and failure of some small urban refugee enterprises.²⁵ Bridget Hayden's 2003 book, *Salvadorans in Costa Rica*, examines how Salvadorans who came to Costa Rica during the war

²¹ Susan Bibler Coutin, *Legalizing Moves: Salvadoran Immigrants' Struggle for U.S. Residency* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003).

²² Nora Hamilton and Norma Stoltz Chinchilla, *Seeking Community in a Global City: Guatemalans and Salvadorans in Los Angeles* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001).

²³ David Pedersen, *American Value: Migrants, Money, and Meaning in El Salvador and the United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

²⁴ Robin Maria DeLugan, *Reimagining National Belonging: Post-Civil War El Salvador in a Global Context* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2012).

²⁵ Tanya Basok, *Keeping Heads Above Water: Salvadorean Refugees in Costa Rica*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993).

adapted to life there before and after 1992.²⁶ Other works have focused on Salvadoran refugees in Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua and Sweden.²⁷

Salvadorans do not figure prominently in the Canadian historical writing about refugees of the 1980s and early 1990s. In fact, that timeframe has generally received limited academic attention. For example, in Ninette Kelley and Michael Trebilcock's survey of Canadian immigration policy, only a chapter is devoted to the period of 1977 through to 1995.²⁸ Similarly, Valerie Knowles' *Strangers at Our Gates* devotes roughly twenty pages to the 1980s and 1990s.²⁹ A few monographs, however, focus explicitly on Canadian immigration in the 1980s. These include Gerald Dirks' *Controversy and Complexity*, which devotes two chapters to Canadian refugee policy.³⁰ Many other works that describe Canadian immigration and refugee policy in the 1980s and 1990s were not written by historians, and were published during or shortly after the conclusion of the Salvadoran civil war. These include Freda Hawkins' *Canada and Immigration*, Howard Adelman's *Refugee Policy*, and works by authors such as Jason Lemco, David Matas, Ilana Simon, and Liisa North.³¹ Some literature also exists relating to the mental and physical health of Salvadoran refugees in Canada.³²

²⁶ Bridget A. Hayden, *Salvadorans in Costa Rica: Displaced Lives* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2003).

²⁷ Jean-Claude Desenclos, Dominique Michel, Françoise Tholly, Ibrahim Magdi, Bernard Pecoul and Gilles Desve, "Mortality trends among refugees in Honduras, 1984-1987," *International journal of epidemiology* 19, no. 2 (1990): 367-373; Robin E. Miller, "Demystifying 'safe haven': the case of Salvadoran and Guatemalan refugees who have lived in Mexico," *Georgetown Immigration Law Journal* 3, no. 1 (Spring 1989): 45-85; Augusto Morel, *Refugiados Salvadoreños en Nicaragua* (Managua: Asociación de Coletivos de Refugiados Salvadoreños (ACRES), 1991); Ann-Charlotte Hermansson, Toomas Timpka and James M. Nyce, "Exploration of the life histories and future of war-wounded Salvadoran and Iranian Kurd quota refugees in Sweden: a qualitative approach," *International Journal of Social Welfare* 12, no. 2 (2003): 142-153.

²⁸ Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 382 – 440.

²⁹ Valerie Knowles, *Strangers at Our Gates: Canadian Immigration and Immigration Policy, 1540 – 2006*, 2nd ed., (Toronto: Dundurn, 2007), 222 – 248.

³⁰ Dirks, *Controversy and Complexity*, 60 – 96.

³¹ Freda Hawkins, *Canada and Immigration: Public Policy and Public Concern* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988); Howard Adelman, ed., *Refugee Policy: Canada and the United States* (Toronto:

A few Canadian refugee groups, who were contemporaries of Salvadoran arrivals, have garnered the attention of historians. Some of these works describe the experiences of Chilean refugees. These include books such as *Safe Haven*, which reflects on the experiences of five refugee families in Canada, and *They Used to Call Us Witches*, in which Julie Shayne examines the roles played by Chilean women exiles in Vancouver during Pinochet's dictatorship from 1973 to 1990.³³ Ugandans were another group who preceded Salvadorans in seeking refugee status in Canada, but there is limited scholarship about their experiences. Some work has been done, for example, on the employment experiences of Ugandans in Canada, Britain and India.³⁴ David Carmen and David Bercuson's book, *The World in Canada*, addresses Haitian and Jamaican migrants – thousands of whom came to Canada in the 1980s – and the interplay between these diasporic communities and Canadian foreign policy.³⁵ The arrival of Indochinese refugees – popularly referred to as “boat people” – has generated more academic attention than the coming of any other migrant group to Canada in the late 1970s and 1980s. For example, Morton Beiser's *Strangers at the Gate* inquires into refugee settlement issues during these peoples' first decade in Canada.³⁶ Louis-Jacques Dorais has written extensively about the

York Lanes Press, 1991); Lemco, *Canada and the Crisis*; David Matats and Ilana Simon, *Closing the Doors: the Failure of Refugee Protection* (Toronto: Summerhill Press, 1989); North and CAPA, *Between War and Peace*.

³² See for example: Sarah Bowen, “Resilience and Health: Salvadoran refugee women in Manitoba,” Msc. Thesis, University of Manitoba, 1999; Josephine Astrid Quallenberg, “A psycho-semiotic study of the adaptation of Salvadoran families to Canada,” *American Journal of Psychoanalysis* 60, no. 3 (2000) 277-292; Marta Y. Young, “Moderators of stress in Salvadoran refugees: The role of social and personal resources,” *International Migration Review* 3, no. 135 (2001): 840-869.

³³ Elizabeth McLuhan, *Safe Haven: the Refugee Experience of Five Families* (Toronto: Multicultural History Society of Ontario, 1995); Julie Shayne, *They Used to Call Us Witches: Chilean Exiles, Culture, and Feminism* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009).

³⁴ Adams, Bert N., and Victor Jesudason, “The employment of Ugandan Asian refugees in Britain, Canada, and India,” *Ethnic & Racial Studies* 7, no. 4 (1984): 462 - 478.

³⁵ David Carment and David Bercuson, *The World in Canada: Diaspora, Demography, and Domestic Politics* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2008).

³⁶ Morton Beiser, *Strangers at the Gate: The “Boat People’s” First Ten Years in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999).

Vietnamese in Canada, and examined themes of transnationalism and community.³⁷ All of these works combined, however, still reflect a paucity of academic writing about refugees to Canada in the 1980s.

Partially in response to this academic gap, Alexander Freund of the University of Winnipeg initiated the Salvadoran Voices of Manitoba Project in 2011. I was involved with this oral history project in a minor way, and it was through that experience that I developed this thesis topic.³⁸ Rather than employing oral histories, my thesis responds to the limited academic writing about Salvadoran refugees to Canada by examining their portrayal in Canadian newspapers.

Newspapers provide unique insights into the time and place in which they were produced. In the 1980s, Canadian newspapers had extraordinary reach: in 1989, there were more than 5.8 million Canadian newspapers sold daily to a Canadian population of approximately 27 million people.³⁹ In the second half of the twentieth century, Canada had one of the most advanced media markets in the world.⁴⁰ Canadians also generally believed what newspapers had to tell them. For example, one 1988 survey found that 51% of Canadian respondents felt “a great deal of confidence in newspaper reporting.”⁴¹ But newspapers of the 1980s did more than relate a day’s events to a wider audience, and they should not be described as simple transmitters of

³⁷ See for example: Louis-Jacques Dorais, “Refugee adaptation and community structure: the Indochinese in Quebec City, Canada,” *International Migration Review* 25, no. 3 (1991): 551 – 573; Louis-Jacques Dorais, *Indétités transnationales chez les Vietnamiens du Québec* (Quebec: Université Laval, 1998); Louis-Jacques Dorais, Louise Pilon-Le and Huy Nguyen, *Exile in a Cold Land: A Vietnamese Community in Canada* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987).

³⁸ “Conference Abstracts (of regular session),” *2012 Interdisciplinary and International Conference: Languages and Cultures of Conflicts and Atrocities* (Winnipeg: The Languages and Cultures Circle of Manitoba and North Dakota and the University of Manitoba, 2012), 24.

³⁹ David Taras, *Power and Betrayal in the Canadian Media* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 1999), 16; David Taras, Frits Pannekoek and Maria Bakardjieva, eds., *How Canadians Communicate*. (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2003), 103; Statistics Canada, “Censuses of Canada 1665 to 1871: Estimated population of Canada, 1605 to present” March 20, 2013, accessed May 30, 2014, <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/98-187-x/4151287-eng.htm>.

⁴⁰ Augie Fleras, *Mass Media Communications in Canada* (Toronto: Thompson Nelson, 2003), 2.

⁴¹ Taras, *Power and Betrayal*, 16.

facts. It is more accurate to say that newspapers produce knowledge, by transforming the lives of millions of people into coherent narratives, usually containing plots and characters that readers find familiar.⁴²

Despite widespread belief and assertions to the contrary, newspapers do not produce “objective” knowledge. Newspapers are products of the societies in which they are made, so they both reflect and – as knowledge producers – shape social norms.⁴³ This is not to say that newspapers are mere agents of propaganda, but that they operate within a complex social process. Newspapers, as instruments of mass media, are rooted in the society of their time and its power structures.⁴⁴ Furthermore, the news media help to shape and define the discourse on matters of public importance, and they occupy the most privileged spaces for the exchange of ideas and information. Major news outlets like newspapers also tend to position themselves closely to those institutional actors – such as the courts, legislatures and the police – that routinely and consistently provide a volume of activity that can be reported.⁴⁵ According to Paul Rutherford, media history can therefore be viewed “as a form of cultural history, more properly a part of the study of meanings and signification, where it is crucial to understanding the networks of pleasure and power that organize life.”⁴⁶

Of the many ways in which newspapers can “organize life,” one of the most pertinent for this study is the ability of the print media to inform conceptions of the nation. Benedict Anderson has argued that modern nations are “imagined communities,” comprised of millions of

⁴² Joshua Greenberg and Sean Hier, “Crisis, Mobilization and Collective Problematization; ‘illegal’ Chinese migrants and the Canadian news media.” *Journalism Studies* 2, no. 4 (2001): 566.

⁴³ Rachel Burke, “Invitation or Invasion? The ‘family home’ metaphor in the Australian media’s construction of immigration,” *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 23, no. 1 (2002): 60.

⁴⁴ Mary Vipond, *The Mass Media in Canada*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 1992), 106 – 107.

⁴⁵ Greenberg and Hier, “Crisis, Mobilization and Collective Problematization,” 564 – 565.

⁴⁶ Paul Rutherford, “Encounters with Theory,” in *Communicating in Canada’s Past: Essays in Media History*, eds. Gene Allen and Daniel J. Robinson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 271.

inhabitants who will never meet each other. Nevertheless, these millions of people understand themselves to share a common national identity and belong to the same nation. Anderson has argued that the expansion of print media in the nineteenth century enabled elites to shape the imagined community of the nation and define its interests.⁴⁷ Sunera Thobani has added that, in the late twentieth century, the mass media became even more critical to the process of nation-building.⁴⁸ The media allowed for the ideas of elites to be widely disseminated and popularized, and for a society's basic myths to be told and retold, reaffirming a society's sense of itself as an imagined community.⁴⁹

In his study of nationalism, Anderson asserts that the modern nation state is conceived of as a limited entity; no nation, no matter its size, envisions itself as coterminous with all humanity.⁵⁰ Thobani adds to this that citizenship has become the major signifier of membership in the nation state in advanced capitalist countries, like Canada, in the post-World War II era. She argues that while this may suggest a community of equals, Canadian citizens have never been a homogenous group nor have they enjoyed equal rights or membership status in the nation.⁵¹ As a reflection of a society's power structures, newspapers generally give voice to those more powerful members of a nation state.

The perspectives of people who are excluded from or on the edge of the nation are usually limited in mass media outlets; accordingly, the voices of refugees are generally absent

⁴⁷ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 2nd ed. (London and New York: Verso, 1991), 6 -7.

⁴⁸ Sunera Thobani, "War and the politics of truth-making in Canada," *Qualitative Studies in Education* 16, no. 3 (May – June 2003): 404.

⁴⁹ Greenberg and Hier, "Crisis, Mobilization and Collective Problematization," 566.

⁵⁰ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 7.

⁵¹ Sunera Thobani, "Nationalizing Canadians: Bordering Immigrant Women in the Late Twentieth Century," *Canadian Journal of Women & the Law* 12 (2000): 281.

from the pages of major Canadian newspapers.⁵² Augie Fleras writes that the Canadian media's treatment of Aboriginal people, people of colour, and immigrants and refugees has been "inconclusive at best, deplorable at worst."⁵³ He has noted trends in the misrepresentations of minorities in Canadian newspapers, such as minorities being: "trivialized as irrelevant or inferior, demonized as a social menace and threat to society, [and] scapegoated as problem people or creating social problems."⁵⁴ Prem Kumar Rajaram adds that as political identity and discourse are connected to a territorial nation-state, those without citizenship are portrayed as speechless, and media representations of "speechless" refugees therefore reinforce the state-centric political imagination.⁵⁵

Furthermore, Canadian newspapers often racialized members of visible minorities, such as Salvadoran refugees, by depicting them in terms of their biological characteristics.⁵⁶ Stereotypes were employed, and discourses of race and racism sometimes used culture to reinforce the difference between "our" superior cultural values and "their" inferior (that is, non-Western) ones.⁵⁷ The media often portrayed events through the "White gaze": the lens of their White experiences, interpretations and understandings of the world.⁵⁸ These narratives legitimized the position and power of the dominant White elite, and ensured that counter-narratives usually went unheard.⁵⁹ These perspectives and prejudices are historically situated, and can be distinguished from the blatant forms of prejudice and racialized discourses that

⁵² Liette Gilbert, "The Discursive Production of a Mexican Refugee Crisis in Canadian Media and Policy," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 39, no. 5 (2013): 829; Stephen E. Nancoo and Robert Sterling Nancoo, eds., *The Mass Media and Canadian Diversity* (Mississauga, ON: Canadian Educators' Press, 1996), 52.

⁵³ Fleras, *Mass Media Communications*, 279.

⁵⁴ Fleras, *Mass Media Communications*, 279.

⁵⁵ Prem Kumar Rajaram, "Humanitarianism and Representations of the Refugee," *Refugee Studies* 15, no. 3 (2002): 248.

⁵⁶ Frances Henry and Carol Tator, *Racial Profiling in Canada: Challenging the Myth of "A Few Bad Apples"* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 8.

⁵⁷ Henry and Tator, *Racial Profiling*, 10.

⁵⁸ Henry and Tator, *Racial Profiling*, 147 – 150; Augie Fleras and Jean Lock Kunz, *Media and Minorities: Representing Diversity in a Multicultural Canada* (Toronto: Thompson Education Publishing, 2001), XII.

⁵⁹ Henry and Tator, *Racial Profiling*, 150; Fleras and Kunz, *Media and Minorities*, 44.

appeared in Canadian newspapers earlier in the twentieth century. Although such overt racism had since become ill-advised in the Canadian print media, more covert displays persisted, and were frequently manifested as prejudice and ethnocentrism.⁶⁰

These concepts are important to my thesis because I suggest that the Canadian print media, as a powerful institution in Canadian society, acted as “gatekeepers” of discourse during the time of the Salvadoran civil war. I gleaned this idea from Franca Iacovetta’s influential monograph, *Gatekeepers*, which addresses newcomers to Canada in the years following World War II. In her chapter focused on press narratives of migration, Iacovetta suggests that Canadian newspapers acted as gatekeepers of discourse, and, by writing about migrants to Canada, these newspapers wanted to mould public opinions and public policy.⁶¹ Of course, newspapers are not directly charged with determining who is admitted to Canada, or when or how this occurs, but they play a key role in determining how newcomers are incorporated into the discursive imagined community of Canada. Iacovetta’s work therefore considers how such discursive gatekeepers constructed newcomers. In a similar way, my thesis focuses on how Canadian newspapers portrayed refugees of El Salvador’s civil war, and their relationship to the imagined community of Canada.

By examining newspapers, my thesis also considers how Canadian discourses about Salvadoran refugees changed from 1980 to 1992. Mainstream newspapers are neither static nor monolithic. Fleras is consistent with many communications scholars in suggesting that:

mainstream media represent a contested site – a kind of ideological battleground involving a struggle among competing forces for control of content, agendas, and

⁶⁰ Fleras and Kunz, *Media and Minorities*, 46.

⁶¹ Franca Iacovetta, *Gatekeepers: Reshaping Immigrant Lives in Cold War Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2006), 22.

outputs. Hegemonic discourses compete with oppositional meanings to establish a bewildering array of contradictory outcomes and mixed messages.⁶²

The discourses presented in major newspapers are debated and morph over time, and may contradict one another. But, as Stuart Hall explains, discourses do not stop abruptly. Instead, “they go unfolding, changing shape, as they make sense of new circumstances.”⁶³ In sum, focusing on newspapers from 1980 to 1992 provides insights into the power structures at work in a past society, popular conceptions of the nation and its membership, and how these discourses were contested and changed over time.

Focusing on newspapers also allows my thesis to benefit from academic writing that addresses refugees in the news in other eras. This is helpful given the limited historiography on refugees of the 1980s and 1990s. Perhaps reflecting the greater focus of Canadian immigration historians on the post-World War II era, there are a number of studies that examine how refugees and immigrants figured into Canadian discourses in the years 1945 through circa 1965. As mentioned, Franca Iacovetta’s work is informative in this way.⁶⁴

There are also many studies about the portrayal of refugees in Canada during the past twenty years. These include studies of the responses of the Canadian print media to the arrival of 599 Chinese migrants in Vancouver in 1999.⁶⁵ Similarly, the press generated by the arrival of 76 Tamil refugees off the coast of Victoria in 2009 has been analyzed by Ashley Bradimore and

⁶² Fleras, *Mass Media Communications*, 3. See also: Greenberg and Hier, “Crisis, Mobilization and Collective Problematization,” 563.

⁶³ Stuart Hall, “The Spectacle of the ‘Other,’” In *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, ed. Stuart Hall (London: Open University Press, 1997) 314.

⁶⁴ Franca Iacovetta, “The Sexual Politics of Moral Citizenship and Containing “Dangerous Foreign Men in Cold War Canada, 1950s–1960s,” *Histoire sociale/Social History* 33, no. 66 (200): 389 – 361; Franca Iacovetta, “Freedom Lovers, Sex Deviates, and Damaged Women: Iron Curtain Refugee Discourses in Cold War Canada,” in *Love, Hate and Fear in Canada’s Cold War*, Richard Cavell, ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004); Iacovetta, *Gatekeepers*.

⁶⁵ Beth Clarkson, “600 is too many: How the press used four boatloads of Chinese migrants to create an immigration crisis,” *Ryerson Review of Journalism* (Spring 2000): 6 – 9; Joshua Greenberg, “Opinion Discourse and Canadian Newspapers: The Case of the Chinese ‘Boat People’” *Canadian Journal of Communications* 25, no. 4 (2000): 517 – 537.

Harald Bauder.⁶⁶ Liette Gilbert's 2007 study of how the local media in Windsor, Ontario portrayed a "refugee crisis" concerning Mexicans in the region in 2007 is also instructive.⁶⁷

Harald Bauder conducted a similar but more expansive study of how five prominent Canadian newspapers reported on immigration from 1996 to 2004, the period in which the 2002 *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* – successor to the 1976 Act – was developed.⁶⁸

These studies of other eras helped to inform my research methodology. Specifically, my thesis examines how Salvadoran refugees were portrayed in three Canadian daily newspapers: the *Globe and Mail*, the *Toronto Star* and Montreal's *Gazette*. The *Globe and Mail* is often regarded as Canada's newspaper of record, and this newspaper has frequently provided more extensive coverage of foreign affairs and national politics than publications associated with specific cities.⁶⁹ I chose to examine the *Star* and the *Gazette* in part because of their geographic locations: In the 1980s, Toronto and Montreal were the two Canadian cities that received the greatest number of Salvadoran refugees.⁷⁰ The *Star* is also the most widely read daily newspaper in Canada and generally caters to a diverse readership. Furthermore, the *Star* has long been a proponent of Canadian nationalism, and it is often considered Canada's most left-wing newspaper.⁷¹ The *Gazette* was founded in 1778 and is now Quebec's only English-language

⁶⁶ Ashley Bradimore and Harald Bauder, "Mystery Ships and Risky Boat People: Tamil Refugee Migration in Canadian Newsprint Media," *Canadian Journal of Communications* 36 (2011): 637 – 661.

⁶⁷ Liette Gilbert, "Mexican Refugee Crisis," 827.

⁶⁸ Harald Bauder, "Immigration Debate in Canada: How Newspapers Reported, 1996 – 2004," *International Migration & Integration* 9 (2008): 289.

⁶⁹ Christopher Dornan, "Printed Matter: Canadian Newspapers," in Taras, Pannekoek and Bakardjieva, *How Canadians Communicate*, 116; David Hayes, *Power and Influence: The Globe and Mail and the News Revolution* (Toronto: Key Porter Books Ltd., 1992): 45-70.

⁷⁰ García, *Seeking Refuge* 139.

⁷¹ Bradimore and Bauder, "Mystery Ships," 9; Dornan, "Printed Matter," 116.

daily newspaper. These three newspapers had different owners in the 1980s, which perhaps also enabled them to put forward some differing perspectives.⁷²

Rather than read every article pertaining to Salvadoran refugees from 1979 through 1992, I looked for articles from three specific eras: 1980 to 1982, 1986 to 1987, and 1991 to 1992. I chose the first period because it encompassed the escalation of hostilities in El Salvador, and the beginning of international media attention being directed towards that nation and its refugees. In 1986 and 1987, an unprecedented number of Salvadorans arrived in Canada, and they were the focus of extensive attention from Canadian newspapers and changes in legislation. Finally, I chose 1991 and 1992 because these years encompassed the end of the civil war in El Salvador, and the conclusion of the Cold War. By comparing three distinct but closely related time periods, I hoped to more easily capture changes and consistencies over time.

To locate the majority of these articles, I used *Proquest: Canadian Newsstand Major Dailies*. For the years 1980 to 1982, the *Toronto Star* and the *Gazette* were unavailable on *Proquest*. I was able to subscribe to the *Toronto Star Archive* online, and to locate articles from that era, but my thesis does not address articles from the *Gazette* from 1980 to 1982. The majority of the articles examined here were retrieved because they included the search terms “refugee” and “El Salvador.” These searches generated 426 articles: 93 from 1980 to 1982, 259 from 1986 and 1987, and 74 from 1991 and 1992. In some instances, however, I expanded these search terms in order to provide a more representative sample of newspaper articles that described the civil war in El Salvador and its refugees. I also conducted a few searches about specific Salvadoran individuals who appeared in Canadian newspapers. This way, I was able to

⁷² *Bloomberg Businessweek*, “Company Overview of The Globe and Mail Inc.” accessed March 1, 2014, <http://investing.businessweek.com/research/stocks/private/snapshot.asp?privcapId=7924708>; *Montreal Gazette*, “About Us,” accessed March 1, 2014, <http://www.montrealgazette.com/about-montreal-gazette/aboutus.html>; *Toronto Star*, “History of the Toronto Star,” accessed March 1, 2014, <http://www.thestar.com/about/history.html>.

locate articles that contributed to discourses about the civil war and its refugees, but which may not have explicitly used the word “refugee.”

Some studies similar to mine consider only “hard news” articles, as these are ostensibly bound by conventional journalistic standards of objectivity, fairness and balance. While I agree that analyzing hard news articles “allows for insight into normalized discourse,”⁷³ for my thesis I chose to analyze “soft” sources, such as editorials and letters to the editor, in addition to news reports, features and columns. I chose to include all of these forms of articles because leading communications scholars like Teun van Dijk have suggested that they are all important to the propagation of public discourse.⁷⁴

I found that both “hard” and “soft” sources contained the opinions of state actors and their critics in fairly equal measure. For example, in the first two months of 1987, 68 articles were published that contained the terms “El Salvador” and “refugee.” Among these, 32 articles were focused on the perspectives of various government actors and/or were hostile to the arrival of more refugees. Only two of these articles were letters to the editor or otherwise clearly demarcated as comment pieces. This was relatively balanced by the 34 articles that prioritized the perspectives of refugees and/or refugee advocates; 4 of these were “soft” pieces. (The other two articles were not easily categorized within this dichotomy.) More variation was found in each newspaper’s representation of particular stories and events, but it would be inaccurate to say that Canadian newspapers during this time overwhelmingly prioritized state perspectives. They did, however, prioritize the perspectives of White Canadians.

⁷³ Bradimore and Bauder, “Mystery Ships,” 645.

⁷⁴ Teun A. Dijk, *Racism and the Press*, (London: Routledge, 1991), 7. See also: Adeyanju, Charles T. and Nicole Neverson, “‘There will be a next time’: Media Discourse about an ‘Apocalyptic’ Vision of Immigration, Racial Diversity, and Health Risks,” *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 39, no. 1- 2 (2007): 86; Stuart Hall, Chas Critcher, Tony Jefferson, John Clarke, and Brian Roberts, *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law-and-Order* (London: Macmillan, 1978).

To address these and other topics and themes, my thesis is organized into three chapters. These chapters examine the years 1980 to 1982, 1986 to 1987 and 1991 to 1992. Each of these chapters is organized in a similar way: They begin with an overview of the articles that addressed Salvadoran refugees, and a summary of the Canadian social, political and economic context in the years under consideration. The majority of each chapter is comprised of a consideration of a few topics that received extensive attention from Canadian newspapers. In chapter one, I consider how Canadian newspapers reported on Canada's role in the Salvadoran civil war, the plight of Salvadoran refugees in Central America, and the arrival of the first Salvadoran refugees to Canada. Chapter two focuses on two broad topics: newspapers' depictions of individual Salvadorans and of Salvadorans as a group. These portrayals are presented in the context of changes made to Canadian immigration policies and laws in 1987, namely the effective closing of the U.S. border to refugee claimants beginning in February of 1987 and the introduction of Bills C-55 and C-84 in the spring and summer of 1987. Chapter three examines how Canadian newspapers wrote about the emerging peace in El Salvador, the continued arrival of groups of refugees, and the experiences of several individual Salvadoran refugees in Canada.

Throughout these chapters, I suggest that in writing about Salvadoran refugees and, to a lesser extent, the war that produced them, Canadian newspapers performed a discursive gatekeeping function. These newspapers debated if and to what extent Salvadoran refugees could be included in the Canadian nation state, and this debate morphed as the civil war continued. In the early 1980s, Canadian newspapers portrayed Salvadoran refugees as a faraway group of interchangeable peasants. Most of the few stories about individual Salvadorans that appeared in Canadian newspapers suggested that Canada should accept more Salvadoran refugees, but these people remained separate from the imagined national community. In 1986 and 1987, this

humanitarian impulse continued in the Canadian print media, especially in depictions of individual, middle-class Salvadorans. Portrayals of Salvadorans as a group, however, were more complicated, as refugees from all nations became a highly contested topic in those years. By 1991 and 1992, refugees continued to be a focus of the Canadian print media's attention, but in these years Salvadorans were more frequently discussed as individuals than as a group. This portrayal of Salvadorans may suggest their growing inclusion in the media's conception of Canada as an imagined community, but their inclusion was limited at best.

Chapter One: 1980 – 1982

This chapter examines how two Canadian newspapers described refugees of El Salvador's civil war from 1980 through 1982. This chapter begins with an overview of the Canadian domestic context for the years under consideration; this is followed by an outline of the Canadian newspaper content that pertained to Salvadoran refugees from 1980 through 1982. Most of my attention is devoted to three topics that help illuminate how Canadian newspapers reported on Salvadoran refugees: Specifically, I consider how Canadian newspapers portrayed Canada's role in the Salvadoran civil war, the plight of Salvadoran refugees in Honduras and elsewhere in Central America, and the arrival of the first Salvadoran refugees in Canada. The Salvadoran civil war was presented in varied ways, as both the official interpretations of the United States and oppositional views were evident in Canadian papers. Meanwhile, refugees produced by this war fled throughout Central America, and Canadian newspapers described them as a helpless, homogenous group of peasants. Although the place of Salvadorans in the Cold War context was somewhat ambiguous, newspapers generally called on their readerships to show compassion for these refugees. The same perspective was extended to individual Salvadoran refugees in Canada, with the exception of one refugee whose admissibility was contested in a number of articles. By debating whether Salvadorans should be admitted to Canada, Canadian newspapers in the early 1980s suggested that Salvadorans, regardless of their physical locations or legal statuses, remained outside the print media's conception of Canada as an imagined community.

The years 1980 through 1982 entailed a few changes in government along with economic difficulties for Canada. Liberal party leader Pierre Elliot Trudeau was elected Prime Minister of Canada in 1968. By the late 1970s, the popularity of the Liberals had declined as the national

debt, inflation and unemployment were all on the rise. In the federal election of 1979, Joseph (“Joe”) Clark led the Conservative Party to a narrow win over the Liberals, but his government was unable to maintain the support of the House of Commons. In February of 1980, Trudeau’s Liberal party won a majority government that lasted until 1984.⁷⁵ Canadian economic growth continued to slow, while inflation, unemployment and government deficits grew. In 1981 and 1982, Canada – along with the rest of the industrialized world – experienced its worst economic depression since the 1930s. By 1983, this recession began to moderate, although the provinces recovered at varying rates.⁷⁶

The early 1980s also entailed increased divergence from the “welfare state” consensus of three post-war decades. Both the Liberal and Conservative parties increasingly embraced neo-liberal thinking. However, many Canadians continued to support the goals of a generous welfare state and joined organizations to prevent what they perceived as troubling changes in Canadian society. National identity was also at the fore of a few constitutional questions in the early 1980s. On May 20, 1980, the referendum on Quebec sovereignty was defeated. In 1982, Trudeau succeeded in his campaign to achieve “patriation” of the constitution when the *Constitution Act, 1982* was proclaimed.⁷⁷ This Act includes the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.⁷⁸

On the international stage, the Trudeau governments generally sought to promote Canada’s independent political identity, while also expanding Canadian prosperity and responding to human needs abroad. Trudeau’s attitude towards the Cold War was fairly ambiguous. His governments improved relations with the Soviets, but also did not contest U.S.

⁷⁵ In 1984, John Turner successfully contested the leadership of the Liberal Party and therefore served as Prime Minister. After being sworn in as prime minister in 1984, Turner called an election in which the Liberals were defeated.

⁷⁶ Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 382; Margaret Conrad and Alvin Finkel, *History of the Canadian Peoples, Volume 2: 1967 to the Present*, 5th ed. (Toronto: Pearson Canada, 2009), 404 – 407, 413 – 414.

⁷⁷ With this change, Britain was no longer responsible for Canada’s constitutional amendments.

⁷⁸ Conrad and Finkel, *Canadian Peoples*, 404 – 407, 413 – 414.

policy towards the Soviet Union, the Middle East, Vietnam or Central America.⁷⁹ Trudeau's governments expanded Canada's foreign aid efforts and pursued a policy promoting international control of nuclear weapons.

Beginning with his initial election in 1968, Trudeau wanted to increase economic and political ties with Central America. Canadian trade with Central America grew dramatically from 1974 to 1984, and exports to the region doubled; trade leveled off during the continued violence of the 1980s, however.⁸⁰ Citing human rights abuses, the Trudeau government suspended aid to El Salvador in 1981, and the Government of Canada was also not officially involved in the 1982 Salvadoran elections.⁸¹

Canadian newspapers from 1980 through 1982 suggest growing Canadian concern and interest in Central America, and El Salvador specifically. For the years 1980 through 1982, I initially examined a total of 93 Canadian newspaper articles that contained the terms "El Salvador" and "refugees." Of these, 53 were found in the *Globe and Mail* and 40 were published in the *Toronto Star*. The *Globe* published 5 articles containing these search terms in 1980, 33 such articles in 1981, and 15 in 1982. In the *Star*, 8 articles containing these search terms were published in 1980, 21 appeared in 1981 and 11 in 1982.⁸² I also conducted more expansive searches, in the hope of giving a more accurate reflection of reporting on the war that produced these refugees; many of the most pertinent articles about the war did not contain the word "refugee." Therefore, I also reviewed articles that contained the words "El Salvador." In the *Globe and Mail*, there were a total of 1082 of these from 1980 through 1982; these included 153

⁷⁹ In 1983, the Trudeau government approved the testing of U.S. cruise missiles in the Canadian north.

⁸⁰ Dirks, *Controversy and Complexity*, 71; García, *Seeking Refuge*, 124 – 125; Jonathan Lemco, *Canada and the Crisis*, 3 -4, 60.

⁸¹ Lemco, *Canada and the Crisis*, 3 - 6; David R. Morrison, *Aid and Ebb Tide: A History of CIDA and Canadian Development Assistance* (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1998), 185 – 186.

⁸² With these search terms, the online *Toronto Star Archive* online produced pages that contained articles with the words "El Salvador" and "refugee" anywhere on the page, rather than specifically in the same article. The numbers listed here only include articles that, upon my review, include both terms.

in 1980, 486 in 1981 and 443 in 1982.⁸³ In the *Star*, 636 articles mentioned “El Salvador”: 121 in 1980, 255 in 1981 and 260 in 1982.

The stories that appeared in Canadian newspapers about the war in El Salvador reflected varying perspectives. Many of these articles presented interpretations of the war from an American vantage point, which was often consistent with U.S. policy interests. In fact, many of the international news stories that appeared in Canadian newspapers in the 1980s were written by American authors, including those who worked at the Associated Press, which has long been based in New York City, and United Press International (UPI), whose head office was in Washington D.C.⁸⁴ Mary Vipond has noted how this centralization of print media sources was increasingly common in the 1980s in Canada: only about two-thirds of the average Canadian daily newspaper’s content was written by its own staff.⁸⁵ Writing specifically about the civil war in El Salvador, Walter Soderland has added that: “Canadians [were] presented information on world events filtered through American perceptual lenses.”⁸⁶ According to scholars like Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky, U.S. mass media outlets of the 1980s were heavily influenced by U.S. policy in their portrayal of the war in El Salvador.⁸⁷

In the early 1980s, the Reagan Administration interpreted the war in El Salvador as part of its struggle against communist expansion. Beginning with his successful presidential

⁸³ This search excluded the following items: classified ads, display ads, lottery numbers, stock quotes, tables of contents, and weather reports.

⁸⁴ Associated Press, “AP’s History,” *The Associated Press*, accessed November 24, 2013, <http://www.ap.org/company/history/ap-history>; United Press International, “About UPI,” *United Press International*, accessed 24 November 2013 <http://about.upi.com>.

⁸⁵ The increased centralization of Canadian newspapers generated enough national concern to prompt the federal government to order the Royal Newspapers Commission in 1980. The so-called “Kent Commission” released its report in 1981, and concluded that newspaper competition in Canada was “virtually dead.” Vipond, *Mass Media in Canada*, 48, 74 -76.

⁸⁶ Walter C. Soderland, “El Salvador: A Comparative Study of Canadian and American Press Reporting, 1981-1983,” *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies / Revue canadienne des études latino-américaines et caraïbes*, 10, No. 20 (1985): 25.

⁸⁷ Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988), 37 – 59.

campaign in 1980, Ronald Reagan had promised his supporters he would reassert the United States' global influence, starting in Central America. For example, a key policy paper for the Reagan campaign of 1980 described the Caribbean as “becoming a Marxist-Leninist lake... The Caribbean rim and basin are spotted with Soviet surrogates and ringed with socialist states.”⁸⁸ The U.S. failure to prevent or reverse the Cuban Revolution of 1959 and the Sandinistas' victory in Nicaragua in 1979 were thorns in the side of Reagan and his supporters. To prevent similar events from unfolding, Reagan developed and implemented what became known as the “Reagan Doctrine” during his two terms in office. The Reagan Doctrine may be defined as:

an aggressive strategy of counter-revolution whose purpose [was] not merely the containment of Marxism, but the ‘bleeding’ and overthrow of radical anti-imperialist regimes in the Third World through economic pressure, the arming of right-wing proxies and insurgencies, and the use of force in so-called low-intensity conflicts.⁸⁹

Seeking to contain what it perceived as a Marxist threat in El Salvador, the Reagan Administration made the Salvadoran military regime of the 1980s the third-largest recipient of U.S. aid after Israel and Egypt.⁹⁰ By 1987, the \$608 million the Salvadoran government received from the United States exceeded its own budget of \$582 million; this was a first in the history of U.S. aid.⁹¹

Many articles that appeared in Canadian newspapers favored a U.S. interpretation of the Salvadoran civil war and drew connections between El Salvador and nations such as Nicaragua, Cuba and the Soviet Union. For example, from 1980 through 1982, 190 articles appeared in the *Globe and Mail* which commented upon El Salvador and “communism” or “communists.” During the same time frame, 324 *Globe* articles mentioned both El Salvador and Nicaragua.

⁸⁸ “A New Inter-American Policy for the Eighties,” prepared by the Committee of Sante Fe for the Council of Inter-American Security Inc., 1980, 1 -2, in North and CAPA, *Between War and Peace*, 44.

⁸⁹ Larry Pratt, “The Reagan Doctrine and the Third World,” *The Socialist Register* (1987): 63.

⁹⁰ Duncan Townson, ed., “Salvadorean civil war (1981–92),” *A Dictionary of Contemporary History*, accessed November 3, 2013, http://www.blackwellreference.com.proxy1.lib.umanitoba.ca/subscriber/tocnode.html?id=g9780631209379_chunk_g978063120937920_ss1-6.

⁹¹ Sundaram and Gelber, *A Decade of War*, 135.

Many of these articles suggested that the United States wanted to prevent the incursion of perceived Soviet influence in El Salvador, as it had failed to do in Cuba and Nicaragua. A 1981 *Globe* article – written by Reuters and UPI – was typical in its emphasis of the link between El Salvador and what the United States viewed as its suspicious neighbors, commenting that: “State Department officials said captured documents show that Communist nations in recent months shipped thousands of rifles, mortar shells and other supplies from Cuba through Nicaragua to the [Salvadoran] rebels.”⁹²

These American perspectives, however, did not go uncontested in Canadian newspapers. For example, one *Globe* editorial from 1982 quoted Thomas Enders, then Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, as saying:

There is no mistaking that the decisive battle for Central America is underway in El Salvador. If after Nicaragua, El Salvador is captured by a violent minority, who in Central America would not live in fear? How long would it be before major strategic United States interests – the Panama Canal, sea lanes, oil supplies – were at risk?⁹³

The editorial interrupted with, “Our old friend the domino theory is back... Great power games are being played in El Salvador; little people are doing the dying.”⁹⁴ This author suggested that El Salvador was a pawn in the broader Cold War, and its citizens, however condescendingly referred to, were suffering as a result. Just over a month later, another editorial similarly doubted the Reagan Administration’s explanation of the Salvadoran civil war:

Eventually, Washington may produce the “smoking gun” of Cuban or Nicaraguan involvement in El Salvador. But even if a foreign presence exists, the conflict remains fundamentally an indigenous one. Attempts to depict it as organized from Havana or Moscow seem futile and exaggerated.⁹⁵

⁹² Reuter and the Associated Press, “Communist role in El Salvador documented Flow of arms to rebels alarms U.S.,” *Globe and Mail*, February 21, 1981, 17. See also: Alan Riding, New York Times Service, “El Salvador guerrillas unbowed by failure of January offensive,” *Globe and Mail*, 9 February 1981, 11.

⁹³ Editorial, “The terror in El Salvador,” *Globe and Mail*, February 4, 1982, 6.

⁹⁴ Editorial, “The terror,” 6.

⁹⁵ Editorial, “Tales of El Salvador,” *Globe and Mail*, March 18, 1982, 6.

This editorial concluded that “in the Reagan Administration’s propaganda war over El Salvador, the truth refuses to roll over and die.”⁹⁶

Like the authors of these editorials, Canadian politicians did not wholeheartedly embrace U.S. interpretations of the war in El Salvador. The Trudeau government generally attributed the escalating crisis in El Salvador to local causes rather than to Cuban and Soviet influence. Canadian policy makers therefore sought to uphold their independent interests and perspectives while not alienating the United States. In 1981, Canada’s Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mark MacGuigan, summarized Canada’s official position in the 1980s: “We are prepared to contest the U.S. policy of military aid, but not to protest it; we are prepared to pronounce on it but not to denounce it; we are prepared to criticize it but not to condemn it.”⁹⁷ The United States and Canada never officially disagreed over the Salvadoran civil war.⁹⁸

In Canadian newspapers, however, journalists and readers called on the Government of Canada to chart a course independent of the United States. One of the most cutting articles on Canadian policy vis-à-vis U.S. policy appeared as a three-page feature in the *Star* in September of 1981. Under the title “Al’s Pal,” Heather Robertson accused Mark MacGuigan of “marching to the drumbeat” of U.S. Secretary of State Alexander Haig. Robertson quoted MacGuigan saying that he was “not concerned in the least about the hawkishness of the Reagan Administration as long as it’s directed toward the Soviet Union.”⁹⁹ Robertson described El Salvador as “desperately in need,” and noted that both the Conservatives and the New Democratic Party (NDP) had called on the Canadian government to protest human rights abuses, oppose U.S. military intervention and seek a democratic solution in El Salvador. Robertson

⁹⁶ Editorial, “Tales,” 6.

⁹⁷ Quoted in García, *Seeking Refuge*, 126. See also: Lemco, *Canada and the Crisis*, 16.

⁹⁸ García, *Seeking Refuge*, 126; Lemco, *Canada and the Crisis*, 69.

⁹⁹ Heather Robertson, “Al’s Pal,” *Toronto Star*, July 18, 1981, 6.

wrote that MacGuigan initially supported these goals, but changed his mind after meeting with Haig, when MacGuigan announced that “Canada has no serious obligations in that part of the world.”¹⁰⁰ Robertson felt that MacGuigan’s stance was inconsistent with Canadian values:

It’s scary, then, that the one thing missing from [MacGuigan’s] foreign policy is what Canadians have come to consider the cornerstone of our worldview – sympathy for the wretched of the earth. We have not forgotten our roots as immigrants and refugees, and our foreign policy, for all its equivocations and subterfuges, has reflected that popular identification with the victims of poverty and oppression.¹⁰¹

For Robertson, Canadian government policy towards El Salvador demonstrated a lack of political independence and a misrepresentation of popular sentiments.

Some engaged readers evidently shared Robertson’s disappointment and their words were selected to appear in Canadian newspapers. Karin Wahl-Jorgensen explains that letters to the editor identify public concerns, make readers feel represented, and provide a platform for public debate.¹⁰² These letters, therefore, may indicate further dissent from the Reagan Administration’s perspectives on El Salvador. For example, in December of 1981, one letter to the editor of the *Star* noted that “Canada remains silent on the increasing threat of direct attack on Central America by U.S. or U.S.-backed forces.” This author called on Canadians to take action, writing that “Canadians who hope for a decent, sane foreign policy made not in Washington but in Canada will have to make it themselves. It will not come from Ottawa as it’s presently constituted.”¹⁰³ One June 1981 letter to the editor of the *Globe* suggested that the civil war in El Salvador was important to Canadians, in contrast to what one *Globe* journalist had suggested a few days before.¹⁰⁴ This contributor, Thomas Anthony, wrote that, according to Canadian

¹⁰⁰ Robertson, “Al’s Pal,” 8.

¹⁰¹ Robertson, “Al’s Pal,” 8.

¹⁰² Karin Wahl-Jorgensen, “Letters to the editor in local and regional newspaper: giving a voice to the readers,” in *Local Journalism and Local Media: Making Local News*, eds. Bob Franklin and David Murphy (London: Routledge, 1998), 221.

¹⁰³ Michael Riordon, letter to the editor, *Toronto Star*, December 16, 1981, A9.

¹⁰⁴ Michael Valpy, “Not a Vogue Subject,” *Globe and Mail*, June 19, 1981, 6.

churches and opinion polls, “no international issue has created so much concern and generated so many letters, in Canada, to External Affairs Minister Mark MacGuigan since Vietnam and Biafra.” Anthony went on to assert Canada’s relevance in international affairs:

Canada is a very important player on the world stage and certainly vis-à-vis the United States. The insistence of Canadian human rights, church and union organizations together with a wide range of Canadians from across the country that Canada oppose continuing U.S. military support for the repression in El Salvador is far more than “nice.”¹⁰⁵

Evidently, Canadian newspapers from 1980 to 1982 provide insight into both U.S. interpretations of the civil war in El Salvador, and Canadian objections to such perspectives.¹⁰⁶

Canadian newspaper articles also demonstrated an interest in the victims of this war. Like Robertson’s comment on the “wretched of the earth,” many of the calls for changes in Canadian policy regarding El Salvador described Salvadorans as suffering. These descriptions continued as Salvadorans fled their country en masse. In the early 1980s, Salvadoran refugees appeared in Canadian newspapers as a helpless group of peasants, mostly comprised of women and children. Reporting on the experiences of North Americans in Central America emphasized the potential of Canadians to intervene and perhaps “save” Salvadoran refugees.

The first Salvadoran refugees to appear repeatedly in Canadian newspapers were seeking refuge elsewhere in Central America. In the *Globe and Mail* and the *Toronto Star*, most descriptions of Salvadoran refugees pertained to Salvadorans in Honduras. In the *Globe*, 28 such articles appeared, in addition to the 15 published in the *Star* from 1980 through 1982.

¹⁰⁵ Thomas Anthony, letter to the editor, *Globe and Mail*, June 27, 1981, 7.

¹⁰⁶ Canadian newspapers also captured other forms of dissent enacted by Canadians. These included demonstrations held against U.S. involvement in El Salvador that occurred in Toronto, Ottawa and Montreal in March of 1981. Edward (“Ed”) Broadbent, leader of the federal NDP partook in the Ottawa demonstrations. He was quoted saying that the Salvadoran regime was “maintained by terror,” and that Canada should publicly denounce U.S. support for the Salvadoran government. The *Globe* reported that the protesters in Montreal chanted “Yankees get out of El Salvador,” and in Toronto, they marched to “Mr. Reagan don’t go to war – keep your claws off El Salvador.” The *Star* also reported on candlelight vigils held in Toronto and attended by 500 people in support of the Salvadoran people. Reuter, New York Times and Staff, “Six more advisers are sent to El Salvador; protest marches mount,” *Globe and Mail*, March 2, 1981, 13; Staff, “500 at El Salvador Service,” *Toronto Star*, March 27, 1982, A8.

There were also 17 articles in the *Globe* and 11 in the *Star* that described Salvadorans who fled to other Central American nations during this period.¹⁰⁷

Salvadorans who sought refuge in Honduras endured many hardships. As more Salvadorans traveled to Honduras, Honduran and Salvadoran forces combined to deter their arrival. In the early 1980s, hundreds of Salvadorans were killed by these combined forces as they tried to cross the Sumpul and Lempa Rivers into Honduras. Salvadorans who reached Honduras were confined to specific refugee zones, and by 1983, there were an estimated 18,000 Salvadorans in camps and settlements in Honduras.¹⁰⁸ They faced continued persecution from Salvadoran and Honduran authorities throughout the 1980s.¹⁰⁹

Salvadorans who fled to Costa Rica fared better than their counterparts in Honduras. Approximately 20,000 Salvadorans entered the country, mostly from 1980 to 1982, and about two-thirds of Salvadorans in Costa Rica obtained refugee status.¹¹⁰ Costa Rica's strong economy and stable democracy allowed Salvadorans some relative security regardless of their legal status.¹¹¹ Other Salvadoran refugees traveled to Nicaragua and Guatemala, which were also refugee-producing nations in the 1980s. By the end of the 1980s, there were as many as 70,000 Salvadorans living in Guatemala, and up to 7,000 in Nicaragua.¹¹²

Canadian newspapers focused on the experiences of Salvadorans in Honduras, and consistently described Salvadoran refugees as the victims of gruesome violence. These articles

¹⁰⁷ Some of these articles addressed both Salvadorans in Honduras and in other Central American nations.

¹⁰⁸ Martin Barber and Meyer Brownstone, "Relocating Refugees in Honduras," *Refuge* 3 (December 1983): 12.

¹⁰⁹ By 1987, the U.N. estimated that there were 24,000 Salvadoran refugees in Honduras. United Nations High Commission for Refugees, "Number of Refugees as of March 31, 1987," Geneva, 1987, in North and CAPA, *Between War and Peace*, 134.

¹¹⁰ Bridget A. Hayden, *Salvadorans in Costa Rica* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2003), xii.

¹¹¹ Costa Rican government agencies estimated that as many as 290,000 Nicaraguans and Salvadorans lived undocumented in Costa Rica by 1989, and 90% of these were Nicaraguans. García, *Seeking Refuge*, 36 – 39; North and CAPA, *Between War and Peace*, 133 – 137.

¹¹² García, *Seeking Refuge*, 39 – 40.

fit into a widespread trend, articulated by van Dijk, that “War, civil war, coups, oppression, dictatorship, and violence in general are still the staple of news reports about the South.”¹¹³

Many Canadian articles included details like the words of a woman in a refugee camp in Honduras who said:

The soldiers came and took Martha. She was pregnant so they tore her clothes off and cut her open with a knife. In front of the poor little ones they did this....Then the soldiers tore out the fetus and destroyed it.¹¹⁴

In March of 1981, an article in the *Star* described a massacre of Salvadoran refugees at the Sumpul River, and how, after the massacre, “dogs and buzzards picked the bodies clean.”¹¹⁵ This article suggested there was a strong precedent for such violence in this region: Previously, some of the neighbors of those present had been decapitated, and “the heads had been left neatly by the side of the road to ram the lesson home.”¹¹⁶ A few months later, the *Globe* quoted an American observer who described a similar scene on the bank of the Lempa River, which he said was “littered with clothes, and there were several dead bodies... We could see dogs eating the corpses of two little girls.”¹¹⁷ Such writing is consistent with the findings of Liisa Malkki, who suggests that discourses about refugees tend to represent refugees in this physical way as “mute bodies,” which are often starving, diseased, wounded, homeless or dead.¹¹⁸

In 1982, the *Star* printed the recollections of an American academic named Philippe Bourgois who had crossed into Honduras with a group of Salvadoran refugees. He described returning to the refugee camp and encountering “the overpowering stench of decaying bodies;

¹¹³ Teun A. van Dijk, “Power and the News Media,” in *Political Communication in Action: States, Institutions, Movements, Audiences* (New York: Hampton Press, 1996), 26.

¹¹⁴ Magnus Isaacson and Frank Rooney, “They are shooting children,” *Globe and Mail*, January 30, 1981, 12.

¹¹⁵ London Sunday Times, “Bloody Massacre,” *Toronto Star*, March 1, 1981, B4.

¹¹⁶ London Sunday Times, “Bloody Massacre,” B4.

¹¹⁷ Magnus Isaacson and Sandra Pentland, “Priest tells of second massacre on Salvador border,” *Globe and Mail*, June 2, 1981, 44.

¹¹⁸ Liisa Malkki, “Speechless Emissaries: Refugees, Humanitarianism, and Dehistoricization,” *Cultural Anthropology* 11, no. 3 (1996): 388.

the Salvadoran soldiers had killed everything they found alive.” Among the dead, Bourgois found “a naked middle-aged woman whose skin was bubbling off – placed by the path... I was told by the peasants that it was standard procedure to display mutilated bodies.”¹¹⁹ Like the decapitations mentioned earlier by the *Star*, Bourgois wrote as if Salvadoran refugees were accustomed to this bloodshed. He recalled how “as soon as they thought they were safe,” Salvadoran refugees “would laugh and joke, even play their radios.”¹²⁰ Another article that appeared in the *Star* also distinguished the lives of Salvadoran refugees from life in Canada. This article quoted a World Vision staff person who said “If we have a problem, as in Quebec, we solve it by voting. Down there, they just pick up a rifle and blast away.”¹²¹ By emphasizing the grotesque and horrible nature of Salvadoran refugee experiences abroad, and Salvadorans’ apparent familiarity with such conditions, Canadian newspapers described Central America as a distant, horrific world.

These descriptions of the violence experienced by Salvadoran refugees are consistent with Leigh Binford’s work on media coverage of the El Mozote Massacre that occurred in El Salvador in 1981.¹²² Binford suggests that for journalists, along with most people in the West, the lives of billions of the world’s people are irrelevant unless they are touched by the crisis or scandal of events like civil wars.¹²³ She asserts that a dichotomy is presented and perpetuated by the newsprint media, which depreciates the suffering of people in the Third World. Specifically, she writes that:

The practices that dominate human rights reporting reproduce the effects of an ideological vision that is dominant in the West of a world divided in two: a homogenous

¹¹⁹ Philippe Bourgois, “The horror in El Salvador: ‘I saw a small boy blow in half,’” *Toronto Star*, February 20, 1982, A10.

¹²⁰ Bourgois, “The horror,” A10.

¹²¹ Staff, “El Salvador refugee fund set up,” *Toronto Star*, August 7, 1980, A12.

¹²² In December of 1981, U.S.-trained Atlacatl Battalion killed over 800 civilians in the Salvadoran town of El Mozote.

¹²³ Leigh Binford, *The El Mozote Massacre* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1996), 4.

mass of poor, Third World humanity, cut more or less from the same cloth, on the one hand, and an aggregation of struggling Western individuals, each unique, each working to fulfill his or her own potential, on the other.¹²⁴

Binford's words are applicable to Canadian reporting on Salvadoran refugees in the early 1980s. These refugees were generally described as interchangeable figures, whose stories became relevant when they were gruesome and when, as will be described further below, they were narrated by Westerners. The refugees themselves were largely "speechless." Prem Kumar Rajaram and others have argued that this representation of refugees separates individual experiences of displacement from their historical, political and social context, "while putting in their stead a depoliticized, dehistoricized and universalized figuration of the refugee as mute victim."¹²⁵

These depictions of largely silent Salvadoran refugees were also gendered. In the pages of the *Globe* and the *Star*, women and children appeared as the most vulnerable and visible Salvadoran refugees. In January of 1981, one *Globe* article opened with the line "Virginia Hernandez arrived here with a small child in her arms, another on her back and two more behind her." The article concluded that those who remained in the refugee camp after a recent raid by Salvadoran military and paramilitary forces were "1000 children and 300 women, all barefoot and starving."¹²⁶ In March of 1981, the *Globe* reported that of the hundreds who tried to cross the river, "most of them were women and children," and that machine gun fire "killed one woman and the child she was holding."¹²⁷ The *Star* similarly emphasized the suffering of women and children. One of its March 1981 articles about the Sumpul River massacre opened with a description of Lolita Guardado whose "family, friends and neighbors had been slaughtered." The

¹²⁴ Binford, *El Mozote*, 6.

¹²⁵ Rajaram, "Humanitarianism and Representations of the Refugee," 377. See also Malkki, "Speechless Emissaries," 251.

¹²⁶ Isaacson and Rooney, "shooting children," 12.

¹²⁷ Isaacson and Pentland, "Priest tells," 44.

newspaper explained that “Lolita, her husband Genaro and their eight children are Salvadorean peasants.”¹²⁸ This same article went on to describe how Margarita Lopez “a bright and pretty 16-year-old was preparing tortillas for the new refugees,” when Honduran and Salvadoran soldiers were already in position.¹²⁹ A few weeks later, another *Star* article wrote about a Salvadoran woman:

who lay in a string hammock on a bamboo pole. Her leg was swollen like a balloon and she clutched her only possessions in a plastic supermarket bag – a gawdy [sic] portrait of the Virgin Mary and a sepia print of Saint Sebastian, a bearded man in a crown and a strange tunic, who she said had guarded her during two months in the mountains.¹³⁰

Such emphases on Salvadoran refugees as women and children are consistent with Vanessa Pupavac’s suggestion that, in sympathetic media coverage of refugees, “Images of helpless distressed women and their children are preferred.”¹³¹ Pupavac writes that the British media generally depict refugees as “vulnerable survivors” and “traumatized.” The same trends appear in Canadian newspapers’ writing about Salvadoran refugees in the 1980s.¹³²

In fact, Canadian newspapers presented Salvadoran refugees of all genders as vulnerable and even helpless. In such portrayals, Salvadorans’ greatest hope lay in the intervention of foreigners. For example, the *Globe* described Salvadoran refugees as:

the central and most helpless victims... The refugees are caught in the middle, with no idea when the war will end in El Salvador so they can go home, and with no prospect of anything approaching a normal life before that happens.¹³³

¹²⁸ London Sunday Times, “Bloody Massacre,” B4.

¹²⁹ London Sunday Times, “Bloody Massacre,” B1, B4.

¹³⁰ David Blundy, *London Sunday Times*, “Salvador border atrocities show army kills ‘for fun,’” *Toronto Star*, April 26, 1981, A8.

¹³¹ Vanessa Pupavac, “Refugee Advocacy, Traumatic Representations and Political Disenchantment,” *Government and Opposition* 43, no. 2 (2008): 272.

¹³² Pupavac, “Refugee Advocacy,” 272.

¹³³ Oakland Ross, “Escaped terror of one conflict, refugees in middle of another,” *Globe and Mail*, December 8, 1981, 1.

The alleged helplessness of Salvadorans was frequently contrasted with the capable nature of North Americans. At times, this dichotomy was extreme. One *Globe* article described a situation in which:

between 13 and 20 refugees were being led away with their thumbs tied together behind their backs. They escaped when the group of foreigners interfered, running at armed guards and yelling “international press.”¹³⁴

In this instance, the peaceful intervention of foreigners had apparently been enough to persuade military forces to release Salvadoran refugees. A similar description appeared in the *Star* months later, when international observers witnessed Honduran soldiers harassing a group of Salvadoran refugees. The soldiers were said to have pushed a man with a walking stick into the ditch, and ordered the refugees to return to El Salvador. But soon a French doctor:

boldly approached the cordon. As the troops poked him in the stomach with their rifles, he called the wrath of the United Nations upon them, and told them they stood before the eyes of the international press. Puzzled and a little frightened by this brave display of authority, the soldiers backed off and, with some churlish prodding and pushing, allowed the refugees to pass.¹³⁵

The *Star* also ran an article whose title, “Gringos form a Lifeline for Terrified Refugees,” and content expressed a similar sentiment: North Americans were uniquely capable of helping Salvadoran refugees.¹³⁶

This distinction between Salvadorans and other Latin Americans, and “gringos” has a long history in Spanish-speaking Latin America. The origins of the term “gringo” are contested, but it has been used to describe English-speaking foreigners – usually Americans – in Spanish-speaking regions since at least the nineteenth century; it can be used as a pejorative term.¹³⁷

More importantly for this study, use of this word may also allude to the long history of foreign

¹³⁴ Gwen Smith, “Reports of refugee raid baffle editor,” *Globe and Mail*, November 27, 1981, 15.

¹³⁵ Blundy, “Salvador border atrocities,” A8.

¹³⁶ Oakland Ross, “Gringos form a lifeline for terrified refugees,” *Globe and Mail*, December 17, 1981, 14.

¹³⁷ William Sayers, “An Unnoticed Early Attestation of gringo ‘Foreigner’: Implications for Its Origin,” *Bulletin of Spanish Studies* 86, no.3 (2009): 329 – 330.

involvement in Latin American affairs. The United States alone intervened militarily in ten Caribbean and Central American nations a total of 34 times between 1898 and 1932. U.S. intervention was not only military and political, but also economic. In the post-World War II-era, the economic growth of the region became increasingly dependent on the United States.¹³⁸ By the 1980s, “gringos” had been involved in Central American affairs for decades, and this term marked them as separate from the people in whose lives they became involved. Furthermore, these newspaper depictions of North Americans in Central America invoke the theme of the “imperialist as savior,” which is a fantasy and long-term effect of imperialism.¹³⁹

North Americans also appeared in Canadian newspapers as the main sources of information about the lives of Salvadoran refugees in Central America. Western narrators of Salvadoran experiences included priests, nuns and other church-affiliated activists; secular refugee relief workers; reporters and journalists, who described their own activities in the region; North American politicians who visited Central America; and others. One American priest, Father Earl Gallagher, was cited in articles that appeared in both the *Globe* and the *Star*. Gallagher’s testimony supported articles describing a massacre of Salvadoran refugees on the Sumpul River, and the risks other Salvadorans faced while trying to cross the Lempa River.¹⁴⁰ When Bianca Jagger – the ex-wife of Rolling Stones lead singer Mick Jagger – visited Salvadoran refugee camps in late 1981, the *Globe and Mail* published 6 articles about her

¹³⁸ North and CAPA, *Between War and Peace*, 29 – 31, 60 – 61.

¹³⁹ Sherene Razack, *Looking White People in the Eye: Gender, Race, and Culture in Courtrooms and Classrooms* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 89.

¹⁴⁰ London Sunday Times, “Bloody Massacre,” B4; Isaacson and Pentland, “Priest tells,” 44.

visit.¹⁴¹ Jagger was among many celebrities who, beginning in about the 1960s, assumed increasing activist roles in international affairs.¹⁴²

NDP leader Ed Broadbent and his party appeared as advocates of Salvadoran refugees abroad, as well. Broadbent voiced his anger with Canadian policy towards the Salvadoran regime, and the impact this was having on the Salvadoran people, on the pages of the *Globe*. He stated that Canada should “absolutely – at the very minimum” send aid to the thousands of Salvadoran refugees in Central America.¹⁴³ In August of 1981, NDP Members of Parliament appeared in the *Globe* supporting the release of 12 Salvadorans imprisoned without cause in Honduras.¹⁴⁴ Manitoba NDP Premier Howard Pawley chided Canadians for their “current, bunker-like attitude” towards refugees “‘fleeing for their lives’ from repressive regimes such as those in Poland and El Salvador.”¹⁴⁵ NDP MP Dan Heap, who had “the privilege” of visiting a Salvadoran refugee camp in Honduras, was similarly critical of Canadian policy towards El Salvador and its refugees.¹⁴⁶ The words of these politicians, priests and pop stars – however well intentioned – were nevertheless presented in lieu of the words of Salvadorans themselves.

While opposition party members and others succeeded in making Salvadoran refugees into a political issue in the early 1980s, the Government of Canada’s official response to Salvadoran refugees, as described in the *Star* and *Globe*, was more cautious. In March of 1981, Immigration Minister Lloyd Axworthy stated in the *Globe* that his department was “keeping an eye on the situation” in El Salvador, but that there had not been any requests to relax

¹⁴¹ See for example: Gwen Smith, “Volunteers head for Honduras,” *Globe and Mail*, December 3, 1981, 13; Oakland Ross, “Terror penetrates hills of Honduras,” *Globe and Mail*, December 15, 1981, 12.

¹⁴² Asteris Huliaras and Nikolaos Tzifakis, “Celebrity Activism in International Relations: In Search of a Framework for Analysis,” *Global Society* 24, no. 2 (2010): 259.

¹⁴³ Staff, “Ottawa hypocritical on El Salvador, NDP says,” *Globe and Mail*, April 27, 1981, 8.

¹⁴⁴ Marina Strauss, “Bishops urge Ottawa to admit 12 refugees from El Salvador,” *Globe and Mail*, August 29, 1981, 12.

¹⁴⁵ Richard Cleroux, “Shun vodka from Poland, Pawley urges,” *Globe and Mail*, December 19, 1981, 13.

¹⁴⁶ Staff, “500 at El Salvador Service,” *Toronto Star*, March 27, 1982, A8.

immigration requirements for Salvadorans fleeing the conflict.¹⁴⁷ When those requests presumably became more numerous a few months later, Axworthy said “that if church groups and others have a strong interest in seeing those displaced by the civil war in El Salvador helped, they should consider sponsoring refugees themselves.” Axworthy told the *Globe* that “the Government has bent the rules slightly to allow some Salvadorans in imminent danger easier entry to Canada.”¹⁴⁸

Axworthy’s words were consistent with the fact that Canada received a relatively small number of Salvadoran refugees from 1980 through 1982. According to Statistics Canada publications, for the years 1980 to 1982, there were 112, 292 and 857 immigrants to Canada, respectively, who listed El Salvador as their country of last permanent residence.¹⁴⁹ These limited arrivals also reflect the UNCHR’s preference in the early 1980s to relocate Salvadoran refugees in nearby nations.¹⁵⁰

Yet in the 1980s, unprecedented numbers of refugees from around the world arrived in Canada. Almost 15,000 Convention refugees and members of designated classes came to Canada in 1981; this number increased to more than 21,000 in 1987, and more than doubled by 1991 to reach 53,401 people.¹⁵¹ From the early 1980s until 1986, the greatest number of refugees to Canada came from Vietnam. The arrival of the Vietnamese, along with other Indochinese

¹⁴⁷ Staff, “No right to comment: MacGuigan,” *Globe and Mail*, March 4, 1981, 12.

¹⁴⁸ Thomas Walkom, “No bias in shuffled border quotas: Axworthy,” *Globe and Mail*, November 4, 1981, 8.

¹⁴⁹ Canada, Immigration Statistics: 1980, Planning and Program Management, Employment and Immigration Canada (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1982); Canada, Immigration Statistics: 1981, Planning and Program Management, Employment and Immigration Canada (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1983); Canada, Immigration Statistics: 1982, Planning and Program Management, Employment and Immigration Canada (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1984).

¹⁵⁰ Dirks, *Controversy and Complexity*, 72.

¹⁵¹ Canada, Immigration Statistics: 1981, Planning and Program Management, Employment and Immigration Canada (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1983); Canada, Immigration Statistics: 1987, Planning and Program Management, Employment and Immigration Canada (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1989); Canada, Immigration Statistics: 1991, Planning and Program Management, Employment and Immigration Canada (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1993).

refugees from Cambodia and Laos, set a high standard for Canadian refugee acceptance. After the fall of Saigon to the North Vietnamese, and the reunification of Vietnam in 1975, thousands of former South Vietnamese left their country, often in unseaworthy boats. Thousands were also leaving Laos and Cambodia at the same time. Thailand, Malaysia and other Southeast Asian states were unwilling and unable to accommodate all of these arrivals, and called upon the UNHCR for help. In 1979 and 1980, many of these so-called “boat people” were brought to Canada. Private sponsors were responsible for bringing over 25,000 of these people to Canada; these sponsors included church groups, service clubs, neighborhood organizations and other spontaneously formed groups of Canadians. The Government committed itself to accepting one Indochinese refugee for every refugee privately sponsored. In 1979 and 1980, more than 60,000 Indochinese people reached Canada, and over 10,000 continued to arrive annually in the 1980s.¹⁵²

While the admission of thousands of these refugees was made possible by the generosity and commitment of Canadians, their admission also reflected Canada’s Cold War ideology. The Indochinese were not required to meet the strict Convention definition of a refugee, but, as groups fleeing communism, were admitted as a “designated class” whom Canada deemed to be in need of resettlement.¹⁵³ Charles B. Keely has argued that, during this era, Canada, the United States and Western European countries used their refugee regimes as tools to embarrass, frustrate and potentially destabilize nascent communist governments. By admitting those who had “escaped communist oppression,” Keely suggests that this “program could be used to

¹⁵² Dirks, *Controversy and Complexity*, 66 – 69; Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 406 – 408.

¹⁵³ Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 406 – 407.

demonstrate the bankruptcy of a system from which people had to escape, often at great peril.”¹⁵⁴ In addition to the acceptance of the Indochinese, this mindset was also applied when Canada accepted over 20% of Hungarian refugees (37, 000) in 1956 and over one-third of Czech refugees (12,000) in 1968.¹⁵⁵ Keely suggests that these refugee admission programs served to “further reinforce internal political support for an anti-Soviet, anticommunist foreign policy because Western generosity would reinforce the domestic constituencies’ indignation at the evils of communist ideology and oppression.”¹⁵⁶

But Salvadoran refugees did not fit easily within this East-West dichotomy. In the United States, Salvadorans were not portrayed as bona fide refugees, but as undocumented economic migrants; Joseph Carens, among others, has posited that it would have been “politically embarrassing” for the United States to acknowledge that so many genuine refugees had been produced by nations that it supported.¹⁵⁷ In Canada, the validity of Salvadorans’ refugee claims was also contested. In the early 1980s, if Latin Americans wished to claim refugee status in Canada as members of an “oppressed and persecuted designated class,” they had to meet a higher standard than their counterparts from Eastern Europe and Indochina. Specifically, they had to demonstrate a well-founded fear of persecution, as per the UN Convention, or that they had been detained for expressing free thought or enacting other civil liberties, and show that they were likely to establish themselves in Canada.¹⁵⁸ Despite such official tensions, some – but not all – Canadian newspaper articles demonstrated the willingness of many Canadians to accept more Salvadorans. There were only a few articles that addressed

¹⁵⁴ Charles B. Keely, “The International Refugee Regime(s): The End of the Cold War Matters,” *International Migration Review* 35, no. 1 (Spring 2001): 307.

¹⁵⁵ García, *Seeking Refuge*, 122.

¹⁵⁶ Keely, “International Refugee Regimes,” 308.

¹⁵⁷ Joseph H. Carens, “States and Refugees: A Normative Analysis,” in Howard Adelman, ed., *Refugee Policy: Canada and the United States* (Toronto: York Lanes Press Limited, 1991), 19 – 20.

¹⁵⁸ These criteria were relaxed as the 1980s progressed. Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 406 – 407.

Salvadoran refugees in Canada in the early 1980s, 18 of which appeared in the *Globe and Mail*, and 4 that appeared in the *Toronto Star*.

A few of these articles suggested that Canada should receive more Salvadoran refugees. One of these noted Canada's distinct treatment of refugees from different nations: In July of 1980, Stan McDowell of the *Globe* described how he believed "Canada's recent record on dealing with victims of repression in Latin America has been shameful." He lamented how awareness of conditions in countries like El Salvador and Chile was not widespread in Canada, and that such "official callousness would not have been tolerated, politically, against Hungarian freedom fighters in 1956, or Vietnamese boat people in 1979." "Pleas for refuge," he wrote, "have been turned down out of plain, inexcusable ignorance."¹⁵⁹ Canadian newspapers in the early 1980s sought to lessen this ignorance. The *Globe and Mail* gave voice to the preliminary report of three Canadian MPs who visited El Salvador and Salvadoran refugee camps in Honduras in 1982. These MPs suggested that Canada raise its 1982 quota of 1000 Latin American refugees, and increase awareness of this quota by sending Canadian immigration officials to Salvadoran refugee camps.¹⁶⁰ A few days later, the *Globe's* Oakland Ross stated that "Canada's record of accepting refugees compares favorably with that of other developed nations," and that Canada's rate of acceptance was very high in 1979 and 1980, due in large part to the arrival of Indochinese refugees. Ross asserted that "Canada would be the central candidate in any search for a haven for Central Americans."¹⁶¹ In a separate article, the *Globe* explained that many Salvadorans had unsuccessfully applied for the refugee status in Canada, and "these decisions left Canadians with the uneasy feeling that, while not everyone can be allowed to stay,

¹⁵⁹ Stan McDowell, "Canada's shameful record on junta victims," *Globe and Mail*, July 7, 1980, 8.

¹⁶⁰ James Rusk, "Wrong to back elections in El Salvador, MPs say after fact-finding trip," *Globe and Mail*, January 27, 1982, 10.

¹⁶¹ Oakland Ross, "World ill prepared for increase in refugees from Latin America," *Globe and Mail*, February 1, 1982, 12.

some may indeed be endangered by being forced to go.” But “fortunately,” the *Globe* stated, Immigration Minister Axworthy had recently advised the Refugee Status Advisory Committee to relax its criteria “in order to allow more of the persecuted a haven.” The *Globe* assured readers that this “further opening of Haven’s Gate should not be confused with opening the floodgates.... Genuine refugees seem certain to account for more of the increase than artful dodgers.”¹⁶² Here, the *Globe* introduced a distinction between “genuine” and less-than-genuine refugees, which would become a hotly contested point later in the decade. But in 1982, the *Globe* assured readers that Canada would be able to and should receive more “genuine” refugees.

One 1980 *Star* article emphasized the validity of a couple of Salvadorans’ refugee claims, despite their undocumented status in Canada. This article, entitled “Metro a haven from torture, refugee says,” described the experiences of two Salvadoran refugees, Pedro and Maria, in detail. Although the article noted that Pedro was in Canada illegally, journalist Joe Serge also underscored the legitimacy of Pedro’s refugee status, and his desire to be safe, rather than profit financially. Pedro, Serge asserted, was an electrical engineering graduate who had run afoul of right-wing paramilitary groups in El Salvador because of his involvement in a student organization. After receiving threats and seeing his landlord’s pets disemboweled, Pedro decided to come to Canada. Maria had worked in a bank in El Salvador where she was threatened by members of the White Hand, an infamous right-wing paramilitary group. She now worked in a Toronto bank and intended to apply for refugee status so she would no longer be “treated like dirt” by those who knew of her precarious, illegal status in Canada.¹⁶³

Canada’s potential to serve as a “haven” for one Salvadoran refugee was less certain, and the threatened deportation of Victor Regalado garnered attention from both the *Toronto Star* and

¹⁶² Staff, “New hope for refugees,” *Globe and Mail*, March 2, 1982, 6.

¹⁶³ Joe Serge, “Metro a haven from torture, refugee says,” *Toronto Star*, July 25, 1980, A14.

the *Globe and Mail*. Regalado was the focus of 11 articles that appeared in the *Globe* in 1982, and 2 that appeared in the *Star*. Regalado was a Salvadoran journalist who had come to Canada in 1980 at the invitation of church and labour groups to speak about the escalating violence in his home country. Afterwards, he went to Mexico, and eventually returned to Canada in 1982.

Regalado was then detained by Canadian authorities because the Department of Immigration had issued a security certificate against him.¹⁶⁴ This marked him as an inadmissible person “who there are reasonable grounds to believe will, while in Canada, engage in or instigate the subversion by force of any government.”¹⁶⁵ The specific charges against Regalado were provided to neither Regalado nor the press. In February of 1982, an adjudicator ordered the deportation of Regalado. This was appealed. Solicitor General Robert Kaplan and Immigration Minister Axworthy were subpoenaed to appear as witnesses at the hearing, but they eventually submitted affidavits instead. Regalado’s case would not be resolved for years to come.¹⁶⁶

Many critics of Regalado’s treatment appeared in the pages of the *Globe* and *Star*. Dan Heap, NDP Immigration Critic, told the *Globe* that “a person in Canada should know what he’s being charged with and should have a chance to answer the charge.”¹⁶⁷ One of Regalado’s lawyers, Noel Saint-Pierre, said that “the whole thing is legal, but it’s undemocratic,”¹⁶⁸ suggesting that the spirit of this law ran contrary to shared Canadian values. The *Star* framed the Regalado case as a question of the “federal government’s power to throw people in jail without a

¹⁶⁴ García, *Seeking Refuge*, 149; Peter McFarlane, *Northern Shadows: Canadians and Central America* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1989), 200 – 201.

¹⁶⁵ Geoffrey York, “Bid to bar Salvadorean based on security file,” *Globe and Mail*, January 9, 1982, 19.

¹⁶⁶ York, “Bid to bar Salvadorean,” 19; Staff, “Salvadorean refugee to appeal deportation,” *Globe and Mail*, February 18, 1982, 5; Canadian Press, “Lawyers appeal deportation of Salvadorean: Kaplan and Axworthy are summoned to testify,” *Globe and Mail*, May 6, 1982, 20; Canadian Press, “Ministers say reports erred,” *Globe and Mail*, May 13, 1982, 14.

¹⁶⁷ York, “Bid to bar Salvadorean,” 19.

¹⁶⁸ York, “Bid to bar Salvadorean,” 19.

trial and without revealing evidence against them.”¹⁶⁹ In March of 1982, the *Star* ran a quarter-page photo of Regalado and began its article with his words:

When I came to Canada’s door ... I was expecting refuge, not imprisonment. Now I’m told to leave the country because I’m guilty of an unknown crime. How can I defend myself?¹⁷⁰

The *Star* described Regalado’s upbringing in a poor rural family, how he put himself through university in El Salvador, how he was committed to freedom of the press, and how this commitment put his life at risk in his homeland.¹⁷¹ The *Star* quoted the Quebec Human Rights League, who said the treatment of Regalado constituted a threat to “the fundamental rights of all refugees, immigrants and Canadian citizens.”¹⁷²

In the *Globe*, however, more deference was paid to the prerogatives of Canadian government officials. These articles gave the impression that Canadian government officials had valid, though mysterious, reasons to desire Regalado’s deportation, and should not be required to explain them in court. For example, the *Globe* quoted the chair of the Immigration Appeal Board, Jean-Pierre Houle, as saying that “The law says that if you cross-examine the ministers, it would be against the national interest.”¹⁷³ A few weeks later, the *Globe* reiterated the words of these ministers’ lawyer, who stated that “Mr. Kaplan and Mr. Axworthy could give no new information about Mr. Regalado’s case and could not disclose secret evidence that the journalist is a danger to the country’s interest.”¹⁷⁴ Such statements suggested Regalado was threatening, but in an unclear way. The *Globe* wrote that “The Solicitor-General said the Salvadorean was assigned and financed by a foreign political party when he entered the country in 1980 to ‘carry

¹⁶⁹ Kelly McParland, “Refugee fights being jailed without a trial,” *Globe and Mail*, February 15, 1982, B7.

¹⁷⁰ Olivia Ward, “Is this man a threat to Canada?” *Toronto Star*, March 21, 1982, A8.

¹⁷¹ Olivia Ward, “Is this man a threat to Canada?” A8.

¹⁷² Olivia Ward, “Is this man a threat to Canada?” A8.

¹⁷³ Canadian Press, “Kaplan, Axworthy refuse to testify on deportation,” *Globe and Mail*, May 11, 1982, 3.

¹⁷⁴ Canadian Press, “Ministers say reports erred,” 14.

out certain activities which are prohibited under Canadian law.”¹⁷⁵ In this article, the laws in question remained unnamed. In another article the *Globe* also cast in doubt which country Regalado threatened, writing that “intelligence reports ... indicated Mr. Regalado would work to overthrow ‘a government’ while in Canada – presumably the embattled Salvadorean regime.”¹⁷⁶ The mysterious nature of the allegations against Regalado – who had Communist Party affiliations – seemingly justified the *Globe*’s suspicions.¹⁷⁷ Unlike in the *Star*, Regalado was not once quoted in the pages of the *Globe* in 1982.

These Canadian newspapers’ coverage of Regalado’s case suggest the tension that emerged as people from non-traditional source countries applied for refugee status in Canada. Peter McFarlane has written that Regalado’s case was a “turning point in Ottawa’s approach to Central Americans fleeing domestic oppression” as it raised awareness of the plight of many Central American refugees, and generated a great deal of public sympathy over the course of the 1980s.¹⁷⁸ In 1982, however, these English-language newspapers approached Regalado’s case cautiously. The *Star* was more sympathetic in its treatment of the journalist, frequently alluding to Canada’s humanitarian tradition and a moral obligation to treat Regalado with the rights afforded citizens. Writers at the *Globe*, however, reinforced that Regalado was not a Canadian citizen, and his rights were therefore limited. In that paper especially, Regalado was positioned clearly outside the imagined community of Canada. His case, and those of thousands of his compatriots, continued to be debated in Canadian newspapers in the decade to follow.

Taken together, Canadian newspaper articles from 1980 to 1982 present a varied picture of Salvadoran refugees. Canadian newspapers both perpetuated and contested the Reagan

¹⁷⁵ Canadian Press, “Lawyers appeal deportation,” 20.

¹⁷⁶ Canadian Press, “Kaplan, Axworthy,” 3.

¹⁷⁷ See for example: York, “Bid to bar Salvadorean,” 19; García, *Seeking Refuge*, 149.

¹⁷⁸ McFarlane, *Northern Shadows*, 199.

Administration's interpretation of the civil war in El Salvador. Salvadoran refugees in Central America were described as the interchangeable victims of horrific violence. Their counterparts in Canada generated limited attention. Regalado, the most publicized Salvadoran refugee of the 1980s, was the subject of national suspicion and sympathy. Canadian newspapers generally suggested that Canadians should be sympathetic to Salvadoran refugees, but this group was nonetheless portrayed as separate from the imagined community of Canada in the early 1980s.

Chapter 2: 1986 – 1987

This chapter is about how Salvadoran refugees were portrayed in Canadian newspapers in 1986 and 1987. It begins with an overview of the Canadian political context in these two years, and a summary of the newspaper content that I have examined. The majority of this chapter is divided into two broad categories: newspapers' depictions of individual Salvadorans, and newspapers' portrayals of Salvadorans as a group. Salvadorans were usually described as a group in relation to the changes made to Canadian immigration policies and laws in 1987; these included the effective closing of the U.S. - Canada border to refugee claimants beginning in February of 1987, and the introduction of Bills C-55 and C-84 in the spring and summer of 1987. While Canadian newspapers generally favored the inclusion of individual, middle-class Salvadoran refugees in the Canadian nation state, the inclusion of Salvadorans as a group was more contested.

Much distinguished the Canadian political scene of 1986-87 from that of the early 1980s. In September of 1984, the Conservative Party achieved a landslide victory over John Turner's Liberals. Brian Mulroney became Prime Minister and retained this post until 1993. Economically, Mulroney charted a more neoliberal course than his Canadian predecessors. Beginning in November of 1984, his Conservative government made clear its intentions to encourage private and foreign investment in Canada, decrease the national debt, privatize crown corporations and review social programs. The Mulroney government shared many ideological affinities with the Reagan and Thatcher governments of Canada's two most important trading partners. Building on this foundation, the Mulroney Government negotiated the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement (FTA) that came into effect in 1989. Many Canadians questioned

whether the Conservative government's relationship with the United States had grown too close, but Mulroney nonetheless won the 1988 federal election.¹⁷⁹

The Mulroney Government sought to expand Canadian involvement in El Salvador and Central America. Canadian interest in the region had increased under Trudeau, and, in 1983, the Parliamentary Subcommittee on Relations with Latin America and the Caribbean released two reports. These reports urged External Affairs to pay more attention to Central America, and attracted a great deal of public attention. They suggested that Canada could expand its leadership role with regard to refugees, and perhaps oversee Salvadoran elections. In 1982, Canada did not officially oversee Salvadoran elections, but, while still under Liberal leadership in 1984, Canada sent official observers to the Salvadoran elections. The Subcommittee report was also instrumental in convincing the Liberal Government to support regional dialogue, and, in 1984, Canada pledged its support to the Contadora Peace Process; this support continued under Mulroney.¹⁸⁰ Finally, this report recommended that Canada suspend all military aid to Central America.¹⁸¹ However, the Mulroney Government re-established aid to El Salvador in December of 1984. In November of 1987, External Affairs Minister Joe Clark visited Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador. He visited aid projects, refugee camps, and local church leaders in order to assess the impact of Canadian political and economic investments in the region. Between 1982 and 1987, Canada had given more than \$105 million in bilateral aid to

¹⁷⁹ Conrad and Finkel, *Canadian Peoples*, 407 – 409, 417 - 418; Steven Kendall Holloway, *Canadian Foreign Policy: Defining the National Interest* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2006), 166 – 167; James Patrick, Nelson Michaud and Michael O'Reilly, eds., *Handbook of Canadian Foreign Policy* (Oxford: Lexington Books, 2006), 41 – 42.

¹⁸⁰ In the early 1980s, the Contadora Group was an initiative undertaken by the foreign ministers of Colombia, Mexico, Panama and Venezuela to deal with the military conflicts in El Salvador, Nicaragua and Guatemala. Their first meeting was held on Contadora Island, Panama in 1983. In 1985, representatives from Argentina, Brazil, Peru and Uruguay met in support of the Contadora Group. North and CAPA, *Between War and Peace*, 177 – 179. For further explanation, see also chapter 3.

¹⁸¹ Lemco, *Canada and the Crisis*, 3 - 6; David R. Morrison, *Aid and Ebb Tide: A History of CIDA and Canadian Development Assistance* (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1998), 185 – 186.

Central America, and more than \$50 million through nongovernmental organizations and multilateral bodies. During the 1986-1987 fiscal year specifically, Canada gave over \$21 million to the region. Clark's trip received mixed reviews, but since 1987, Canadian interest in Central America has continued to grow.¹⁸²

The arrival of refugees from throughout Central America, and from El Salvador specifically, increased greatly throughout the 1980s. As the table below indicates, in both 1986 and 1987, more Salvadorans came to Canada than ever before. This increase can be attributed to many factors, several of which are yet to be described, including: the continued violence in El Salvador, in addition to the devastation caused by an earthquake that struck the country in October of 1986; the inability of other Central American nations to accommodate Salvadoran refugees; the persistence of Canadian activists; and the willingness of the Canadian government to increase and surpass its quotas for refugees.¹⁸³ As a result, Salvadorans were one of the largest refugee groups to come to Canada during this era: From 1984 through 1991, El Salvador was consistently among the top three among countries which produced the greatest number of Convention refugees and members of designated classes to come to Canada.¹⁸⁴ This chapter will attest to the contested and controversial nature of these Salvadorans' arrivals.

¹⁸² Lemco, *Canada and the Crisis*, 4 -7, 69 – 70.

¹⁸³ Dirks, *Controversy and Complexity*, 71 – 73; García, *Seeking Refuge*, 128 - 129.

¹⁸⁴ This list was topped by Vietnam from 1984 through 1986, then by Poland from 1987 through 1991. El Salvador ranked third behind Vietnam and Poland in all of those years save for 1985, when El Salvador produced the second-greatest number of Convention refugees and members of designated classes to come to Canada. In 1992, El Salvador fell to fifth place on this list, behind Sri Lanka, Poland, Somalia and Iran. Statistics Canada did not collect this data prior to 1984. Canada, *Immigration Statistics: 1984 - 1992*, Planning and Program Management, Employment and Immigration Canada (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1986 - 1994).

Table 1. Arrivals to Canada who gave El Salvador as their country of last permanent residence, 1980 through 1987.¹⁸⁵

Calendar Year	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987
Arrivals to Canada	112	292	857	2551	2579	2881	3167	3536

The arrival of these Salvadorans received an unprecedented amount of media attention. I examined a total of 259 Canadian newspaper articles from 1986 and 1987 that contained the terms “El Salvador” and “refugee.” The *Toronto Star* published 123 articles that contained these search terms, whereas the *Globe and Mail* produced 76 such articles, and Montreal’s *Gazette* printed 60. Of these, 55 were published in 1986 and 204 in 1987. Coverage of Salvadoran refugees was quite unevenly distributed over these months: In February and March of 1986, there was only article in any of these three newspapers that contained these two search terms. Articles containing these terms peaked a year later, when 45 and 42 such articles were printed in February and March of 1987, respectively, by all three newspapers combined.

I have divided the content of these articles into two broad topics, and the first of these is the portrayal of individual Salvadorans. Few Canadian newspaper articles described Salvadoran refugees in an individualized way. Only rarely did Canadian newspapers provide the full names of Salvadoran refugees, quote them directly, and give specific details about their lives; that is,

¹⁸⁵ Canada, Immigration Statistics: 1980, Planning and Program Management, Employment and Immigration Canada (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1982); Canada, Immigration Statistics: 1981, Planning and Program Management, Employment and Immigration Canada (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1983); Canada, Immigration Statistics: 1982, Planning and Program Management, Employment and Immigration Canada (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1984); Canada, Immigration Statistics: 1983, Planning and Program Management, Employment and Immigration Canada (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1985); Canada, Immigration Statistics: 1984, Planning and Program Management, Employment and Immigration Canada (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1986); Canada, Immigration Statistics: 1985, Planning and Program Management, Employment and Immigration Canada (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1987); Canada, Immigration Statistics: 1986, Planning and Program Management, Employment and Immigration Canada (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1988); Canada, Immigration Statistics: 1987, Planning and Program Management, Employment and Immigration Canada (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1989).

Canadian newspapers rarely wrote about Salvadoran refugees in a similar way to how they wrote about White North Americans. In addition to articles about Victor Regalado, only 5 articles about individual Salvadorans appeared in the *Toronto Star*, in addition to 1 in the *Globe and Mail* and 7 in the *Gazette*. With the exception of Salvadorans who were denied entry to Canada in February of 1987 – who are addressed later in this chapter – almost all of the Salvadorans who garnered this sort of attention had middle class backgrounds. These articles also generally appeared outside the context of, or made little reference to, the major immigration law reforms of 1987. These articles described Salvadorans who were lab technicians, “a truck owner who paid his workers double the going rate,” “a minister at the Church of the Nazarene,” “college students” who “had been in demonstrations over student issues like tuition fees,” a photographer who had worked for El Salvador’s Human Rights Commission, an electronics technician, a doctor, a university instructor, a high school teacher, and an economics professor.¹⁸⁶

One of these flattering depictions of Salvadoran refugees was written about Carlos Vega for the Life section of the *Star* in January of 1986. Janis Foord of the *Star* described how Vega had left El Salvador “at the urging of his family,” because as Vega’s family told him “you don’t have a future here.” Vega asserted that “In my country, it is very difficult to build a better life and it is very dangerous.” The *Star* wrote that Vega had completed a two-year electronics technician program in El Salvador before fleeing to Costa Rica for four years. While there, he and five other refugees set up a small leather factory with the help of UN funding. Vega had

¹⁸⁶ Andre Picard, “Salvadorean refugees in Toronto stage fast for their compatriots,” *Globe and Mail*, December 26, 1987, A18; Susan Schwartz, “Refugees pay heavy price for freedom: culture shock and plunge in economic status frighteningly real,” *Gazette*, January 15, 1986, E1; Staff, “22 Hondurans join growing stream: refugee aid workers,” *Gazette*, August 29, 1987, B7; Harvey Shepherd, “Christmas legend reflected in plight of Salvadoran refugees,” *Gazette*, December 24, 1987, L10; Janis Foord, “Salvadoran, 26, has experience in electronics and business skills,” *Toronto Star*, January 10, 1986, F2; Lois Sweet, “Housing crisis dashes hopes of refugees: With no home immigrants are unable to start English classes to resume lives,” *Toronto Star*, January 17, 1986, B1; Joan Leishman, “Central American immigrants fearful of suffering reprisals,” *Toronto Star*, April 27, 1986, H4; Dale Brazao, “Church groups guide refugees to Canada,” *Toronto Star*, March 17, 1987, A14.

arrived in Canada from El Salvador in April of 1985, and “immediately began studying English.” Vega had completed an English as a Second Language course at George Brown College, and, according to Foord, “his English, although halting, improves steadily.” His former instructors at George Brown described how “Carlos learns quickly and has a special ability to adapt,” and “has a quiet sense of confidence yet realizes he has a lot to learn.” Vega’s instructors’ words were matched by his own, as he told the *Star* “the thing I have to do now is work” and “the principal thing for me is to learn.” Foord invited readers to call the number provided “if you have a position that would help Carlos start his new life.”¹⁸⁷ Vega was described as hardworking, skilled, determined, humble and not overtly political. As Pupavac has noted, Vega was like so many “talented, middle-class asylum seekers deprived of their profession” whom refugee advocacy groups have repeatedly invoked.¹⁸⁸

In another *Star* article, such desirable newcomers were contrasted with “bureaucratic obstacles and hidden discrimination” in Canada’s immigration system. In January of 1986, Lois Sweet of the *Star* recounted the experiences of a couple she referred to as Pedro and Blanca Santos. Pedro was a doctor and Blanca was a university teacher. The couple had two children whom Sweet described as “bright and active.” The Santos parents had been persecuted “simply because they tried to practice their professions” in El Salvador. “Had they been born in Canada,” Sweet lamented, “they would all be enjoying full lives.” Since coming to Canada, the Santos had been in search of low-cost housing, of which there was a shortage in Toronto. Without an address, the Santos could not enroll in English language classes; the Government of Canada only sponsored English classes for one year “and the clock starts ticking from the moment refugees enter Canada.” The family was said to have applied for over 600 apartments, and

¹⁸⁷ Foord, “Salvadoran, 26, has experience,” F2.

¹⁸⁸ Pupavac, “Refugee Advocacy,” 284.

encountered discrimination in the practice. Sweet quoted University of Toronto professor Ursula Franklin, who said:

The level of prejudice and bias that these people are experiencing is absolutely unacceptable. If people, again and again say, ‘We don’t want refugees,’ or ‘We don’t want kids,’ and if this is Canada, then I don’t want it.¹⁸⁹

The Santosés’ experience was portrayed as a poor reflection of Canada as a whole. Their depiction in Canadian newspapers is also consistent with Pupavac’s suggestion that those advocating for refugees find it easier “to plead on behalf of special individuals or professionals like themselves, whom advocates identify as their peers or fit their cultural moral frame.”¹⁹⁰

By contrast, Canadian newspapers found Victor Regalado’s ongoing legal fight to stay in Canada difficult to frame, as had often been the case in the early 1980s. In 1986 and 1987, there were 15 articles that specifically mentioned Regalado; 9 of these appeared in the *Gazette*, 3 were in the *Toronto Star*, and 3 were in the *Globe and Mail*. Since 1982, Regalado and his lawyers had appealed to the Federal Court and the Federal Court of Appeal, but both courts upheld his deportation order. In November of 1986, Regalado applied for leave to appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada. On January 29, 1987, the Supreme Court denied his application and upheld his expulsion from the country. However, Regalado successfully argued that returning to El Salvador would endanger his life, and, in 1987, Canada did not (officially) deport Salvadorans facing political repression back to El Salvador. So, following the Supreme Court’s ruling, immigration officials were obligated to find another country willing to accept Regalado.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁹ Lois Sweet, “Housing crisis dashes hopes,” B1

¹⁹⁰ Pupavac, “Refugee Advocacy,” 285.

¹⁹¹ McFarlane, *Northern Shadows*, 201; Patricia Poirier, “Refugee from El Salvador loses six-year fight to stay in Canada,” *Globe and Mail*, January 30, 1987, A3; Canadian Press, “Court upholds plan to deport Salvadoran journalist,” *Toronto Star*, January 30, 1987, F14; Patricia Poirier, “Deportation order on hold as officials seek destination,” *Globe and Mail*, January 31, 1987, A8; Canadian Press, “Salvadoran deportee can pick destination,” *Toronto Star*, February 1, 1987, A14.

Like they had in 1982, Canadian newspapers demonstrated varying perspectives on Regalado's case in 1987. Voices of support for Regalado were more hushed in the pages of the *Globe and Mail* and the *Star*, as both papers gave limited coverage to this story in 1987. The *Star* printed the Canadian Press's summaries of the case in its three articles on the subject.¹⁹² The *Globe* had its own staff cover the case, but its coverage was nonetheless distinct from that of the *Gazette*. For example, on February 4, 1987, both the *Globe* and the *Gazette* reported that Regalado would soon be deported. The *Globe* wrote that, at a news conference held the previous day, Regalado said he "considers himself a Communist."¹⁹³ In the *Gazette*, nearly the same line appeared, but concluded that Regalado "considers himself a Communist and a pacifist."¹⁹⁴ But the *Gazette*'s portrayal was not entirely complimentary either, describing Regalado's words at that press conference as "a rambling, emotional appeal," and thereby distinct from the measured, legal analysis of Canadian commentators. The *Gazette* also included Regalado's statement that: "I still believe Canada is a welcoming country, even if there are torturers, Second World War criminals and Nazi sympathizers here."¹⁹⁵ Evidently, Regalado was not portrayed as a grateful, modest refugee like Carlos Vega or the Santosos.

By late March of 1987, the Government of Canada continued to search for possible destinations for Regalado. Although the *Gazette* did not always present a flattering image of Regalado, the newspaper nonetheless alluded to extensive Canadian support for his case. The *Gazette* described how Regalado's supporters pressured members of Parliament and the public to

¹⁹² Canadian Press, "Court upholds plan to deport Salvadoran journalist," F14; Canadian Press, "Salvadoran deportee can pick destination," A14; Canadian Press, "Salvadoran journalist to be deported," *Toronto Star*, February 4, 1987, A9.

¹⁹³ Canadian Press, "Salvadoran journalist to be deported," A9.

¹⁹⁴ Peggy Curran, "Canada seeking another nation to accept deported Salvadoran," *Gazette*, February 4, 1987, A5.

¹⁹⁵ Peggy Curran, "Canada seeking another nation," A5.

allow Regalado to stay.¹⁹⁶ At the NDP's national convention, the party supported a resolution opposed to the deportation of Regalado.¹⁹⁷ The *Gazette* published a letter to the editor which also posited that the government could have erred in its judgment against Regalado.¹⁹⁸ By July of 1987, immigration officials were still looking for somewhere to send Regalado, while he and his lawyer brought their case to the attention of the United Nations Human Rights Committee in Geneva. His lawyer told reporters that "we want a humanitarian solution that takes into account the fact that he has been here for five years and has built a life and future for himself in Montreal."¹⁹⁹ Although the media coverage of Regalado's case dwindled after 1987, Regalado and his counsel continued their efforts. Finally, in 1996, Regalado was granted legal entry to Canada. By that time, the *Gazette* reported that he had married and had two children with a Canadian woman.²⁰⁰

Victor Regalado's portrayal in Canadian newspapers demonstrates the tension inherent in immigration debates of the 1980s. Regalado was a Cold War-era dissident, but, according to Canadian newspapers, he was also a committed communist who dissented against a right-wing regime. In the few instances when Regalado was quoted, he advocated free speech and spoke of the danger he faced in his native country. The *Star* and *Gazette* sometimes depicted Regalado's case as a challenge to the Government of Canada's avowed commitment to human and civil rights. Like other, unnamed Salvadorans, Regalado had difficulty asserting his rights as an effectively stateless person in a world of states. Canadian newspapers enhanced public knowledge

¹⁹⁶ Peggy Curran, "Salvadoran still hopes Canada will keep him," *Gazette*, March 24, 1987, A5.

¹⁹⁷ Sciortino was the Quebec NDP's immigration critic at the time. Jennifer Robinson, "Party tells Ottawa," A5.

¹⁹⁸ Susan Rutledge wrote that: "Justice should apply to everyone in Canada. In Mr. Regalado's case, if justice means admitting there was never any grounds for such a grave accusation, our government must do so." Susan Rutledge, letter to the editor, *Gazette*, March 11, 1987, B2.

¹⁹⁹ Staff, "Ousted by Canada, man appeals to the UN," *Gazette*, July 8, 1987, A9.

²⁰⁰ Irwin Block, "Doing the Buffalo Shuffle: Refugee plans to cross into U.S., then come right back," *Gazette*, May 10, 1996, A6; Irwin Block, "Journalist is allowed to immigrate: Salvadoran says he hopes to apply for citizenship," *Gazette*, June 8, 1996, A4.

of this case – which, García writes, aided in his eventual success – but the papers also fell short of championing Regalado.²⁰¹ Instead, newspapers provided a forum in which to debate Regalado’s admissibility into the imagined community of Canada.

Yet throughout most of the 1980s, Canada gained international attention for its apparent willingness to welcome refugees. A large, unanticipated influx of inland refugee claimants came to Canada from around the world, and Canadians debated how to receive or reject these newcomers. In the late 1970s, Canada received approximately 200 to 400 inland refugee claims per year; for the years 1982 through to 1984, this number increased from 3,400 to 5,200 claims and peaked at 37,000 claimants in 1992. A huge claims backlog resulted. Canadian immigration ministers commissioned various reports to attempt to address the delays yet ensure the fairness of the system; these included: the 1981 report by the Task Force on Immigration Practices and Procedures (“The Robinson Report”); *A New Refugee Status Determination Process for Canada*, written by Ottawa law professor Ed Ratushny; and *Refugee Determination in Canada* by Rabbi Gunther Plaut (“The Plaut Report”). These reports all recommended that claimants be given oral hearings so as to ensure procedural fairness, and that the body responsible for determining refugee status in Canada be more independent. In 1985, the Supreme Court of Canada examined the procedural fairness of the inland refugee determination system in *Singh v. Canada (Minister of Employment and Immigration)*, and ruled that claimants must be given oral hearings so as to abide by Section 7 of the *Charter*. In response to these rulings and recommendations, the Government of Canada introduced amendments to the *Immigration Act* in 1985. These amendments permitted oral hearings for all claimants before the Immigration Appeal Board (IAB), and increased the number of IAB members.²⁰²

²⁰¹ García, *Seeking Refuge*, 149.

²⁰² Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 412 – 415.

With the implementation of these new measures, the wait time for claims to be processed increased further. Delays in processing extended to forty months. On May 21, 1986, a partial amnesty was granted to refugee claimants who were deemed likely to establish themselves in Canada; 86% of the 28,000 applicants successfully gained status because of this measure. Afterwards, many more immigrants began to arrive and claim refugee status in anticipation of another amnesty. Among these were 155 Tamil refugee claimants who arrived by lifeboat on the coast of Newfoundland on August 11, 1986. The arrival of these people ignited Canada-wide controversy, but the government permitted the Tamils to enter the country and apply for refugee status. In a speech given August 17, Prime Minister Mulroney said:

We don't want people jumping to the head of the line. We don't want injustice introduced into the system. We don't want excessive delays. But there will always be human suffering and human misery and there will be people who come [to Canada] for freedom And if we err ... we will always err on the side of justice and on the side of compassion....it's not the presence of frightened human beings searching for freedom and opportunity that's going to undermine Canada of our immigration policies.²⁰³

Mulroney asserted that the admission of these people to Canada would not compromise the immigration system as a whole, even though these Tamils had arrived without warning. He assumed the Tamils' claims were legitimate until proven otherwise.²⁰⁴

Rhetoric about Canada's generous attitude towards refugees reached a new high when, in October of 1986, the UNHCR gave the Nansen Refugee Award to the "people of Canada." The Nansen Refugee Award is the highest distinction given by the UN for aid to refugees, and 1986 marked the first time a nation was its recipient.²⁰⁵ Jean-Pierre Hocke, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, praised Canada for "the humanitarian impulse that lies behind the

²⁰³ Joe O'Donnell, "Show compassion for Tamil refugees, Mulroney urges" *Toronto Star*, August 18, 1986, A1.

²⁰⁴ Dirks, *Controversy and Complexity*, 88 – 89; García, *Seeking Refuge*, 123, 130; Alexandra Mann, "Refugees Who Arrive by Boat and Canada's Commitment to the Refugee Convention: A Discursive Analysis," *Refuge* 26, no. 2 (2009): 196 -197.

²⁰⁵ The medal is named after Fridtjof Nansen, the first League of Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

welcome traditionally extended to refugees,” adding that “Canada has generously granted asylum to an increasing number of refugees who have spontaneously traveled to its shores and borders, often over vast distances, in search of a haven from oppression.”²⁰⁶ The medal was accepted on behalf of the Canadian people by Governor General Jeanne Sauvé. Many newspaper articles lauded Canada for its accomplishment, with one *Globe* editorial concluding that Mr. Hocke’s “kind words will inspire a collective blush...we must be doing something right.”²⁰⁷

Yet soon after receiving the Nansen Medal, Canada’s self-image as a generous recipient of the world’s refugees came into question. Thousands of inland refugee claims continued to be filed in Canada, including 4,000 by Portuguese, 2,000 by Turkish, and 1,600 by Brazilian nationals in 1986 and 1987. All claimants were entitled to the use the same refugee status determination system, and, by adding their names to the list, they were able to wait in Canada. In 1986, 18,000 new claimants were added, followed by 25,000 more in 1987. With wait times growing, thousands more refugee claimants began to arrive from the United States in late 1986, including unprecedented numbers of Salvadorans. Changes in U.S. immigration law had spurred on their movement: In November of 1986, U.S. Congress passed the *Immigration Reform and Control Act*. This Act sought to restrict the number of undocumented workers in the United States. Border control was expanded, tougher status verification standards were imposed, and employers were penalized more harshly for knowingly hiring undocumented workers.²⁰⁸

These changes in U.S. immigration law disproportionately affected Salvadorans living in the United States. The United States Government regarded Salvadorans as economic migrants, and their refugee claims were overwhelmingly rejected; only 3% of claims filed in the 1980s

206 Andrew McIntosh, “Nansen medal for aid to refugees,” *Globe and Mail*, October 6, 1986, A1.

207 Editorial, “Where the homeless find a home,” *Globe and Mail*, October 7, 1986, A6. See also: Dirks, *Controversy and Complexity*, 66; García, *Seeking Refuge*, 122.

²⁰⁸ Dirks, *Controversy and Complexity*, 88 – 89.

were successful, compared to the more 80% success rate of Salvadoran applicants in Canada.²⁰⁹ Nevertheless, over 500,000 Salvadorans fled to the United States during the course of the Salvadoran civil war, in addition to their counterparts from Guatemala. Despite the attitudes of their government, many American churches, religious groups and other activists coalesced to form the Sanctuary Movement, which sought to protect undocumented Central Americans fleeing violence in their homelands. The Sanctuary Movement began in 1982 when the pastor of the Southside Presbyterian Church in Tucson, Arizona and other activists declared the church a sanctuary for Central American refugees. Other churches, denominations, and faiths soon joined the movement, and by mid-1984, over 150 churches had declared sanctuary. The Sanctuary Movement brought Central Americans into the United States and transported them throughout North America to places where they could safely establish themselves. In 1984, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) brought charges against 16 Arizona Sanctuary workers, including the founders of the movement, and the INS received extensive negative press. The Sanctuary Movement expanded further, and by 1987 there were over 420 Sanctuary groups.²¹⁰

The increased pressure brought by the 1986 U.S. *Immigration Reform and Control Act*, and Canada's much greater acceptance rate of Salvadoran refugees inspired many Salvadorans to travel north, often assisted by members of the Sanctuary Movement. Beginning in late 1986, Canada witnessed a dramatic rise in petitions for asylum at its U.S. consulates. Others requested asylum at the various points along the United States-Canada border, or entered Canada illegally. In January of 1987, the number of Salvadorans who arrived at the Canadian border nearly equaled the number of Salvadoran asylum applicants from the previous year. Between December 1986 and February 1987, nearly 10,000 refugees, most of them from Central America, arrived in

²⁰⁹ García, *Seeking Refuge*, 11.

²¹⁰ Norma Stoltz Chinchilla, Nora Hamilton and James Loucky, "The Sanctuary Movement and Central American Activism in Los Angeles," *Latin American Perspectives* 36, no. 101 (2009): 105 – 107.

Canada. Churches on both sides of the border were filled with refugees, and the Salvation Army and Red Cross in Montreal and Toronto were filled to capacity. Toronto's Canadian National Exhibition Grounds became an emergency shelter for refugees.²¹¹

In February of 1987, the Canadian government imposed four new restrictions to discourage this overland migration. The first of these was the cancellation of the list of eighteen countries which were considered to be genuine refugee-producing states, and whose nationals would automatically be permitted to work and receive social services pending ministerial direction on asylum claims. This list of nations was known as the "B-1 list," and it had included El Salvador, along with Albania, Bulgaria, mainland China, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, Kampuchea, North Korea, East Germany, Laos, Romania, the Soviet Union, Vietnam, Afghanistan, Guatemala, Iran, Lebanon and Sri Lanka.²¹² Second, the Canadian government implemented transit visa requirements for Salvadorans and other nationals. If Salvadorans planned to stop in Canada en route to another destination, they were now required to have visas. This measure sought to prevent Salvadorans from petitioning for asylum during brief stays in Canada. Applicants who were considered potential claimants were frequently denied these visas. Third, special programs for natives of El Salvador, as well as Guatemala, Iran, Lebanon and Sri Lanka, were modified to discourage those with relatives in Canada from arriving without completing their processing abroad.²¹³

The fourth measure required those entering Canada via the United States and claiming refugee status to remain on the U.S. side of the border until their hearings took place. Claimants' hearing dates were usually scheduled months into the future. Canadian refugee advocates

²¹¹ García, *Seeking Refuge*, 130 - 131.

²¹² Staff, "Tamils involved in criminal acts will be deported, minister vows," *The Gazette*, August 20, 1986, A1; Benoit Aubin, "Refugee policy snarls immigration system: Arrival of Tamils reveals plight of thousands seeking asylum in Canada," *The Gazette*, 23 August 1986, B4.

²¹³ Dirks, *Controversy and Complexity*, 51, 89; García, *Seeking Refuge*, 131 - 132.

worried that this measure would endanger the lives of refugee claimants, as the United States had a high rate of deportation of several of these groups, including Salvadorans. Many of those sent back to the United States were required to sign an INS form indicating that they would be automatically deported from the United States if they were not later admitted to Canada; some Salvadorans were immediately deported. Immigration Minister Benoit Bouchard assured Canadian NGOs that Canada had an informal understanding with the United States that Salvadorans awaiting hearings would not be deported. A spokesperson for the INS denied this claim.²¹⁴ Those who remained in the United States usually waited in border towns, such as Detroit, Michigan; Great Falls, Montana; and Plattsburgh, Rochester, Buffalo and Lackawanna, New York. They were dependent on volunteers for food, shelter and work.²¹⁵

Of the three Canadian newspapers examined here, only Montreal's *Gazette* wrote about individual Salvadorans who were affected by these policy changes. The portrayal of Salvadorans in these articles was more akin to the portrayal of Salvadoran refugees in Central America in the early 1980s, than to the portrayals of middle class Salvadorans described earlier in this chapter. These Salvadorans were described as desperate, ignorant and simple, clinging to their faith and dreams of lives in Canada as they awaited their fates in upstate New York.

One of these articles appeared as front-page news in February of 1987. Reporting from the border town of Lacolle, Quebec, journalist David Lord wrote that "The Canadian-U.S. border slammed shut here yesterday on dozens of people who had hoped to enter Canada as refugees." Lord described the plight of Daisy Moran and her 10-month-old son, who had been living illegally in the United States and sought refuge in Canada. "We don't have anywhere to go,"

²¹⁴ García, *Seeking Refuge*, 132.

²¹⁵ García, *Seeking Refuge*, 131 – 132.

Moran told Lord.²¹⁶ Another *Gazette* article described a woman called Luz-Maria Lara. Journalist Michael Farber explained that Lara had brought a poster of Jesus with her from El Salvador, to Honduras and into the United States. Farber wrote that: “Perhaps soon – if immigration officials are on the side of the angels – her Savior will come to Canada.” Farber concluded that “Belief in a better future is a staple of life here.”²¹⁷ Both of these articles described desperate, powerless refugee women hoping for mercy from the Canadian immigration system.

Another front-page article that appeared that week emphasized the shock, ignorance and desperation of Salvadoran refugee claimants who had been turned away at the Canadian border. The article opened with the line: “At first, Ilesia Rodriguez didn’t understand.” Rodriguez was said to have cried “I can’t go back.... My life is in danger and I can’t go back.” Another Salvadoran refugee claimant was said to have been “shocked” when he was turned away at the Canadian border. “My father told me to come to Canada so I wouldn’t have to die in El Salvador,” he told the *Gazette*. “Now I don't know what's going to happen to me. It was unfair of Canada to suddenly change the rules... For people like me it could mean death.” The author, Karen Seidman, wrote that “It was a weekend of shattered dreams for the many who hoped to find refuge in Canada.”²¹⁸

In 1987, however, individuals’ dreams and struggles faded from the forefront of Canadian government discussion about refugees. The U.S.-Canada border was effectively reopened to refugee claimants by May of 1987,²¹⁹ but the number of unresolved refugee claims had nonetheless reached 50,000. The Mulroney Government soon produced two controversial

²¹⁶ David Lord, “Dozens turned back at border,” *Gazette*, February 21, 1987, A1.

²¹⁷ Michael Farber, “Hope a staple in wait at gate,” *Gazette*, February 23, 1987, A3.

²¹⁸ Karen Seidman, “Dreams of new life shattered at border: ‘My life is in danger, I can’t go back,’” *Gazette*, February 23, 1987, A1.

²¹⁹ Tom Spears, “Refugees awaiting hearings may stay on Canadian soil,” *Toronto Star*, May 5, 1987, A19.

bills to amend the *Immigration Act*. Bill C-55, the “Refugee Reform Bill,” was the first of these, and received its initial reading in May of 1987. The main objective of Bill C-55 was to streamline the refugee claims process, eliminate the backlog and make deportations easier. To this end, Bill C-55 introduced a new tribunal, the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB).²²⁰

The government introduced the second bill, C-84, following the unanticipated arrival of 174 Sikh men on the shore of Nova Scotia in July of 1987. Arriving in a boat called the *Amelie*, they hoped to apply for refugee status in Canada. Lynda Mannick has described how the arrival of these Sikhs briefly dominated the Canadian news; politicians, the Canadian public, and journalists together produced a discourse suggesting that this small group of refugee claimants was cause for national alarm. Canadian newspapers devoted great attention to the arrival of the *Amelie*: for example, the *Star* ran 8 consecutive days of front-page articles on the topic in July of 1987.²²¹ These and other newspaper articles were overwhelmingly negative in their portrayal of these Sikhs. Canadian politicians appeared in the news telling the public that the threat posed by these men had been brought under control. Yet reports continued to surface on the pending arrival of more refugees on more boats, facilitated by smugglers, and the Sikhs were often compared to terrorists.²²² The print media asserted that Canada had made itself too vulnerable due to its policies and geography. The Sikhs’ arrival was repeatedly referred to as a “crisis.”

Newspapers suggested the Canadian public was overwhelmingly opposed to accepting these men

²²⁰ Maria Cristina García, “Canada: a Northern Refuge for Central Americans,” *Migration Policy Institute*, April 1, 2006, accessed March 27, 2014, <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/canada-northern-refuge-central-americans>.

²²¹ See for example: Walter Stefaniuk, “Holland reported starting point of refugees' voyage to Canada Ottawa's hands tied, immigration minister says,” *Toronto Star*, July 14, 1987, A1; Don Dutton, “Most of 174 boat people said bound for Metro,” *Toronto Star*, July 15, 1987, A1; Kevin Donovan, “Profits from secret trip went to European Sikhs jailed sea captain says,” *Toronto Star*, July 17, 1987, A1; Kevin Donovan, “Refugees may go free Monday,” *Toronto Star*, July 18, 1987, A1.

²²² Sikh people had received considerable negative press in Canada following the Air India Disaster. In June of 1985, Air India Flight 182 exploded over the Atlantic Ocean, killing hundreds of Canadians, along with Britons and Indians. The bombing was attributed to a Sikh militant group. See for example: Michael Nijhawan and Kamal Arora, “Lullabies for Broken Children: Diasporic Citizenship and the Dissenting Voices of Young Sikhs in Canada,” *Sikh Formations: Religion, Culture, Theory*, 9, no. 3 (2013): 300.

as refugees. In both the writing of journalists and in letters to the editor, these Sikhs were derided as unwelcome, inauthentic refugees.²²³ On July 30, 1987, Prime Minister Mulroney took the drastic step of recalling Parliament from its summer recess in order to “crackdown on migrants.”²²⁴ The *Star* and the *Gazette* similarly wrote about how “Parliament [is] being recalled in [a] bid to end refugee ‘abuse,’” and how Ottawa intended to “get tough on immigrant-smugglers.”²²⁵

The government framed Bill C-84 as a response to the “threat” posed by undesired immigrants. Bill C-84 provided for the detention and removal of arrivals thought to pose a criminal or security risk to Canada; the detention of unidentified arrivals and security risks; significant penalties for smugglers of refugees; increased search and seizure powers; and increased fines and penalties for companies bringing individuals to Canada who lacked proper identification. Many Canadians worried that these provisions would be extended to refugee advocates, who might then face legal sanctions like their American counterparts in the Sanctuary Movement. Another controversial element of Bill C-84 was its “safe third country” provision. This measure would allow immigration officials to return asylum seekers to a country deemed “safe” if they had passed through that country en route to Canada. In practice, this country was most often the United States, which had a high deportation rate of Salvadorans. Both Bills C-55 and C-84 were passed in 1988 and came into effect on January 1, 1989. The safe third country provision, however, was not enacted until years later.²²⁶

²²³ Lynda Mannick, “Remembering arrivals of refugees by boat in a Canadian context,” *Memory Studies* 7 (2014):79 – 83.

²²⁴ Richard Cleroux and Victor Malarek, “Tip on new voyage checked Mulroney will recall House for crackdown on migrants,” *Globe and Mail*, July 31, 1987, A1.

²²⁵ Martin Cohn, “Parliament being recalled in bid to end refugee ‘abuse,’” July 31, 1987, A1; Staff, “Ottawa to get tough on immigrant-smugglers; Government wants MPs recalled to stem the flow of illegals and increase fines and jail terms,” *Gazette*, July 31, 1987, A1.

²²⁶ The goals of this provision were later achieved by the *Canada-U.S. Safe Third Country Agreement*, which was signed in 2002 and came into effect in 2004. “Safe Third Country Agreement,” *Canada Border Services*

Salvadorans played varied roles in Canadian newspapers' portrayals of these immigration debates. As mentioned, Salvadorans were rarely permitted to speak for themselves, but were frequently talked about. In such stories, Canadian government agencies, departments and officials were often the primary sources. Ashley Bradimore and Harald Bauder found that this same phenomenon frequently occurred when the Canadian newsprint media addressed the unanticipated arrival of Tamil refugees to Canada in 2009. By quoting and summarizing government sources before any others, Bradimore and Bauder argue that Canadian newspapers established a "hierarchy of credibility" in which a security-driven state perspective is prioritized. "This hierarchy or pyramid," they write,

buries oppositional views at the bottom of the narrative and influences the audience's overall reading of the event. Furthermore, it allows the primary sources to define the situation, determine which terminologies are applicable, and establish the overall tone of the discussion.²²⁷

This deference towards Canadian government opinions was evident in a number of articles produced in the winter of 1987. Articles that prioritized official perspectives had titles such as: "Bouchard considering changes to make refugees wait in U.S."; "New regulations are stemming flow of refugee claimants, Weiner says"; and "Ottawa will speed rulings on refugee status in 1987: Bouchard."²²⁸ In all of these articles, either Employment and Immigration Minister Benoit Bouchard or Minister of State for Immigration Gerry Weiner was the first person quoted. In the first of these articles, Benoit's words were followed by Weiner's; no criticism was offered by the newspaper. A few months later, Weiner's description of "Ottawa's tough emergency measures to stem the flow of people arriving in Canada claiming to be refugees," opened a *Globe and Mail*

Agency, July 23, 2009, accessed April 15, 2014, <http://www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/agency-agence/stca-etps-eng.html>.; García, *Seeking Refuge*, 143 – 144.

²²⁷ Bradimore and Bauder, "Mystery Ships," 650 – 651.

²²⁸ Staff, "Bouchard considering changes to make refugees wait in U.S." *Globe and Mail*, 16 January 1987, A5; Victor Malarek, "New regulations are stemming flow of refugee claimants, Weiner says," *Globe and Mail*, 11 April 1987, A12; Paul Delean, "Ottawa will speed rulings on refugee status in 1987: Bouchard," *Gazette*, 31 December 1986, A1.

article, but journalist Victor Malarek noted the small group of protestors who attended Weiner's event. The dissenting opinions of Lorne Waldman, a Toronto immigration lawyer, were also quoted. Nevertheless, it appeared Weiner's perspective was prioritized in this article, as the demonstrators assembled were described as those "whom Mr. Weiner jokingly referred to as his fan club."²²⁹ Paul Delean of the *Montreal Gazette* followed a very similar format in the third of these articles, beginning with the words of Bouchard, and briefly providing the dissenting opinion of immigration lawyer Diane Belanger of Montreal.²³⁰

Bradimore and Bauder warn that "if media and political debates rely mostly on each other for information and knowledge, they then establish a closed discursive circle that silences dissent and stifles oppositional intervention."²³¹ However, they also suggest that if the views of actors other than the state are presented first, the hierarchy of credibility may be inverted.²³² The latter appears to have sometimes been the case in 1986 and 1987, as Canadian newspapers tolerated, disseminated and generated dissent with regard to government policies, and avoided creating an echo chamber of state voices. In many of these articles, the primary critics of government policy were members of opposition parties, whom Canadian newspapers often represented as highly credible. For example, on February 21, 1987 – the day after the government effectively closed the U.S.-Canadian border to refugee claimants – the *Globe* ran an article entitled "New rules to curb refugees called 'turning back the clock,'" which gleaned its title from the words of Liberal MP and immigration critic, Sergio Marchi. Marchi's words were followed by those of NDP MP Dan Heap, a brief summary of the changes implemented by the Government, and quotes from

²²⁹ Malarek, "New regulations are stemming flow," A12.

²³⁰ Paul Delean, "Ottawa will speed rulings on refugee status in 1987: Bouchard." *Gazette*, December 31, 1986, A1.

²³¹ Bradimore and Bauder, "Mystery ships," 657.

²³² Bradimore and Bauder, "Mystery ships," 651.

critics such as a Toronto lawyer, the Toronto Refugee Affairs Council and B'nai B'rith Canada.

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All three newspapers also published articles that prioritized the perspectives of non-governmental actors, and most of these criticized the recently proposed Canadian policy changes. In a *Globe and Mail* article from March of 1987, Carolyn Patty Blum, a lecturer at the University of California, Berkley's law school, wrote that "now Canada joined the United States in this derogation of our mutual responsibilities to refugees under both domestic law and United Nations treaty." Blum lauded the U.S. Sanctuary Movement, comparing it to an "Aboveground Railroad," organized "to assist Central Americans in their journey to Canada, just as many had done in the nineteenth century to free slaves via the Underground Railroad."²³⁴ Blum provided no space for government officials' self-justification. This was also the case in an article produced by the *Gazette* in late February of 1987. It quoted leaders of the Italian Canadian Congress, the director of the *Association des gens d'affaires et professionnels haïtiens* (Association of Haitian Business People and Professionals) and the news director of a local radio station that had received complaints about the policy changes.²³⁵ An article that appeared in the *Star* described how Canada's Roman Catholic bishops were "urging Canada to 'respect its international obligation' by continuing to assist refugees from El Salvador's civil war and elsewhere in Central America." Although this article focused on the perspectives of the bishops, it concluded with an immigration spokesperson's defense of the recent policy changes.²³⁶ In

²³³ Graham Fraser, "New rules to curb refugees called 'turning back the clock,'" *Globe and Mail*, February 21, 1987, A4

²³⁴ Carolyn Patty Blum, "Canada follows bad U.S. example on refugees," *Globe and Mail*, March 13, 1987, A7.

²³⁵ David Lord, "Ethnic leaders want new rules eased," *Gazette*, February 25, 1987, A3

²³⁶ Michael McAteer, "Catholic bishops urge assistance for refugees," *Toronto Star*, March 19, 1987, A2.

light of Bradimore and Bauder's assessment, this article still allowed the bishops to establish the narrative and require the Government of Canada to defend itself.

Many of the most biting critiques of Canadian government policy appeared in letters to the editor. Contributors like Alawi Mohideen made unabashed statements like:

People from Guatemala, El Salvador and Chile are under threat of torture, death and disappearance when they are returned to those countries for the mere act of leaving their countries. It is known and documented that U.S. immigration is deporting 400 Salvadorans a month and that many of them have died by torture and assassination.²³⁷

Not bound by journalistic conventions, Mohideen – along with the newspaper staff who selected and edited his writing – was not required to provide space for the explanations of Canadian or U.S. government officials. The same applied to T. Nicoll, who wrote to the *Gazette* in March of 1987 that:

Canada is apparently turning its back on refugees fleeing fascist regimes such as those in Chile and El Salvador. Anyone who knows anything about these countries knows the dangers these people are faced with. Surely what they are asking is tantamount to political asylum.²³⁸

Another editorial that appeared in the *Gazette* that week questioned why the Canadian government had not adopted “a more constructive approach” when its current policy potentially endangered the lives of Salvadorans. “Reluctantly,” wrote contributor Richard Goldman, “one must conclude that racism and xenophobia play a big role.”²³⁹ These letters suggested that the correct course was obvious, and that the Canadian government's plans were founded upon ignorance and possible prejudice.

Despite these varied responses to official government policy, all of these articles were focused on the opinions of Canadians, and Salvadoran refugees appeared in newspapers predominantly as a topic for discussion amongst Canadians. Five trends were evident in

²³⁷ Alawi Mohideen, letter to the editor, *Globe and Mail*, March 12, 1987, A6.

²³⁸ T. Nicoll, letter to the editor, *Gazette*, March 26, 1987, B2.

²³⁹ Richard Goldman, “Racism hits refugees,” *Gazette*, March 30, 1987, B2.

Canadian newspapers' depictions of Salvadoran refugees as a group: For one, Salvadorans, as alluded to above, were written about as a reflection – or distortion – of alleged Canadian humanitarianism. Secondly, their treatment was considered in light of Canadian policy vis-à-vis that of the United States; the U.S. categorization of Salvadorans as “illegal” also appeared in Canadian newspapers. Nevertheless, Canadian newspapers generally adopted a perspective consistent with Canadian policy, which viewed Salvadoran refugees as “genuine” refugee claimants within a dichotomy of “bogus” and “genuine” refugees. Canadian newspapers also talked about Salvadoran and other refugee claimants using disaster metaphors, and compared and conflated Salvadorans with other groups. All of these devices combined to obfuscate the identity of Salvadoran refugees in Canada, and separate them from the imagined Canadian community.

Both articles that criticized Canadian government policy and those that promoted it used references to Canadian humanitarianism as a rhetorical device. Sometimes, members of government were quoted describing their policies as in line with Canadian values. For example, Minister Bouchard invoked Canada's self-perceived compassion in explaining the changes made to refugee admissions: “Our policy is straightforward – we provide asylum to every genuine refugee who lands in Canada... We will not allow this proud tradition to be undermined by those who would abuse it.”²⁴⁰ However, the voices of dissent that appeared in newspaper articles were quicker to point out how Canadian policy strayed from avowed Canadian values. Predictably, some of these voices included those of members of the opposition. For instance, the *Globe* wrote of how opposition MPs “accused the Government of betraying Canada's tradition of generosity with its new regulations.” Similarly, Sergio Marchi told the *Globe* that, with the measures

²⁴⁰ Graham Fraser, “New rules to curb refugees called ‘turning back the clock,’” *Globe and Mail*, February 21, 1987, A4.

instituted in February of 1987, “the Conservative Government of Canada has turned back the clock on what has been a proud and humanitarian refugee tradition.”²⁴¹

The Canadian press did not only print criticism received from elected representatives; the voices of non-governmental actors were also represented in the print media. For example, Marchi’s words were similar to those of Mark Persaud, a member of the Toronto Refugee Affairs Council. He told the *Globe* “The council feels this decision [to effectively close the U.S.-Canada border to refugee claimants] is immoral and irresponsible and does not reflect the humanitarian and compassionate tradition of the Canadian people toward those whose lives are in danger.”²⁴² Carolyn Patty Blum wrote that “these policies do little to enhance our own sense of morality as nations [the United States and Canada] and as people having compassion for the victims of persecution who have endured horrors beyond any that we can imagine.”²⁴³ Blum’s words were similar to those of Alawi Mohideen, who wrote a letter to the editor of the *Globe and Mail* in March of 1987, saying that:

It is unbelievable, with this cruel and heartless policy, that it has only been four months since the Nansen Medal was awarded to Canada by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to the people of Canada for their fair treatment of refugees... The actions of the Mulroney Government have made a mockery of Madame Sauvé’s words [upon accepting the Nansen Medal on behalf of Canadians] and have ruined Canada’s reputation as a safe haven for the persecuted of this world.²⁴⁴

According to these contributors, Canada was betraying its reputation and traditions by implementing these new refugee policies.

Appeals to Canadian national identity were often also paired with criticism of the Canadian government for subscribing to American perspectives on Salvadoran refugees. Blum criticized the Canadian government for following the United States’ “bad example on refugees.”

²⁴¹ Fraser, “New rules to curb refugees,” A4.

²⁴² Fraser, “New rules to curb refugees,” A4

²⁴³ Blum, “Canada follows bad U.S. example,” A7.

²⁴⁴ Alawi Mohideen, Letter to the Editor, *Globe and Mail*, March 12, 1987, A6.

This sentiment was echoed in a statement made by Canada's Roman Catholic bishops. The *Star* described how "they called on Canada to distance itself from U.S. policy on El Salvador," and for Canadians to "join action to their prayers by urging the Canadian government to 'opt for a courageous Central American policy and by warmly welcoming the refugees who are already among us.'"²⁴⁵ One letter to the editor described Canada's immigration policy as subject to "blatant bias," and overly affected by "America's view of creeping Communism enveloping the world."²⁴⁶ As they had in the early 1980s, Canadian newspapers provided a forum for Canadians who wished to distance themselves, and their nation state, from U.S. interpretations of the world and its refugees.

Nevertheless, Canadian newspapers frequently mentioned the "illegal" American origins of many Salvadorans refugees in 1986 and 1987. In February of 1987, the *Gazette* wrote that "About half the refugee claimants this year are from Central American countries, such as El Salvador and Guatemala, who entered from the United States, which recently introduced tough new measures against illegal immigrants."²⁴⁷ A *Globe* article described Central Americans as "part of a tide of illegal aliens leaving the United States."²⁴⁸ The *Star* similarly entitled a February 1987 article: "Illegal aliens face crackdown in U.S.: Tough new law a major source of surge of foreigners seeking refuge in Canada."²⁴⁹ Employment and Immigration Minister Benoit Bouchard was quoted in the *Globe and Mail* saying: "Can we say that all people from El Salvador or Guatemala are refugees, when we know that some were seasonal workers in the

²⁴⁵ Michael McAteer, "Catholic bishops urge assistance for refugees," *Toronto Star*, March 19, 1987, A2.

²⁴⁶ T. Nicoll, letter to the editor, *Gazette*, March 26, 1987, B2

²⁴⁷ Staff, "Canada toughens refugee policy; Rights groups in uproar: 'These people are going to be sent to death,'" *Gazette*, February 21, 1987, A1.

²⁴⁸ Deborah Wilson, "Illegal aliens flood across border As many as 100 refugees a day at immigration office in Fort Erie," *Globe and Mail*, February 16, 1987, A1.

²⁴⁹ Bob Hepburn, "Illegal aliens face crackdown in U.S. Tough new law a major source of surge of foreigners seeking refuge in Canada," *Toronto Star*, February 26, 1987, A20.

United States?” He concluded: “That’s very, very delicate.”²⁵⁰ Bouchard alluded to the political sensitivity of Canada potentially admitting migrants whose refugee claims the United States rejected.

The newspapers thereby suggested that Canadian policy was made in consideration of U.S. policies, just as critics had claimed. Furthermore, Canadian discourses were influenced by American categories. In a study of Canadian newspapers’ depictions of Mexican migrants to Ontario in 2007, Liette Gilbert found that newspapers decried the “illegal” arrival of a few hundred Mexicans, who proceeded to make allegedly “unfounded” and “bogus” refugee claims in Canada. Gilbert argues that this “discourse of ‘illegality’ and ‘criminality’ associated with Mexican migrants in the U.S. migrated north, and was extended indiscriminately to Mexican refugee claimants in Canada.”²⁵¹ Twenty years earlier, a similar discourse about “illegal” Central Americans was prominent in the United States, and was evidently given voice in Canadian news.

Although the content of Canadian newspapers reflected the close relationship between the United States and Canada, Canadian newspapers in 1986 and 1987 also focused specifically on Canadian immigration issues. In this context, Salvadorans were generally upheld as “genuine” refugee claimants, in keeping with Canadian policy. By contrast, other nationals, especially Turks and Portuguese, were decried as “bogus” in Canadian newspapers. Both Bouchard and Weiner were quoted in the *Globe* asserting that “the situation of the Latin Americans is different from that of the Turks.”²⁵² In another article, Toronto lawyer Waldman accused the government of directing its measures at nationals “from countries which are known refugee producers,

²⁵⁰ Graham Fraser, “Tamils wouldn’t be deported, Bouchard says,” *Globe and Mail*, February 11, 1987, A4.

²⁵¹ Gilbert, “Mexican Refugee Crisis,” 828 – 829.

²⁵² Staff, “Bouchard considering changes to make refugees wait in U.S.” *Globe and Mail*, January 16, 1987,

countries like Guatemala, El Salvador and Chile.” Waldman asserted that “these people are not abusers but legitimate refugees.”²⁵³ The director of the Association of Haitian Business People and Professionals stated in the *Gazette* “that people from countries such as Chile and El Salvador should be allowed to enter Canada, unless they have a criminal record.” His words concluded this article: “Keep the border closed, but not for those who are real refugees. Keep it open for them.”²⁵⁴ The editorial that appeared in the *Gazette* on February 28, 1987, also distinguished between refugees. “The recent waves of self-styled ‘refugees’ from Portugal and Turkey have both clogged the system and clouded the refugee issue,” wrote Gretta Chambers. Meanwhile, “much current protest suggests that having to wait out the process in Plattsburg is tantamount to being condemned to die or worse in El Salvador, because the United States will deport people before Canada can rule on their cases.”²⁵⁵ The *Globe* was similarly terse in its consideration of “manifestly unfounded claimants, such as the Turks and Portuguese, who made orchestrated arrivals in recent months.” This article concluded that “Ottawa is entitled to give short shrift to those whose refugee claims are a flagrant abuse of the system.”²⁵⁶

Such broad categorizations of refugee claimants have been used at other, more recent times by the Canadian print media. Minelle Mahtani and Alison Mountz found that newspapers distinguished between “bogus” Chinese claimants and “genuine” Kosovar claimants in British Columbia in 1999 and 2000.²⁵⁷ Mahtani and Mountz suggest that the propagation of these conflicting discourses of “genuine” and “bogus” refugee claimants appeared in correlation with a

²⁵³ Malarek, “New regulations are stemming flow,” A12.

²⁵⁴ David Lord, “Ethnic leaders want new rules eased,” A3.

²⁵⁵ Gretta Chambers, “Lend an ear to refugees,” *Gazette*, February 28, 1987, B3.

²⁵⁶ Staff, “Handling refugees,” *Globe and Mail*, February 21, 1987, D6.

²⁵⁷ Minelle Mahtani. and Alison Mountz, “Immigration to British Columbia: Media Representation and Public Opinion,” Vancouver Centre of Excellence: Research on Immigration and Integration in the Metropolis, Working Paper No. 02-15. (2002): 29.

backlash against affording refugee claimants due process.²⁵⁸ The stricter immigration laws proposed by the Mulroney Government in 1987 suggest that Mahtani and Mountz's findings had at least one historical precedent. Writing about the arrival of unanticipated refugees in the 1990s, Greenberg and Hier suggest that Canadians newspapers' concern with the legal identity of migrants "can be couched in terms of the state's need to 'embrace' its populations and distinguish its population from 'others.'"²⁵⁹ The press in the 1980s employed legal terminology – regardless of factual correspondence with Canadian law – to similarly distinguish between prospective members of the nation. This reinforces Thobani's point about the importance of citizenship in bestowing membership to discursively constructed nation states in the late twentieth century.²⁶⁰ Without being "legally" or "genuinely" entitled to become Canadian citizens, refugees were unlikely to be admitted into the imagined community of Canada by the gatekeeper press.

While Salvadorans were usually placed in the "genuine" side of the press's genuine-bogus dichotomy, this group of refugee claimants was also depicted, along with other claimants, using disaster metaphors. Greenberg and Hier observed similar descriptions in how the British Columbian press reported on the arrival of Chinese migrants in 1999. Greenberg and Hier write that, by branding migrants' acts with catastrophic metaphors:

the specificity and complexity surrounding each boat arrival was therefore denied and replaced by an abstract and simplified metanarrative ("waves of boat people" or "invasion of migrants") that could account for every symptom and outcome, and be capable of attributing blame and responsibility for the crisis unambiguously to the agents of harm: the migrants and the federal government.²⁶¹

²⁵⁸ Mahtani and Mountz, "Immigration to British Columbia," 22.

²⁵⁹ Greenberg and Hier, "Crisis, Mobilization and Collective Problematization," 576.

²⁶⁰ Thobani, "Nationalizing Canadians," 281.

²⁶¹ Greenberg and Hier, "Crisis, Mobilization and Collective Problematization," 573 – 574.

Greenberg and Hier conclude that such a discourse serves to objectify migrants. Otto Santa Ana reached similar conclusions in his study of how the *Los Angeles Times* wrote about Latino immigration in the context of Proposition 187 in 1994.²⁶² He suggested that the primary metaphor used to describe Latinos was one of “immigration as dangerous waters”; this included images of “the human surge” and the “inexorable flow.”²⁶³ Santa Ana argues that these metaphors were not applied neutrally, as “the dangerous waters metaphors do not refer to any aspect of the humanity of the immigrants.” Furthermore, in the use of water metaphors that emphasized the relative numbers of migrants, “individuals are lost in the mass sense of these volume terms.”²⁶⁴

Canadian newspapers of 1986 and 1987 employed all of these devices to depict Salvadoran refugees and the alleged refugee crisis developing in Canada. An editorial that appeared in the *Globe* in December 1986 argued that Minister Weiner “cannot simply play the little Dutch boy who sticks his finger in the dike.”²⁶⁵ This article suggests, as Greenberg and Hier do, that blame for the “crisis” was attributable to both the Government of Canada and migrants to Canada. Allusions to a “flood” of refugee claimants were also common in the Canadian print media. In late 1986 and early 1987, Canadian journalists described “a world awash with 11 million refugees,” “refugee claimants *flooding* into Montreal” and “a *tide* of illegal aliens leaving the United States” and seeking asylum in Canada.²⁶⁶ Journalists also

²⁶² Proposition 187, also known as the Save Our State (SOS) initiative, was a 1994 ballot initiative to establish a state-run citizenship screening system and prohibit non-citizens from using state services in California. Otto Santa Ana, *Brown Tide Rising: metaphors of Latinos in contemporary American public discourse* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002), 5 -7.

²⁶³ Santa Ana, *Brown Tide*, 72 – 73.

²⁶⁴ Santa Ana, *Brown Tide*, 73.

²⁶⁵ Editorial, “Turkish delight?” *Globe and Mail*, 31 December 1986, A6.

²⁶⁶ Emphasis mine; Staff, “Refugees in waiting,” *Globe and Mail*, 5 January 1987, A6; Victor Malarek, “Flood of arrivals strains province’s programs,” *Globe and Mail*, 6 January 1987, A3; Deborah Wilson, “Illegal aliens flood across border; As many as 100 refugees a day at immigration office in Fort Erie,” *Globe and Mail*, February 16, 1987, A1.

recommended that amendments to the *Immigration Act* “streamline” the refugee process, or control the “refugee *flow*,” in addition to describing the “*waves* of citizens from different countries” who had sought refuge in Canada in the past year.²⁶⁷ Again, these metaphors were not used to explain the experiences and struggles of individuals or even groups of migrants. Instead, they depicted migrants as a looming, mysterious threat to Canada.

The decontextualized depiction of Salvadoran refugees in Canadian newspapers was further exacerbated due to frequent comparisons between Salvadorans and other nationals. Salvadorans were often compared to Guatemalans and Chileans. In other instances, they were simply referred to as “Latin Americans.”²⁶⁸ Salvadoran refugees were also often mentioned as members of a disparate group of nations which had belonged to the B-1 list prior to its cancellation. In this context, El Salvador was frequently listed alongside nations including Afghanistan, the Soviet Union, Iran, Lebanon and Sri Lanka.²⁶⁹ Given such far-reaching comparisons and combinations, Canadian newspapers presented an indistinct picture of Salvadoran refugee claimants. This, in addition to newspapers’ implication of Salvadoran refugees in disaster metaphors, their overarching concern with “bogus” and “illegal” refugees, and their discussion of Salvadorans primarily as a policy issue, combined to obfuscate the identity of the majority of refugee claimants featured in the Canadian print media.

In 1986 and 1987, Canadian refugee policy was reformulated in response to both internal and external pressures. As more people came to Canada from around the world to claim refugee status, Canada’s allegedly generous attitude towards these claimants was tested. Salvadorans

²⁶⁷ Staff, “Refugees in waiting,” A6; Staff, “Refugee flow speeded by crackdown in U.S.,” *Globe and Mail*, 24 January 1987, A2; Fraser, “Tamils wouldn’t be deported,” A4.

²⁶⁸ Lord, “Ethnic leaders want new rules eased,” A3; Blum, “Canada follows bad U.S.,” A7; Alawi Mohideen, letter to the editor, A6; T. Nicoll, letter to the editor, B2; David Brough, “Study finds Poles, Iranians favored: Bias suggested in U.S. refugee policy,” *Globe and Mail*, March 10, 1987, A13; Staff, “Bouchard considering changes to make refugees wait in U.S.” *Globe and Mail*, January 16, 1987, A5.

²⁶⁹ Fraser, “New rules to curb refugees,” A4; Staff, “Handling refugees,” *Globe and Mail*, February 21, 1987, D6.

were caught up in these debates. In Canadian newspapers, a few Salvadoran refugees were presented as skilled, middle-class immigrants ready to contribute to their adopted country. But 1987's most publicized individual Salvadoran, Victor Regalado, was the subject of conflicting and unflattering news reports. Furthermore, the vast majority of Regalado's compatriots appeared in Canadian newspapers as an unnamed mass of migrants, whose numbers, unclear and perhaps "illegal" origins threatened to "flood" into Canada. Salvadoran refugees formed just one facet of Canada's immigration debates of 1987, but their portrayal in Canadian newspapers nevertheless suggests how the print media guarded against the inclusion of certain groups in their conception of the Canadian nation.

Chapter 3: 1991 – 1992

This third chapter examines the portrayal of Salvadoran refugees in Canadian newspapers at a contentious and transitional time in the histories of both Canada and El Salvador. The years 1991 and 1992 entailed the conclusion of the Cold War, as well as the official end of the civil war in El Salvador. This chapter begins with an overview of the Canadian domestic context in the early 1990s, and the emergence of the peace accords in El Salvador. Canada supported this peace process and it was catalyzed by the end of the Cold War. In 1991 and 1992, the *Globe and Mail*, *Toronto Star* and *Montreal Gazette* lauded Canada's involvement in the UN peacekeeping mission in El Salvador, but questioned how much had changed with the Cold War's end. Some continuities were evident, such as the continued arrival to Canada of refugee claimants from El Salvador and around the world; Canadian immigration policy also continued to excite national media attention in the early 1990s. However, Canadian newspapers paid less attention to Salvadoran refugees as a group in 1991 and 1992. In contrast to the 1980s, several individual Salvadoran refugees garnered the attention of Canadian newspapers in the early 1990s. Although Salvadoran refugees were given greater voice in newspapers in 1991 and 1992, Canadian newspapers still problematized their inclusion in the imagined community of Canada.

The early 1990s marked the end of Brian Mulroney's tenure as Prime Minister of Canada. Mulroney's Conservatives won their second term as government in 1988. That year, the Mulroney Government passed the *Multiculturalism Act*, which was an official extension of Canada's policy of multiculturalism, first asserted by Prime Minister Trudeau in 1971, and enshrined in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. The *Multiculturalism Act* was intended to address the needs of immigrants and their families in Canada by supporting cultural programs and activities as well as language and heritage education. The Act responded to the

wide array of immigrants who came to Canada in the 1970s and 1980s, and, viewed more cynically, to what was framed as the “immigrant issue.”²⁷⁰

Overall, the popularity of the Mulroney Government declined sharply in the early 1990s. The Mulroney Government successfully expanded its 1989 Free Trade Agreement with the United States to include Mexico, and form the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in December of 1992. The Mulroney Government failed, however, to effectively respond to the worldwide recession of 1990 to 1992. Mulroney raised taxes and alienated many of his former supporters in the business sectors, while his annual budget deficits increased to unprecedented levels. Canadian consumers were directly affected – and frustrated – when Mulroney’s government implemented the goods and services tax (GST) in 1991.²⁷¹ The national unemployment rate rose from 7.5% in 1989 to over 11% by 1993.²⁷² Mulroney resigned in 1993 and was replaced by Kim Campbell. In the 1993 general election, the Conservative Party suffered a resounding defeat to the Liberals.

As Mulroney’s tenure concluded, the long peace processes in Central America finally began to bear fruit. Attempts to establish a sustained peace in Central America had begun in 1983 when four neighboring countries – Colombia, Mexico, Panama and Venezuela – tried to foster negotiations through regional collaboration rather than the involvement of superpowers. These nations became known as the “Contadora Group” because their first meeting was on Panama’s Isla de Contadora; Argentina, Brazil, Peru and Uruguay joined in 1984 as the “Latin Support Group,” and Canada vowed its support to the Contadora Group in 1984. The Group’s

²⁷⁰ Patricia K. Wood and Liette Gilbert, “Multiculturalism in Canada: Accidental Discourse, Alternative Vision, Urban Practice,” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 29, no.3 (September 2005): 683.

²⁷¹ J. Frank Strain, “Debts Paid and Debts Owed: The Legacy of Mulroney’s Economic Policies,” in Raymond B. Blake, ed., *Transforming the Nation: Canada and Brian Mulroney* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2007), 49 – 59.

²⁷² Raymond B. Blake, “Introduction,” in Blake, *Transforming*, 8.

proposal was rejected in 1986, but it laid the foundation for the signing of the Esquipulas II Accord by the five Central American presidents in 1987. The details of Esquipulas II proved difficult to negotiate, and, in November of 1988, the Central American foreign ministers agreed to ask the UN Secretary General to approach Canada, Spain, West Germany, a Latin American State and the Organization of American States (OAS) to develop a mechanism to help implement these measures. A year later, the Government of El Salvador and the FMLN both formally requested the involvement of the UN.²⁷³

These requests for international involvement in El Salvador and elsewhere in Central America were generally well received in Canada. Following Secretary of State for External Affairs Joe Clark's visit to Central America in late 1987, the Mulroney Government's interest in Latin America as a whole continued to increase. In 1988, the Department of Foreign Affairs conducted an internal policy review on the region, and the Canadian government established the House of Commons Special Committee on the Peace Process in Central America, which recommended increased aid and peacekeeping services in support of the Esquipulas II Accord. Foreign Affairs developed a new policy framework towards Latin America that was adopted in 1989. In October of 1989, Mulroney announced that Canada would become a full member of the Organization of American States. The following month, Clark re-stated Canada's plan to participate in the peace processes in Central America and increased bilateral aid to the region by \$100 million. By 1990, Clark made it clear that Canada, as part of its contribution to the Esquipulas II Accord, would provide more than one hundred officers to the United Nations Observer Group in Central America.²⁷⁴

²⁷³ Lemco, *Canada and the Crisis*, 95 – 104, 109 – 114.

²⁷⁴ Peter McKenna, "Canada's Policy towards Latin America: A Statist Interpretation," *International Journal*, 49, No. 4 (Autumn, 1994): 930 – 939; Jean Daudelin, "Foreign Policy at the Fringe: Canada and Latin America," *International Journal* 58, No. 4 (Autumn, 2003): 637-639.

The prospect of peace in Central America emerged as the Cold War order of the past four decades fell apart. Little changed when George H.W. Bush succeeded Ronald Reagan as President of the United States in 1989, but in the Soviet Union the preceding decade had entailed immense changes. By the late 1980s, the Soviet Union had lost its superpower status, and in 1991, the USSR dissolved into fifteen separate nations. Politicians and journalists heralded – and questioned – the emergence of a “new world order,” a phrase first applied to the end of the Cold War in 1988, and further popularized by President Bush Sr. in September of 1991.²⁷⁵

With the end of the Cold War, the United Nations operated under a broader consensus. The UN peacekeeping operation in El Salvador was part of a dramatic increase in such operations worldwide.²⁷⁶ The official involvement of the United Nations in the conflict in El Salvador began in late 1989. In 1990, the FMLN and the Salvadoran government reached their first accord agreeing to respect human rights. The following year, the UN Security Council established the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador (*Misión de Observadores de las Naciones Unidas en El Salvador* or ONUSAL) to ensure the fulfillment of this and future agreements. The UN Secretary General and his representative oversaw further negotiations, which culminated in the signing of the Chapultepec Peace Accords in Mexico City on January 16, 1992. These Accords were compulsory for both the FMLN and the Government of El Salvador, and suggested a commitment to building a new Salvadoran society. By this time, the immense damage wrought by the civil war was evident: It had resulted in the deaths of over 80,000 Salvadorans, in addition to the more than 1 million Salvadorans who had been forced to

²⁷⁵ John Herd Thompson and Stephen J. Randall, *Canada and the United States: Ambivalent Allies*, 4th ed., (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2008), 265. See for example: Harry Bruce, “‘New World Order’ has imperialist ring to it,” *Gazette*, March 9, 1991, 14; Olivia Ward, “New world order? It's no sure thing,” *Toronto Star*, November 18, 1991, A15.

²⁷⁶ With new support, the UN Security Council authorized 20 new operations between 1989 and 1994, and the number of peacekeepers grew from 11,000 to 75,000. United Nations, “Post Cold War surge,” *United Nations Peacekeeping*, accessed April 19, 2014, <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/operations/surge.shtml>.

emigrate. The cost of material damage was estimated to be over \$1 billion.²⁷⁷ With a staff of more than 1000 people from 16 nations, ONUSAL confronted numerous and daunting challenges until its conclusion in April of 1995. The Peace Accords that ONUSAL helped to bring about remain in place to this day, and represented an unprecedented achievement by the United Nations.²⁷⁸

Canadian newspapers paid close attention to the emerging peace in El Salvador. The *Globe and Mail*, *Toronto Star* and *Montreal Gazette* published a combined 876 articles that mentioned “El Salvador” in 1991 and 1992. Of these, 367 were published in the *Globe*, 290 in the *Star* and 219 in the *Gazette*. Canadian newspapers devoted more attention to the Central American nation in 1991 than in 1992, as 489 articles appeared in 1991 and 387 were printed in 1992. Canadian newspapers applauded Canada’s involvement in ONUSAL, but also debated the nature of the post-Cold War world.

Canadian newspapers praised Canada’s contribution to ONUSAL. In January of 1992, it was announced that Canada would be the second-largest military observer of El Salvador’s ceasefire,²⁷⁹ and Canadian newspapers generally suggested the importance of Canada’s contributions. The *Globe* noted, for example, that Associate Defense Minister Mary Collins “was the second-highest foreign government official to visit El Salvador since the ceasefire was signed,” and how Canada “was the only donor to respond” to an international appeal for funding

²⁷⁷ Torres-Rivas and Gonzalez-Suarez, *Obstacles and Hopes: Perspectives for Democratic Development in El Salvador* (Montreal: International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development, 1994), 21 - 22.

²⁷⁸ United Nations, “El Salvador – ONUSAL: Background,” *United Nations Peacekeeping*, accessed April 3, 2014, <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/onusalbackgr1.html>; Tommie Sue Montgomery, “Getting to Peace in El Salvador: The Roles of the United Nations Secretariat and ONUSAL,” *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 37, no. 4 (Winter, 1995): 139-172.

²⁷⁹ Jean Kavanagh, “Canadian observers to monitor ceasefire, PM salutes peace plan in El Salvador,” *Globe and Mail*, January 22, 1992, A12.

for demobilization in the spring of 1992.²⁸⁰ The *Star* reiterated Canada's willingness to contribute to peace in El Salvador, quoting Collins as saying "Canadians are willing to accept any other request from the UN 'with the view to assuring the long-awaited peace and prosperity of El Salvador.'"²⁸¹

As they had in the 1980s, Canadian newspapers suggested that it was the international community's responsibility to stabilize El Salvador. The *Globe* described how ex-combatants in El Salvador "ask if the world outside El Salvador knows or cares what is happening to them." Establishing lasting peace in El Salvador, the *Globe* suggested, "is the new task of the international community."²⁸² A feature in the *Star* remarked that "in peace as in war, El Salvador is largely dependent on foreign aid." This article expressed concern that El Salvador had lost its importance to the international community: "the international events that made peace possible – such as the end of the Cold War – have left the little country irrelevant.... El Salvador is learning that the new world order doesn't have much to do with the coffee-growing countries of Central America."²⁸³ These newspapers implied that international attention was integral to El Salvador's fate as a nation.

Comment pieces in Canadian newspapers questioned how much had changed in recent years, despite nominal shifts. In April of 1991, Brian Fawcett wrote in the *Globe* that continued funding for the government of El Salvador would ensure "that dozens more bodies will appear each morning in the garbage dumps." He concluded that "I can't really see the difference

²⁸⁰ Jean Kavanagh, "Canadian observers to monitor ceasefire," A12; Brian K. Murphy, "Making sure the ceasefire holds: After 12 years, the U.S.-backed war is over, but poor conditions in the camps of the leftist ex-rebel fighters make for despair and could explode into renewed violence; Canada has been quick to respond but more help is needed," *Globe and Mail*, April 6, 1992, A11.

²⁸¹ Associated Press and Canadian Press, "Canada to bolster Salvadoran force," *Toronto Star*, January 22, 1992, A2.

²⁸² Brian K. Murphy, "Making sure the ceasefire holds," A11.

²⁸³ David Marcus, *Dallas Morning News*, "El Salvador's victims of peace: Former rebels lack education, jobs for smooth transition to civilian life," *Toronto Star*, July 23, 1992, A21.

between the new world order we're hearing so much about and the old one. Sometimes it seems as if we've simply traded the threat of nuclear oblivion for the reality of moral oblivion."²⁸⁴ Bill Fairbairn, Director of the Inter-Church Committee on Human Rights in Latin America, also suggested that Canada's involvement in El Salvador demonstrated some moral failings. Fairbairn wrote in the *Globe* in May of 1991 that "In El Salvador and Guatemala, Colombia and Peru, military and security forces have not only escaped prosecution and punishment for past violations; they still commit them." Fairbairn suggested that Canada was among "countries that share guilt by their complicity," and that Canada should therefore commit itself to "the search for truth and prosecution of the offenders."²⁸⁵ The pages of the *Gazette* featured similar sentiments. Journalist Jean-Claude Leclerc wrote about how Salvadorans displaced by war "certainly deserve our support in this great human adventure." Leclerc lamented how "This is quite a challenge for a country like Canada which *claims* to work for peace, human rights and international development."²⁸⁶ Douglas Roche also questioned Canada's national character as reflected in the ends of the Cold War and the Salvadoran civil war. In November of 1991, Roche wrote in the *Toronto Star* about how Canada was missing the opportunity for moral leadership presented by the end of the Cold War. Roche stated that the West "remains committed to the Cold War ways even though the scale of human misery in the world reveals new threats to security posed by the mounting millions of dislocated peoples." He described the unfortunate state of the world's more than 17 million refugees, including those from El Salvador. "The perpetuation of this escalating human misery makes a mockery of the new world order," he wrote. He called on Canada to take a more active role:

²⁸⁴ Brian Fawcett, "Fifth Column: Public Eye: Is life in the gulf any better now? It's a question Brian Fawcett finds difficult to answer," *Globe and Mail*, April 26, 1991, A14.

²⁸⁵ Bill Fairbairn, letter to the editor, *Globe and Mail*, May 29, 1991, A11.

²⁸⁶ Emphasis mine, Jean-Claude Leclerc, "Refugee odyssey shows the way for Canadians," *Gazette*, April 5, 1991, B3.

The dangers and injustices of the world in change pass over Ottawa's head.... With the end of the Cold War, a new moment has been given to the world. This new moment requires politicians, institutions and the public to rouse from the present torpor.²⁸⁷

These Canadian newspaper articles suggested a popular understanding that, although the clear bipolar configuration of international politics had ended by the early 1990s, not everything had changed.

Accordingly, in 1991, refugees in Canada remained a well-publicized and contested topic, and many of the issues from the late 1980s remained pertinent. The Immigration and Refugee Board, which had been implemented in 1989, was able to process many of the outstanding refugee claims that had originally been filed in the 1980s; by the end of 1992, most of the outstanding claims made prior to 1989 – which numbered over 100,000 – had been processed.²⁸⁸ The number of inland refugee claims continued to grow, however, exceeding 20,000 applicants in 1989 and doubling to 40,125 applicants in 1992. In June of 1992, the Mulroney government introduced Bill C-86 to further amend the *Immigration Act*. Bill C-86 aimed to address a number of unforeseen problems with Canada's evolving immigration intake system. For one, as the number of refugee claimants continued to increase, another processing backlog seemed likely to develop. Furthermore, Bill C-86 aimed to reduce the costs of immigration personnel and programs, which had increased to an estimated \$900 million annually. Canadian politicians also wished to match Canadian admission standards with the restrictive measures recently implemented in Western European states, as migration from Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union and developing countries had increased in the early 1990s. Furthermore, Canadian employers wanted more freedom to directly recruit workers from abroad,

²⁸⁷ Douglas Roche, "Refugees, bombs and us," *Toronto Star*, November 14, 1991, A25.

²⁸⁸ Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 423.

and Canadian provinces and municipalities were having difficulty supporting the increased numbers of immigrants, especially refugee claimants.²⁸⁹

The Mulroney Government portrayed Bill C-86 as a means of making Canada's immigration system more efficient and economical, but several of its measures were poorly received by refugee advocates. Among the measures that generated the most controversy was the re-introduction of a "safe third country" provision, which would enable the government to return those whose claims were denied to countries deemed "safe." The list of such countries was not provided. Bill C-86 also allocated more power to senior immigration officials. These powers included the right to determine whether a refugee claimant could appear before a refugee panel. Furthermore, this bill proposed that refugee claimants would be ineligible to work until their claims were fully processed. Another provision stated that refugees claimants could be denied asylum if they had criminal records in their home countries, even if their actions were not criminal in Canada. Bill C-86 received Royal Assent in December of 1992, and the majority of its provisions came into effect on February 1, 1993. The "safe third country" provision was not adopted, and the Government of Canada's employment authorization policy was changed in 1994 to allow refugee claimants to work while their cases moved through the system.²⁹⁰

In 1992, Bill C-86 received considerable attention from Canadian newspapers. A total of 54 articles specifically addressed Bill C-86 in 1992; 27 of these appeared in the *Globe and Mail*, 24 in the *Toronto Star* and 3 in the *Gazette*. The majority of these articles were critical of Bill C-86 and prioritized the perspectives of those who objected to the Bill's passing; most of these criticisms focused on how Bill C-86 reflected on Canada as a nation. For example, refugee advocates, such as Anthony Cosentino and Kim Barnhardt of the Canadian Coalition for a Just

²⁸⁹ Dirks, *Controversy and Complexity*, 158 – 159.

²⁹⁰ Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 424 – 425; García, *Seeking Refuge*, 141; Lisa Marie Jakubowski, *Immigration and the Legalization of Racism* (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 1997), 63 – 64.

Refugee and Immigration Policy Toronto, wrote to the *Globe and Mail* in the hope of reminding the Canadian press of its ability to influence policymakers: “We hope that continued coverage of Bill C-86 will help the Conservative government to recognize that a just immigration policy must ensure the safety and basic human rights of all who arrive at our borders.”²⁹¹ A few days later, the *Globe* highlighted the comments of a lawyer for the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, who reacted to the introduction of Bill C-86 by saying: “The government is polluting the legislative agenda and political climate with a lot of garbage.”²⁹² Elsewhere, the *Globe* prioritized the perspectives of critics such as an immigration lawyer who referred to the amendments contained in Bill C-86 as “not fair” and “not Canadian.”²⁹³

The Bill received similarly unsympathetic treatment in the pages of the *Star*. That newspaper furthered the opinions of figures like Emmanuel Dick, vice-president of the Canadian Ethnocultural Council, who said that “What we [the Council] see in Bill C-86 is a policy that focuses on Canada's economic needs and undermines social needs such as family reunification.”²⁹⁴ The *Star* also cited representatives from the Coalition for a Just Refugee and Immigration Policy. In the pages of the *Star*, members of this group framed Bill C-86 as a disappointing development in the context of Canadian history: “This government is only concerned with one thing at this point in time in Canada's history – that is to get re-elected.” Another critic described the government’s haste to push through the bill as “contemptuous of the Canadian people and their democratic institutions.”²⁹⁵

²⁹¹ Anthony Cosentino and Kim Barnhardt, letter to the editor, *Globe and Mail*, November 13, 1992, A22.

²⁹² Estanislao Oziewicz, “Immigration bill called ‘garbage’: Allowing the government a wider latitude to deny entry to Canada is unreasonable, the Canadian Civil Liberties Association charges,” *Globe and Mail*, June 20, 1992, A8.

²⁹³ Estanislao Oziewicz, “Immigration proposal ‘not Canadian’: Critics consider powers to control flow of newcomers potentially dangerous,” *Globe and Mail*, June 19, 1992, A.11.

²⁹⁴ Canadian Press, “Anger grows over immigration bill,” *Toronto Star*, July 30, 1992, A12.

²⁹⁵ Paul Moloney, “Immigration bill denies basic rights, new coalition says,” *Toronto Star*, August 11, 1992, A5. The few *Gazette* articles that appeared in relation to Bill C-86 noted simply that the bill had been tabled

Although the debate surrounding Bill C-86 generated considerable media attention in 1992, Salvadorans did not appear at the forefront of this debate in Canadian newspapers. Only one article specifically addressed both Salvadorans and Bill C-86. In this article, a critic of Bill C-86 mentioned “Canada’s *past* efforts to address special refugee problems in Sri Lanka, Yugoslavia, Lebanon, El Salvador and now Somalia.”²⁹⁶ Evidently, by late 1992, it was assumed that El Salvador would no longer produce thousands of refugees, as the Salvadoran civil war was officially ending. But during the years 1991 and 1992, thousands of Salvadorans were continuing to arrive in Canada. In fact, Statistics Canada suggests that more than 25,000 Salvadorans came to Canada from 1988 through 1992.²⁹⁷ Furthermore, according to this source, more Salvadorans came to Canada in 1991 than in 1986 and 1987 combined.²⁹⁸ Yet this is not the impression one would gain from reading Canadian newspapers.

Table 2. Arrivals to Canada who gave El Salvador as their country of last permanent residence, 1988 through 1992.²⁹⁹

Calendar Year	Total Arrivals	Family Class	Refugee Class	Assisted Relative Class	Independent Class
1988	2705	312	2091	158	144
1989	2848	240	2263	241	104
1990	4290	365	3750	130	45
1991	6977	747	5646	234	350
1992	5593	981	4009	129	474

and eventually passed through both houses of government. See for example: Staff, “Immigration bill passes,” *Gazette*, November 25, 1992, B1; Staff, “Senators pass immigration bill,” *Gazette*, December 16, 1992, B1; Staff, “Bill tightening refugee rules is cleared to become law,” *Gazette*, December 16, 1992, B4.

²⁹⁶ Emphasis mine, David Roberts, “Senate asked to stand and fight Refugee bill is racist and arbitrary, Canadian Council for Refugees charges,” *Globe and Mail*, November 14, 1992, A8.

²⁹⁷ Statistics by nation and class of refugee, as shown in Table 2, are only available from 1984 onwards. Prior to that, classes are stated by region, such as “North America” or “South America.”

²⁹⁸ See Table 1.

²⁹⁹ Canada, Immigration Statistics: 1988, Planning and Program Management, Employment and Immigration Canada (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1990); Canada, Immigration Statistics: 1989, Planning and Program Management, Employment and Immigration Canada (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1991); Canada, Immigration Statistics: 1990, Planning and Program Management, Employment and Immigration Canada (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1992); Canada, Immigration Statistics: 1991, Planning and Program Management, Employment and Immigration Canada (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1993); Canada, Immigration Statistics: 1992, Planning and Program Management, Employment and Immigration Canada (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1994).

In the early 1990s, Salvadorans in Canada were portrayed in many of the same ways as they had been in 1986 and 1987. A total of 74 articles specifically addressed Salvadoran refugees; 30 such articles appeared in the *Star*, in addition to 22 in the *Globe* and 22 in the *Gazette*. Most frequently, when Canadian newspapers mentioned Salvadoran refugees as a group, they were mentioned alongside other nationals. Salvadorans were described alongside Guatemalans, as conflicts in both nations officially concluded in the 1990s.³⁰⁰ Salvadoran refugees were also again compared to people from around the world. For example, refugee claimants from El Salvador were compared to those from Vietnam and Somalia, as Canada in the early 1990s would only deport to such nations on “a case-by-case basis.”³⁰¹ Salvadorans also appeared alongside refugee claimants from Sudan and Vietnam in a summary of the Canadian Council for Refugees’ 1992 report.³⁰²

Comparisons between “genuine” and “bogus” refugees were also made in 1991 and 1992. In a March 1991 article addressing the state of Canada’s refugee claims system, the *Globe* wrote that “one saving grace is that the claimants are now coming from countries likely to produce refugees (Somalia, Sri Lanka, Lebanon, El Salvador, China) rather than countries from which the largest group of claimants came in 1988 (Trinidad, Portugal).”³⁰³ This sentiment was frequently expressed in the *Globe*. For example, another article which complained that “even bogus refugees have a good chance of staying in Canada,” conceded that the “incredibly high acceptance rate is explained in part by source countries that are genuinely war-torn and or riven

³⁰⁰ See for example: Jacquie Miller, Southam Star Network, “Crackdown feared on refugee claimants,” *Toronto Star*, June 4, 1992, A3; Daniel Stoffman, “Embassy often last hope of foiling death squads,” *Toronto Star*, September 20, 1992, B4; Andre Picard, “Nobel Peace Prize laureate calls for U.S. activist’s release Leonard Peltier ‘symbol of all Indian political prisoners,’ Menchu declares,” *Globe and Mail*, November 10, 1992, A3.

³⁰¹ Estanislao Oziewicz, “Sending the serious criminal element home: Police, Chinese community want Ottawa to end its moratorium on deporting illegals back to China,” *Globe and Mail*, February 21, 1991, A6.

³⁰² John Deverell, “Refugee system found in ‘virtual collapse,’” *Toronto Star*, September 4, 1992, A8.

³⁰³ Christie McLaren, “Canada’s clogged refugee system,” *Globe and Mail*, March 1, 1991, A12.

by ethnic or political strife: Sri Lanka, Somalia, Lebanon, Iran, China, El Salvador, Ghana.”³⁰⁴

As they were in 1986 and 1987, Salvadorans comprised one of several groups of allegedly more “legitimate” claimants; in the early 1990s, however, little mention was made of many Salvadorans’ “illegal” pasts in the United States.

In contrast to the 1980s, in the early 1990s a number of Canadian newspaper articles focused on the experiences of individual Salvadoran refugees. More than 10 Salvadorans were named and described in Canadian newspapers in 1991 and 1992. Using these individuals’ stories, Canadian newspapers were able to: continue and modify a discourse from the 1980s that critiqued the delays in Canada’s refugee system; demonstrate the Canadian immigration system’s ability to both separate and provide for refugee families; allude to the complicated nature of Salvadorans’ incorporation into Canadian society, and the development of their transnational connections; and, finally, describe the failed integration of one young Salvadoran man who, only a few months after his refugee claim was accepted, was shot to death by a plainclothes Montreal police officer.

One of the most tragic stories about a Salvadoran refugee was that of Jesús Seferino Aguilar, who was described in the pages of the *Toronto Star* as a victim of Canada’s inefficient refugee processing system. Aguilar died by suicide on May 8, 1991. The two articles that addressed Aguilar’s death were unusual, as Canadian newspapers in the 1990s generally avoided reporting on suicide; when reports were provided, details of the death were usually omitted.³⁰⁵ In

³⁰⁴Jeffrey Simpson, “How Canada deals with people who arrive here claiming to be refugees,” *Globe and Mail*, June 12, 1991, A14.

³⁰⁵ Madelyn S. Gould, “Suicide and the Media,” *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 932 (April 2001): 200 – 224; Steve Ladurantaye, “How the taboo against reporting on suicide met its end,” *Globe and Mail*, December 9, 2011, accessed April 6, 2014, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/life/health-and-fitness/health/conditions/how-the-taboo-against-reporting-on-suicide-met-its-end/article4181695/?page=all>; Jane Pirkis, R. Warwick Blood, Annette Beautrais, Philip Burgess and Jaelea Skehan, “Media guidelines on the reporting of suicide,” *Crisis* 27, no. 2 (2006): 82–87.

Aguilar's case, however, the *Star* described how the young Salvadoran had died. The newspaper also quoted Aguilar's former psychiatrist.³⁰⁶

Like Salvadoran refugees in Honduras in the early 1980s, or those who were refused entry to Canada in 1987, Aguilar was described as helpless, and also childlike. *Star* journalist Peter Edwards wrote that, for Aguilar there would be "no more fear of being lost in a big city or helplessness that he would never be reunited with his family." Edwards noted how Aguilar had begun classes two weeks before his death, and, on his first day of class, "was more nervous than a Grade 1 student showing up at school for the first time." The *Star* quoted Aguilar's former teacher who said "The first day he walked into my room, he was shaking like a little boy." Edwards added that Aguilar had found riding on the Toronto Transit System to be "horrificing."³⁰⁷ In the other article he wrote about Aguilar's death, Edwards added the words of Aguilar's former psychiatrist, who said Aguilar was "like a helpless kid."³⁰⁸

Unlike most Salvadoran refugees who appeared in Canadian newspapers in the 1980s, however, Aguilar was cast in a "sick role."³⁰⁹ Vanessa Pupavac suggests that interest in the mental health of refugees is a historical phenomenon that emerged in the 1980s, following the American Psychiatric Association's recognition of post-traumatic stress disorder in 1980. In the 1980s, U.S. psychiatric journals began to report on the mental health of Vietnamese, Cambodian and Latin American refugees. Pupavac writes that interest in refugees' mental health expanded at the end of the Cold War. She argues that "trauma diagnosis and counseling treatment are cited by advocates to affirm refugees' suffering and authenticity,"³¹⁰ as can be seen in the articles about

³⁰⁶ Peter Edwards, "Refugee kills himself after four years in limbo," *Toronto Star*, May 18, 1991, A3; Peter Edwards, "Federal delays attacked at refugee claimant's funeral," *Toronto Star*, May 20, 1991, A6.

³⁰⁷ Peter Edwards, "Refugee kills himself," A3.

³⁰⁸ Peter Edwards, "Federal delays attacked," A6.

³⁰⁹ This is distinct from the professional and academic representation of Salvadoran refugees as traumatized victims in need of therapy and other care.

³¹⁰ Pupavac, "Refugee Advocacy," 278.

Aguilar. But Pupavac suggests that this form of advocacy is a double-edged sword, as “casting refugees in the sick role questions their moral agency and legitimizes the inversion of their rights into the rights of the external advocate.”³¹¹

Through his death, Aguilar lost all agency and became a cause for such external advocates. The emphasis of the *Star*'s reporting on Aguilar's death was the relationship between his death and the delays in Canada's refugee claims system. When he died, Aguilar had been waiting almost four years to have his refugee claim formally heard. His death was compared to the recent suicide of a Polish refugee claimant, and placed within the context of the increasing incidences of depression experienced by refugee claimants as they waited for their cases to be resolved. The *Star* quoted a United Church minister who said that “Jesus, by his action, I think has expressed the ultimate despair of people in the refugee backlog.”³¹² The newspaper suggested that others might share Aguilar's fate if the situation were not remedied: “Just how many refugee claimants and people caught in immigration backlogs commit suicide is unknown, but community workers fear it is growing along with the backlog of 100,000 refugee claimants.”³¹³ Two days later, the *Star* opened its article by suggesting that “Canada's immigration system must be streamlined to keep more refugee claimants from killing themselves.” The incoming chair of the Inter-Church Committee for Refugees added that “There are a lot of Jesuses.”³¹⁴

Other Salvadorans appeared in Canadian newspapers as examples of the Canadian immigration system's impact on refugee families. This focus was consistent with Canadian immigration policies of the early 1990s. The objective of “family reunification” was first

³¹¹ Pupavac, “Refugee Advocacy,” 281.

³¹² Peter Edwards, “Refugee kills himself,” A3.

³¹³ Peter Edwards, “Refugee kills himself,” A3.

³¹⁴ Peter Edwards, “Federal delays attacked,” A6.

articulated in legislation in the 1976 *Immigration Act*.³¹⁵ By 1983, family class immigrants comprised 50% of all immigrants admitted to Canada. Family admissions slowed in the mid-1980s, but increased again in 1988, when a measure was enacted in favour of the family category.³¹⁶ With this change, family category admissions grew from nearly 32% in 1988 to 44% in 1993.³¹⁷ In the early 1990s, therefore, family reunification would have been a well-known and highly visible component of Canadian immigration. Furthermore, since at least the 1970s, family reunification has been considered by many to be a symbol of Canadian immigration policy's humanitarian impulse.³¹⁸ As Table 2 above indicates, many of the Salvadorans who were admitted to Canada were sponsored by their family members who were already in the country.

Therefore, when the Canadian immigration system threatened to separate or endanger a few Salvadoran families in the early 1990s, Canadian newspapers were alarmed. In April of 1992, the *Globe and Mail* reported on the pending deportation of Lilian Alas, a Salvadoran refugee claimant. Alas had five children, one of whom had been chosen as a government-sponsored refugee, four others who were living with their grandmother in El Salvador, and a fifth who was born in Canada six months earlier and was therefore a citizen. The child's father was a Nicaraguan whose refugee claim had been accepted. Refugee advocate Nancy Pocock was quoted in the *Globe* saying that Alas' deportation would separate a child from its parents and thereby violate the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. When questioned why she had a child without a clear ruling on her refugee claim, Alas defended her decision: "I thought about having an abortion, but I couldn't do that... I didn't want to kill my baby just to

³¹⁵ However, the concept of family reunification as an immigration method has existed since 1908. Rell DeShaw, "The History of Family Reunification in Canada and Current Policy," *Canadian Issues* (Spring 2006): 9.

³¹⁶ Specifically, unmarried sons and daughters of any age were permitted to immigrate as dependents of sponsored parents. DeShaw, "History of Family Reunification," 10.

³¹⁷ Dominique Daniel, "The Debate on Family Reunification and Canada's Immigration Act of 1976," *American Review of Canadian Studies* 35, no.4 (2005): 698.

³¹⁸ DeShaw, "History of Family Reunification," 9.

please the Canadian government.”³¹⁹ In a similar story that was published in August of 1992, the *Toronto Star* described how a Colombian man, Luis Morales Echeverri, was going to be deported and therefore separated from his Salvadoran wife, Lizzet Martínez, who had recently been granted landed immigrant status, and their two children. The *Star* quoted lawyers and refugee advocates who claimed that Echeverri was “the victim of a new get tough approach to refugees by the federal government.” His lawyer told the *Star* that the “move now is to crack down on people perceived as abusing the system, but the policy is going too far.”³²⁰ Both of these cases generated only one article each, after which their cases faded from the news.

The fate of a Salvadoran refugee claimant named José Alberto García Estrada – referred to as “Estrada” in Canadian newspapers – and his family generated several articles in the early 1990s.³²¹ Unlike the cases of Echeverri and Alas, Garcías’ experiences generated support from many powerful Canadian institutions. This may have been one reason why García was the topic of 7 articles that appeared in 1991 and 1992, 4 of which were in the *Star* and 3 of which were in the *Globe and Mail*. García, his wife Antonia Funes Umanzor de García, and their two young children, Karla, 6, and Jonathan, 6 months, had arrived in Canada and filed for refugee status in late 1989. The *Star* reported that, in his refugee board hearing, García had stated that he had served as secretary of the Union of Industrial and Metal Workers in El Salvador, which was affiliated with the anti-government FENESTRAS Labour Federation. García said that he had been harassed and beaten by the Salvadoran military police. The police raided his home in

³¹⁹ Estanislao Oziewicz, “Refugee claimant's children caught in deportation order Mother being sent to El Salvador has ‘Canadian’ family,” *Globe and Mail*, April 25, 1992, A7.

³²⁰ Donovan Vincent, “Refugee policy attacked over Dad’s deportation,” *Toronto Star*, August 18, 1992, A7.

³²¹ This was an error on the part of Canadian newspapers. Spanish naming conventions typically allow for two surnames. The first of these is the father’s family name (more precisely, the surname the father gained from his father) and the second is the mother’s family name (more precisely, the surname the mother gained from her father). When shortening José Alberto García Estrada’s name to conform to English naming convention, newspapers should have selected the name “García” as that is his paternal last name – the name most often used in the Anglophone world.

October of 1989, but failed to find García and attacked his wife. She was stabbed five times and was rendered unconscious. In December of 1990, a refugee determination panel ruled that García had a credible claim to asylum, but his demand for refugee status was denied in March of 1991. García's lawyer failed to appeal on time, but then, as noted in Canadian newspapers, activists petitioned on García's behalf. The *Star* said that letters of support were sent to Immigration Minister Valcourt from a Montreal physician who had examined Umanzor de García's stab wounds; the FENESTRAS representative in Quebec; Canadian trade unionists, including the President of the Canadian Auto Workers Association; the Canadian Bar Association; the Inter-Church Committee for Human Rights in Latin America; and the Jesuit Refugee Service for Central America. Valcourt was said to have personally reviewed García's file. Nevertheless, without further official explanation, García and his family were deported to El Salvador on June 20, 1991.³²²

In the summer of 1991, supporters of the García family worried that the family had died upon returning to El Salvador, and voiced their concerns in the press. In June, Gerald Caplan, former national secretary of the New Democratic Party, wrote in the *Star*: "Although, ominously, no one has yet heard from the family, it's fervently hoped they're still alive somewhere in El Salvador."³²³ By August, one letter to the editor of the *Globe* was less optimistic, writing: "Let's face facts: They are probably dead."³²⁴ The *Star* and the *Globe* reported how Canadians had lobbied Minister Valcourt to grant the García family a minister's permit to return on humanitarian and compassionate grounds. Valcourt had not done so, but had responded to public pressure by referring García's case for review by the United Nations High Commissioner for

³²² Dave Todd, "Ottawa rapped as Salvadorans hustled home," *Toronto Star*, June 24, 1991, A12; Gerald Caplan, "How could Canada deport this refugee family?" *Toronto Star*, June 30, 1991, B3.

³²³ Gerald Caplan, "How could Canada deport this refugee family?" B3.

³²⁴ Darlene A. Hebert, letter to the editor, *Globe and Mail*, August 26, 1991, A14.

Refugees. In October of 1992, the *Globe* reported that García and his family were alive in El Salvador. This final article about the García family concluded by noting that they could re-apply for admission to Canada.³²⁵

Although the Canadian immigration apparatus had caused great hardships for the García, Echeverri and Alas families, Canadian newspapers nonetheless upheld their nation's potential to bring families together. The story of Amílcar Gonzales focused on this point. A pair of syndicated articles in the *Star* explained that Gonzales was abandoned by his parents in El Salvador at the age of 2. Gonzales began working at 8, and, at 14, began walking north. He feared he would be deported from the United States, and so he came to Canada at the age of 15. By age 18, he was living alone in Vancouver. After learning how to read and write, he became a high school student. The *Toronto Star* described Gonzales as “ambitious,” “hard working,” and “determined to improve his life.” In this way, Gonzales' story was reminiscent of the article that portrayed an earnest and hardworking Carlos Vega in the pages of the same newspaper years before.³²⁶

But this article about Gonzales also spoke about the young man, who was 18 at the time, as if he were a little boy. The newspaper wrote that Gonzales was “looking for parents,” who, in Gonzales' words, “would love me and make sure I'm okay...They would help me buy clothes and shoes and food.” Gonzales went on to say that “I need somebody to take care of me, someone to tell me when I do bad things and when I do good things... If I could find a mother and father, I would be a good boy forever.”³²⁷ A few months later, the *Toronto Star* wrote that the young Salvadoran had found Canadian parents. The previous article about Gonzales was said to have

³²⁵ Estanislao Oziewicz, “Group urges halt to deportations: Jesuit service fears for safety of returnees to El Salvador,” *Globe and Mail*, October 2, 1991.

³²⁶ Foord, “Salvadoran, 26, has experience,” F2.

³²⁷ Canadian Press, “Teen refugee says he needs a family,” *Toronto Star*, November 23, 1991, K17.

generated dozens of responses, which Gonzales and his school counselors sifted through. Eventually, east Vancouver residents Merrilee Robson and Stuart Thomas were selected and Gonzales moved in with them. Gonzalez told the *Star*: “I’m allowed to call them my parents. I never had that before.” Gonzales added that “Life has changed a lot. I’m doing good in school, it’s easier for me to concentrate and do things better.”³²⁸ As was the case with Salvadoran refugees in Honduras in the early 1980s, Gonzalez appeared in Canadian newspapers as someone needing help from wealthy, White North Americans.

Despite such tales of family and reunification, other newspaper articles suggested the often conflicted nature of emerging Salvadoran trans-nationalism. In October of 1991, the *Gazette* published the first of two articles about another Salvadoran woman, Adela Platero, and her family. But unlike any other article published in the *Gazette*, the *Toronto Star* or the *Globe and Mail* during the years examined in this thesis, this article was written by a Salvadoran refugee herself. Platero was a volunteer for Salvaide, a Canadian aid organization for Salvadorans resettling areas evacuated during earlier fighting. In this article, Platero described her return to El Salvador in July of 1991 with her 10-year-old son after a decade in Montreal. Ernesto had been born in a Mexican refugee camp and had since gained Canadian citizenship.³²⁹ Platero wrote that during her trip, she “felt complete – Salvadoran again,” but at the same time asserted that “Montreal is my home now, at least to the half of me that had adopted ‘Norteamericano’ life.” She concluded by wondering: “Home? What is home for me anymore? My family is memories and my country is torn. But I will return.” Arriving at Montreal’s Dorval

³²⁸ Reuter, “Refugee teen from El Salvador finds a home of his own finally,” *Toronto Star*, March 14, 1992, K12.

³²⁹ Adela Platero, “El Salvadora a bit less terrifying on return after 10 years,” *Gazette*, October 6, 1991, E2.

airport, Platero wrote that she and her son “weep openly.” She concluded: “We are Salvadorans – but home again in Montreal.”³³⁰

Platero again appeared in the pages of the *Gazette* following the official end of the civil war in El Salvador. The newspaper said Platero “isn’t in a rush back to her homeland,” and that she would visit El Salvador before deciding whether to return permanently. Celina Hasbun, another Salvadoran in Montreal told the *Gazette* “That was my dream, to go back.”

Circumstances had changed for Hasbun however: “Now I have to think it over because my husband is Canadian, and it would be harder for him to adjust there than for me to adjust here. But I have a lot of friends who are wanting to go back.” Another Salvadoran, José Alfredo Mejía, was also waiting to decide whether he would return. Doris Montalvo told the *Gazette* that she would not be returning to El Salvador. Her daughter and husband had disappeared in the early 1980s. The *Gazette* stated that there were as many as 25,000 Salvadorans in Montreal, the majority of whom had fled during the civil war.³³¹

In the early 1990s, the Canadian press began to allude to the transnationalism that has characterized many such Salvadoran communities since the end of the civil war. The transnational character of so many contemporary experiences, and phenomena such as migration and diaspora in particular, have altered how individuals conceive of their national belonging, and how nation-states themselves partake in nation-building. Patricia Landolt, Lilian Autler and Sonia Baires write that “the violence, chaos and poverty in which migrants left their families in El Salvador endowed them with a deep sense of social obligation towards their places of origin” despite their continued geographic distance.³³² Similarly, in her work on Salvadoran national

³³⁰ Platero, “El Salvadora a bit less terrifying,” E2.

³³¹ Catherine Wallace, “Peace in sight: Montreal's Salvadorans consider going home,” *Gazette*, January 3, 1992, A3.

³³² Landolt, Autler and Baires, “From Hermano Lejano to Hermano Mayor,” 293.

identity, Robin Maria DeLugan suggests that El Salvador emerged from its twelve-year civil war with a more inclusive sense of national belonging to include those Salvadorans living outside El Salvador.³³³ DeLugan relies in part on Benedict Anderson's concept of imagined communities to explain the development of Salvadoran transnationalism.³³⁴ Other scholars have added to this definition and specified ways in which transnational subjects develop and maintain their allegiances to certain imagined communities. Economic connections have been employed by Salvadorans living abroad to cultivate a sense of transnational belonging: Since the end of the civil war, El Salvador's economy has been tremendously reliant on remittances from abroad.³³⁵ Through these and other means, Salvadorans living outside of El Salvador have been able to "express their longing for a beloved homeland" and maintain long-distance ties with the Salvadoran nation state.³³⁶

Adapting to life in Canada and developing a new sense of identity was described as challenging for many of the Salvadorans mentioned above, but the final series of articles examined here depicts a Salvadoran refugee, Jorge Alberto Chavarría Reyes, whose life in Canadian society was cut short. Early in the morning of November 22, 1990, Chavarría was shot in the chest by plainclothes Montreal police officer Eric Masse. Chavarría died of his injuries a few hours later. Through this death, Chavarría garnered more media attention than any other Salvadoran refugee examined here. Specifically, Chavarría was the subject of 21 newspaper articles in 1991 and 1992, in addition to 3 articles that appeared in late 1990. Of these 24 articles, 20 appeared in the *Montreal Gazette*, in addition to 2 articles in the *Globe and Mail* and 2 in the

³³³ DeLugan, *Reimagining National Belonging*, 89.

³³⁴ DeLugan, *Reimagining National Belonging*, 11.

³³⁵ Aldo Lauria-Santiago and Leigh Binford. *Landscapes of Struggle: Politics, Society and Community in El Salvador* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2004), 207, 245; DeLugan, *Reimagining National Belonging*, 89 – 90.

³³⁶ DeLugan, *Reimagining National Belonging*, 95 – 97.

Toronto Star. A further 15 articles mentioned Chavarría from 1993 through 2008; 2 of these appeared in the *Globe and Mail* and the remainder were published in the *Gazette*.

Conflicting details of what had transpired the morning of November 22 appeared for months in the *Montreal Gazette*. It was the *Toronto Star*, however, that first reported that the Quebec provincial police force was investigating Chavarría's death.³³⁷ This initial report by the Canadian Press stated that Chavarría had "just stolen a loaf of bread, a package of cold cuts and a dozen eggs" from a convenience store before being shot dead by a plainclothes police officer.³³⁸ The value of the goods Chavarría was alleged to have stolen was later estimated to be about \$10.³³⁹ What Chavarría had taken from the store – a Provi-Soir "dépanneur" – and the estimated value of these goods was repeated in many of the stories about his death.³⁴⁰ After Chavarría left the dépanneur, the clerk of that store called the police. Masse was nearby and pursued Chavarría on foot. Some form of scuffle ensued between the two, and Chavarría fled into a parking garage, in which he was cornered. Masse argued that Chavarría then threatened him with a knife, and Masse fired in self-defense.³⁴¹

More details of that evening appeared in the press when, in November of 1991, Chavarría's death was the subject of a coroner's public inquest overseen by chief coroner Pierre Trahan. It was unclear whether Chavarría was armed that evening, and if he had been armed when he was shot. In April of 1993, the *Gazette* reported that Coroner Trahan absolved Masse and the police of blame in the death of Chavarría.³⁴² Trahan noted that the evidence suggested Chavarría had likely been disarmed before he was shot, as his alleged knife was found about 70

³³⁷ Canadian Press, "Quebec police probe shooting of shoplifter," *Toronto Star*, November 28, 1990, A13.

³³⁸ Canadian Press, "Quebec police probe shooting," A13.

³³⁹ David Sidaway, "Protesters want inquiry; Fatal shooting by officer stirs anger," *Gazette*, November 29, 1992, C12.

³⁴⁰ A dépanneur is a convenience store. Chavarría left a Provi-Soir, which was later purchased by Couche-Tard, the same corporation that owns Mac's Convenience Stores.

³⁴¹ Staff, "Coroner awaits Surete report on fatal shooting of shoplifter," *Gazette*, March 7, 1991, A4.

³⁴² Andre Picard, "Coroner absolves police in four fatal shootings," *Globe and Mail*, April 23, 1993, N3.

feet from the location of the shooting.³⁴³ Masse was also ordered to appear before the Quebec Police Ethics Commission tribunal. The tribunal cleared Masse of any wrong-doing. Carmelo Tutino, the lawyer who had helped Chavarría gain refugee status in August of 1990, filed an appeal.³⁴⁴ It was heard in May of 1994, but Masse's exoneration was upheld.³⁴⁵

Chavarría's character was debated in the *Gazette* in the early 1990s. Chavarría had been granted refugee status in August of 1990, only about three months before he was fatally shot. The *Gazette* sometimes alluded to the poverty Chavarría had grown up in and the hardships he had continued to face in Canada. On November 30, 1990, the *Gazette* reported that "a simple funeral service" was to be held that day for Chavarría. This article noted that Chavarría's family "can't afford to have his body returned to El Salvador, so the Quebec Social Services Department has agreed to pay the \$1,500 cost of a burial in Montreal's Cimetière de l'Est."³⁴⁶ Chavarría's parents, Coralia Chavarría-Reyes and Jorge Alberto Vigil, also filed a civil suit against Masse, accusing him of acting recklessly.³⁴⁷ The results of this suit did not appear in the *Gazette*, but Tutino, who represented Chavarría's "impoverished parents" still living in El Salvador, stated that the family could not afford to post the \$4500 bond required to proceed with the suit; a collection was being undertaken for their cause.³⁴⁸ Repeated mention of what Chavarría had allegedly taken on the night he was shot – bread, meat and eggs – also suggested that he had been poor.

Despite some of these more compassionate portrayals, Canadian newspapers nonetheless usually described Chavarría as foreign, inebriated and threatening. Language was one marker of

³⁴³ Ingrid Peritz, "Refugee's death leaves a cloud," *Gazette*, May 3, 1993, A1.

³⁴⁴ Mike King, "Family appeals exoneration of policeman in 1990 killing," *Gazette*, August 13, 1992, A3.

³⁴⁵ Mike King, "Appeal heard of cop's exoneration in death," *Gazette*, May 8, 1994, A5.

³⁴⁶ Staff, "Salvadoran to be buried today," *Gazette*, November 30, 1990, A3.

³⁴⁷ Staff, "Police acted recklessly: lawsuit," *Gazette*, November 23, 1991, A3.

³⁴⁸ Mike King, "Policeman who shot thief must appear at tribunal; Ethics Commission will hear complaint lodged after death of shoplifter," *Gazette*, January 30, 1991, A3.

Chavarría as different. For example, Chavarría was referred to as “a man with a Spanish accent.”³⁴⁹ Language differences also seemed to have caused confusion on the night of November 22: Summarizing Masse’s explanation of that evening, the *Gazette* described how Masse said he first spoke to Chavarría in French, and then Chavarría responded in English and ran away. When the officer pushed Chavarría to the ground and began giving him directions, “the suspect spoke incomprehensibly and rummaged through his pockets.”³⁵⁰ Whether Chavarría’s “incomprehensible” speech was in fact Spanish was not mentioned. The *Gazette* repeatedly stated, however, that “Chavarria had a high blood-alcohol count at the time of his death.”³⁵¹ Croisetiére added that Chavarría made him feel “a little nervous,” and Chavarría “seemed drunk.”³⁵²

The newspapers described Chavarría as suspicious and likely dangerous. Chavarría’s former roommate, José Victor Ventura- Martínez, testified that Chavarría “hated the police and talked about killing them.” The *Gazette* noted that Chavarría “had been a FMLN guerrilla in their native Central American country before coming to Canada.” Ventura-Martínez added that Chavarría “sometimes became violent when drunk.” No mention was made of why a former FMLN guerilla might be uncomfortable with the police. An editorial in the *Gazette* described Chavarría’s case as belonging to a “murky category” in which “the Hispanic victims had knives; whether these two fugitives [Chavarría and another man killed by police gunfire] were actually threatening the police with them at the instant they were shot has yet to be firmly established.”³⁵³ These depictions of Chavarría fit within a broader trend of the Canadian mass media demonizing

³⁴⁹ Mike King, “Inquest into fatal shooting of shoplifting suspect,” *Gazette*, September 27, 1991, A3.

³⁵⁰ King, “I fired instinctively, cop testifies,” A4.

³⁵¹ King, “Man shot by police had hands up,” A3; King, “I fired instinctively, cop testifies,” A4; King, “Shooting victim hated police, roommate testifies,” A3.

³⁵² King, “Man shot by police had hands up,” A3.

³⁵³ Editorial, “The death of Mr. Fletcher: Let’s not jump to conclusions about police action,” *Gazette*, November 16, 1991, B2.

minority women and men as social problems. In this case, Chavarría was criminalized as a troublemaker, even though an alternative reading of events could portray him as a victim of police brutality.³⁵⁴ The newspapers focused almost no attention on Eric Masse's character or history.

In fact, newspapers often used Chavarría's alleged crime in lieu of his name. Six articles described him as a "shoplifter" rather than providing his name in their titles. These articles had titles like: "MUC cop cleared in fatal shooting; Ethics committee absolves undercover police officer in shoplifter's death"; "Policeman who shot thief must appear at tribunal; Ethics Commission will hear complaint lodged after death of shoplifter"; "Inquest to probe shooting of shoplifter by police officer"; and "Coroner awaits Surete report on fatal shooting of shoplifter."³⁵⁵ Chavarría was never convicted of shoplifting, but that crime was used interchangeably with his name in Canadian newspapers.

The press also often alluded to Chavarría's identity as a member of minority group. His refugee status was mentioned a few times. In a *Gazette* editorial, Jack Todd framed Chavarría's death as a poor reflection on the nation in which he sought refuge:

For Jorge Chavarria, El Norte was more deadly than the world he left behind. It's ironic: he could have stayed in El Salvador and risked getting shot by a cop but he fled to Canada – and was shot by a cop.³⁵⁶

While Todd's article pointed to the tragedy of Chavarría being killed in a country in which he had sought refuge, a letter to the editor of the *Gazette* blamed Chavarría for his own death and questioned why he had been admitted to Canada. Michel Bonneau wrote to the *Gazette*:

³⁵⁴ Fleras, *Mass Media Communication in Canada*, 288.

³⁵⁵ Mike King, "MUC cop cleared in fatal shooting; Ethics committee absolves undercover police officer in shoplifter's death," *Gazette*, July 20, 1992, A3; King, "Policeman who shot thief must appear at tribunal," A3; Mike King, "Inquest to probe shooting of shoplifter by police officer," *Gazette*, July 17, 1991, A4; Staff, "Coroner awaits Surete report," A4.

³⁵⁶ Jack Todd, "Trouble patterns: Is it racism or just itchy trigger fingers?" *Gazette*, November 7, 1991, A3.

If [Chavarría's family] wanted peace, what was he doing on a Thursday morning at 3 a.m. stealing food and under the influence of alcohol? Is this the type of citizen we are accepting in this country?

Anyone carrying a gun or a knife is not a law-abiding citizen and is asking for trouble. Justice is strict with Canadian-born citizens and I do not see why there should be another standard for immigrants or refugees.³⁵⁷

The justice of Chavarría's death was apparently not in doubt for this reader. Despite these contrasting perspectives, however, Chavarría's death did not become a lightning rod for immigration issues in the early 1990s. Instead, Chavarría became a representative of a minority group within Canadian culture.

Chavarría was frequently portrayed as a representative of Montreal's growing Latin American community. A few days after Chavarría's death, the *Gazette* reported that about 50 protesters, "mostly Latin-Americans," had gathered outside the Bonsecours St. office of the MUC police. The president of the Quebec Congress of Hispano-Canadiens told the newspaper that he had filed a formal complaint with the Quebec Human Rights Commission in response to Chavarría's case.³⁵⁸ By March of 1991, the *Gazette* reported that "various ethnic groups have been demanding an independent inquiry and inquest into Chavarría's death." The same article stated that, although a funeral had been held for Chavarría, his body remained un-buried, and "Latin-American organizations have been trying to raise funds to that end."³⁵⁹

With such articles, Chavarría's death was presented as an issue of concern for members of Latin American and other minority communities, rather than an issue for all Canadians. Front-page articles with titles like "Police under fire again: Minority groups see a 'trigger-happy'

³⁵⁷ Michel Bonneau, letter to the editor, *Gazette*, May 12, 1993, B2.

³⁵⁸ Staff, "Salvadoran to be buried today," *Gazette*, November 30, 1990, A3.

³⁵⁹ Mike King, "Still no word on inquest into shoplifter's death: Salvadoran short by police near Cartierville depanneur," *Gazette*, March 6, 1991, A3.

force”³⁶⁰ demonstrated this position. Furthermore, the *Gazette* suggested that it was up to Latin Americans to assert their rights if they wanted them to be respected. In July of 1991, the *Gazette* entitled an article “Latinos advised to campaign for justice.” This article quoted Chavarría’s lawyer, Tutino, who told the newspaper that “the Latino community should be as vigilant as blacks in seeking justice.” Tutino accused authorities of stalling on Chavarría’s case “because they know the Latino community is not putting any pressure on them.” This was contrasted, by the *Gazette* and Tutino, with the black community, which was said to be “very well organized and structured so they get action.”³⁶¹ These depictions of police violence as a problem for certain minority groups supports Sherene Razack’s argument that, when oppressed groups seek justice, dominant groups often respond by denying their responsibility for, and complicity in, the oppression of marginalized others.³⁶² The onus was placed on Montreal’s Latin American community to seek justice in Chavarría’s case, and this group was consistently portrayed as separate from mainstream, White Canada.

Canadian newspapers’ representation of Chavarría and the official inquiries into the circumstances surrounding his death can be assessed in many ways. Chavarría’s death, and its media portrayal, both speak to the continued challenges experienced by refugees and former refugees in Canada. This is consistent with many studies that have demonstrated the social, political and economic challenges of immigrants in constructing equal and meaningful citizenship.³⁶³

³⁶⁰ Ingrid Peritz, “Police under fire again: Minority groups see a ‘trigger-happy’ force,” *Gazette*, July 12, 1991, A1.

³⁶¹ Staff, “Latinos advised to campaign for justice,” *Gazette*, July 20, 1991, A4.

³⁶² Sherene Razack, *Looking White People in the Eye*, 57 - 60.

³⁶³ See for example: Peter M. Ward, *White Canada Forever: Popular Attitudes and Public Policy towards Orientals in British Columbia*, 3rd ed. (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2002); Bryan Ray and Valerie Preston, “Geographies of Discrimination: Variations in Perceived Discomfort and Discrimination in Canada’s Gateway Cities,” *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies* 7 (2009): 228–249; Patricia Wood, *Nationalism from the Margins: Italians in Alberta and British Columbia* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2002).

Chavarría's case also demonstrates the inconsistencies of Canadian rhetoric about "multiculturalism." Chavarría died two years after the passing of the *Multiculturalism Act*, and after almost two decades of official Canadian policy on multiculturalism. Patricia Wood and Liette Gilbert write that the discourse of multiculturalism had since become "an organizing national ideal."³⁶⁴ They add, however, that the policy of multiculturalism was hastily implemented in the 1970s, without much consideration of what it would mean or how its goals would be achieved. It was never a popular movement.³⁶⁵ Richard Gwyn in fact sees the divisive ability of this policy, as it separates "ethnics" from White Canadians. He writes that multiculturalism ensures that "no one becomes a Canadian but instead remains, forever, a Greek Canadian, a Somali Canadian or whatever."³⁶⁶ The Canadian press repeatedly depicted Chavarría as "Latino-Canadian" or "Salvadoran- Canadian" – that is, as a member of a distinct group separated from the imagined community of Canada.

Canadian newspapers in 1991 and 1992 built upon the discourses about Salvadoran refugees that had developed in the 1980s. These newspapers continued to write about the war and the prospect of peace in El Salvador as a topic for Canadian concern, and depictions of Salvadorans as a group were similar to those that had appeared years before. But during the early 1990s, Canadian newspapers also gave greater voice to Salvadorans in Canada. They articulated a variety of concerns that affected Salvadorans, such as the impacts of migration on their families and on their senses of identity. One Salvadoran woman even wrote of her own experiences. Nevertheless, Canadian newspapers still suggested that Salvadorans had not been completely incorporated into the Canadian nation, but constituted a distinct minority.

³⁶⁴ Wood and Gilbert, "Multiculturalism in Canada," 680.

³⁶⁵ Wood and Gilbert, "Multiculturalism in Canada," 684.

³⁶⁶ Richard Gwyn, "We are destined to become a nation of nationalities," *Toronto Star*, October 2, 1994, E3. See also: Richard Gwyn, *Nationalism without Walls: the Unbearable Lightness of Being Canadian* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1995).

Conclusion

My thesis has examined the many ways in which three prominent Canadian newspapers portrayed Salvadoran refugees during the Salvadoran civil war of 1980 to 1992. As newspapers both reflect and shape a nation's idea of itself, they acted as discursive gatekeepers to the imagined community of Canada. During the years 1980 to 1992, these discourses of national belonging and exclusion morphed. In the early 1980s, Salvadorans were constructed as distant and distinct from Canada. By 1986 and 1987, Salvadoran refugees generated more media attention and their inclusion in the Canadian nation was increasingly contested. In 1991 and 1992, Salvadorans were given greater voice in Canadian newspapers, but this did not prevent their portrayal as a distinct minority group within Canada. From 1980 to 1992, Canadian newspapers portrayed Salvadorans as increasingly close to, but never fully integrated within, the imagined community of Canada.

As a reflection of power structures within Canadian society, newspapers of 1980 to 1992 emphasized the perspectives of government actors. They also, however, frequently presented the perspectives of refugee advocates, including opposition party members, but also non-governmental actors, such as church members, students, lawyers and other activists. This trend supports García's thesis that refugee advocates were instrumental in making the plight of Central American refugees into questions of national concern in the 1980s and 1990s.

Using Canada's treatment of Salvadoran refugees as their backdrop, these institutional actors and activists contested the nature of Canadian national identity in the pages of Canadian newspapers. There were many facets to these debates. For one, Canadian newspapers encapsulated debates over Canadian identity in relation to the United States. Both Canada's foreign policy towards El Salvador and its policies towards Salvadoran refugees were considered

in light of American policies. This relates to a second trend, which was that Canada was considered in relation to third world countries, such as El Salvador. Canadian newspapers called on Canadians to show sympathy for the people of El Salvador, and provided examples of North Americans “saving” Salvadorans, both in Central America and in Canada. This connected to Canada’s supposed humanitarian tradition, which was called into question, particularly in 1986 and 1987. In the early 1990s, all of these discourses converged in Canadian newspapers’ consideration of Canada’s peacekeeping role in El Salvador. Canadian newspapers praised national efforts to contribute to the Salvadoran peace process, and chart an independent path for Canada in the post-Cold War world. Overall, these debates, though ostensibly about Salvadoran refugees, revealed a great deal about how the Canadian nation imagined itself in this era.

Salvadoran refugees rarely described their own experiences in the pages of Canadian newspapers. When this became a more common occurrence in the early 1990s, Salvadorans were most often named and quoted in the pages of the *Montreal Gazette*. Montreal was then home to Canada’s largest Salvadoran community. Perhaps, with greater visibility in the streets of Montreal, Salvadorans also gained greater recognition and more humanizing treatment in the pages of one of the city’s major daily newspapers.

By naming and quoting Salvadoran refugees, Canadian newspapers of the 1990s began to write about Salvadorans as they would write about White, middle-class Canadians. But Canadian newspapers continued to write about Salvadorans as different from mainstream Canadians. In fact, these alleged differences were the topic of most of the articles discussed in chapter three; these differences were considered newsworthy. For example, Canadian newspapers suggested that Salvadorans were unusual because their families were threatened with separation, or because some of them identified with two nation states. Furthermore, the Salvadorans who garnered the

most attention from the print media almost never spoke for themselves: Regalado was quoted a few times, but García was silent. Newspapers only became interested in Aguilar and Chavarría after their deaths.

Perhaps paradoxically, these stories also rarely focused on anything particularly “Salvadoran” about refugees from El Salvador. These people were described in generic terms: in most of the articles about Salvadoran refugees, the subjects could have been refugees from almost any poor, warm country who fled to Canada because in their home countries “it is very difficult to build a better life and it is very dangerous,” as one article put it.³⁶⁷ Canadian newspapers’ tendency to combine descriptions of Salvadorans with those of other nationals did nothing to counteract this trend.

Evidently, using newspapers as my primary source has provided unique insights but has also limited my study in some ways. My thesis has not addressed a number of possible questions about the arrival of Salvadoran refugees to Canada. For instance, I have not focused on the relationship between economics and Canadian immigration, although the two topics are often discussed in tandem. Two of the three time periods examined in my thesis were marked by economic recessions: In both the early 1980s and the early 1990s Canadian debt and unemployment increased. Some scholars, including Lisa Marie Jakubowski, and studies, like one by the Employment Council of Canada, have suggested that economic downturns in the West may cause increased antagonism concerning the arrival of more newcomers.³⁶⁸ But this relationship is not straightforward. I would agree with scholars like Gerald Dirks who suggest that, while economic factors are important, social and political factors are crucial to

³⁶⁷ Foord, “Salvadoran, 26, has experience,” F2.

³⁶⁸ Jakubowski, *Legalization of Racism*, 66 – 69; Economic Council of Canada, *New Faces in the Crowd* (Ottawa: Supply and Services Canada, 1991),28.

understanding how immigration debates have unfolded in Canada.³⁶⁹ I hope that, by focusing on newspapers, my thesis has elucidated some of the contours of the social and political context of Canada as a refugee-receiving nation in the 1980s and early 1990s.

Nevertheless, my thesis focuses on newspapers in which the unique lived experiences of Salvadoran refugees were rarely featured, and in which those individual stories that did appear were filtered through the knowledge-making processes of major media outlets. Therefore, while my thesis is about Salvadoran refugees, they are largely silent in its pages. I hope not to perpetuate a discourse in which the people who are most affected by refugee policies are rarely given space to speak about them. Instead, I hope to have demonstrated some of the details and flaws in this way of making knowledge about and for refugees. These discourses are consequential, as they both gave meaning to past experiences and continue to unfold in new permutations in the present day. In the more than twenty two years since the conclusion of the Salvadoran civil war, refugee and immigration policies have remained highly contested and publicized topics in Canadian newspapers. Many of the issues that ignited national interest in the 1980s continue to be debated today, as, for example, Canadian immigration ministers still talk about “bogus” refugees and the family reunification focus of Canadian immigration policy has been cast into doubt.³⁷⁰ Although relatively few refugees are now admitted to Canada from El Salvador, new variations of the discourses that emerged in connection with Salvadorans’ arrivals during the civil war continue to be applied to other newcomers. That is, new groups are spoken

³⁶⁹ Dirks, *Controversy and Complexity*, ix.

³⁷⁰ See for example: Tamara Baluja, “Tories unveil bill to thwart 'bogus' refugees,” *Globe and Mail*, February 16, 2012, accessed June 1, 2014, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/tories-unveil-bill-to-thwart-bogus-refugees/article546604/>; Allan Thomson, “Immigration Minister Jason Kenney’s proposal to halt bogus refugees is riddled with problems: World Citizen,” *Toronto Star*, February 24, 2012, accessed June 1, 2014, http://www.thestar.com/life/2012/02/24/immigration_minister_jason_kenneys_proposal_to_halt_bogus_refugees_is_riddled_with_problems_world_citizen.html; Nicholas Keung, “Think-tank urges family immigration: Economic needs, well-being of workers' children must be balanced, institute says,” *Toronto Star*, May 14, 2014, A8; Staff, “The quiet, ugly upheaval of Canada's once-great immigration system,” *Toronto Star*, May 13, 2014, A15.

about in the way Salvadoran refugees once were, and similar discourses about minority groups in Canada also persist. I hope that these discourses, and the nation that produces and is produced by them, continue to morph, but in a more inclusive and humanizing direction.

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