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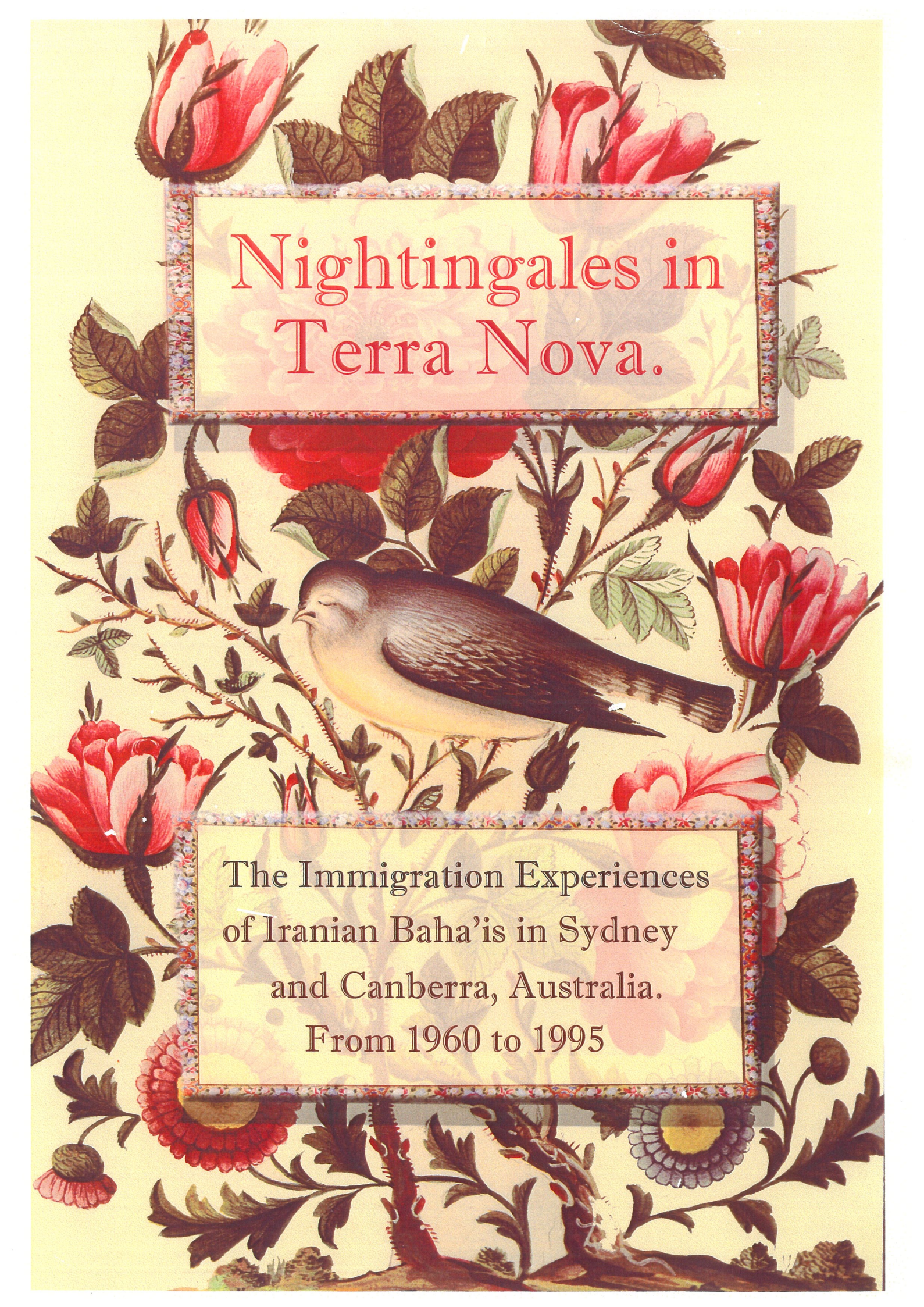
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Nightingales in Terra Nova.

The Immigration Experiences
of Iranian Baha'is in Sydney
and Canberra, Australia.

From 1960 to 1995

NIGHTINGALES IN TERRA NOVA

**A study of the Immigration
Experiences of Iranian Baha'is in Sydney and
Canberra from 1960 to 1998.**

Thesis submitted by

Margaret Bluett BA (Hons.) JCU

In November 2005

**For the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
In the School of Humanities
James Cook University, Cairns.**

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Acknowledgements

I gratefully acknowledge the role my principal supervisor, Dr. Janice Wegner, played in the writing of this thesis. Her assistance in the process was above and beyond the call of duty and included weekly guidance, constructive criticism, corrections on language usage and grammar. She paid particular attention to structure and effective use of ideas. Without her help this thesis would never have reached completion. I also acknowledge the assistance given by my second supervisor Dr. Russell McGregor who stepped in whenever Jan was not available and who provided valuable advice on immigration policies and the structure of the thesis. Mention should also be made of the assistance given by Dr. Dawn May who read the thesis and made some constructive suggestions..

I would like to pay tribute to the assistance of my family. My husband, Noel Bluett, assisted with information technology and was always supportive and encouraging. My daughter Sharon assisted with statistical analysis. My daughter Anna Lisa scanned photos, figures and graphs into the word document and assisted with general layout and final printing. My son Greg designed the cover. My daughter-in-law Katy Bluett allowed me the use of her apartment and her telephone in Sydney while I spent months interviewing Iranians. My grandson Sean Bluett assisted by transporting me around Sydney and accompanied me when interviewing some Iranians. Because his mother is Iranian he was also a conduit to obtaining interviews. All other members of the family provided occasional advice, sympathy and encouragement.

Grateful thanks to the National Baha'i Office staff in Sydney who provided me with statistical information on Baha'i communities in Sydney and Canberra. They also allowed access to information not privy to outsiders such as addresses and phone numbers of possible interviewees.

The librarian at the Department of Immigration in Canberra made available to me data on Iranians that existed in the library and made valuable suggestions on information resources.

The Iranian interviewees who provided the oral history for this thesis also deserve a mention because without their assistance and co-operation this thesis would have no substance or validity.

Iranian Bahá'ís and their Immigration Experiences in Sydney and Canberra

1960 -1998

ABSTRACT

When the 'White Australia' immigration policy was finally dismantled in 1973 a door of opportunity opened for migrants from the Middle East seeking a refuge from war and social chaos. Among these migrants were several thousand Iranian Bahá'ís, members of a persecuted minority forced by the Islamic regime, established after the Iranian Revolution of 1979, to leave their homes. Some of these migrants or their relatives spent time in prison, suffered torture and saw their homes torched. The largest number became refugees forced to hire people smugglers to escape from Iran. These migrants were highly motivated to become effective settlers elsewhere because they could not return home. The changes in immigration policies, which occurred in Australia in the 1970s and early 1980s, developed a safe haven for the Iranian Bahá'ís. A special program established in the 1980s to assist refugees to migrate to Australia hastened their arrival and facilitated their settlement.

The data for this oral history was obtained through interviews with eighty three Iranian Baha'is in 2003. The intention was to record the immigration experiences of the Iranian Bahá'ís from their perspective while the first generation was still alive. It also aimed to examine the reasons why they rapidly became successful settlers given that their country of origin had a very different culture to that of Australia. The study found that the central core of their faith, that humanity is one and the world is one country, helped them to achieve successful long-term settlement. The other factor that assisted their settlement process was the presence of a well-established Bahá'í community in Australia. There was a small number of Iranian Bahá'ís already in Australia, before 1979, and they provided the links that began a chain migration of skilled migrants. However the refugee assistance program enabled many more migrants than would have been expected through the traditional channels of chain migration. The Bahá'í community provided the migrants with a social network and an acceptable identity in their host society. The immigration process was furthered by the family reunion policy and migrants who had family with them made the smoothest transition to Australian society. Women in the group with the opportunity of individual autonomy Australian society provided took maximum advantage of the freedoms it offered such as freedom to work outside the home and to seek further education. They were also free to craft an individual life style that included issues such as clothing and

gender relationships. Problems encountered in Australia were non-recognition of professional qualifications and some discrimination based on language or colour. The study focused on settlement at an individual and community level and measured settlement success through issues such as employment levels and location. The findings of the study demonstrated that a multicultural policy enables migrants to feel valued in their host society. A humanitarian immigration policy is beneficial to a host society because it facilitates settlement for people driven out of their homes by war and persecution and pulls migrants who have the strongest motivation to become successful settlers because they cannot go home. The study also demonstrated that a migrant group with a dual identity, that is both a religious and ethnic identity, and one not considered mainstream in Australia, are not necessarily the harbingers of social disorder and can be an asset to their host society.

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NIGHTINGALES IN TERRA NOVA

The Immigration Experiences of Iranian Bahá'ís in Sydney and Canberra

From 1960 to 1998

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction and Theoretical framework

Small numbers of Iranians were living in Australia in the 1960s and early 1970s but the numbers increased dramatically after the Revolution in Iran in 1979. The Revolution caused thousands of Iranians to migrate to other countries including Australia. The experiences of the Iranians, who migrated to Australia after being driven out of their own country by the Revolution, were part of the process changing the face of 'White Australia' and turning it into a more diverse nation.

This study was carried out specifically to look at the immigration experiences of the Iranian Bahá'ís living in Australia. It attempted to see the immigrant process from the viewpoint of the migrant, rather than from an official or wider social perspective. The study aimed through an oral history process to establish how the multicultural policies that crystallized in Australia in the 1980s aided their integration. Multiculturalism suited the Iranian Bahá'ís because the central theme of their ideology is recognition of the benefits of unity in diversity. In addition their identity is not related to any particular geographical location because they believe the world is one country. Their inclusive approach to their relationship with others enabled them to find a safe haven in Australia whether they came as skilled migrants, refugees or under the family reunion policy. The study intended to provide an analysis of their community formation and examine both individual and group related settlement needs.

In 1979 the majority of the people in Iran were Shi'ite Moslems. Other small religious groups such as Assyrian and Armenian Christians and Jews lived in Iran, but the Bahá'í community was the largest minority. These different religious communities were treated with varying degrees of tolerance during the reign of the Muhammad Reza Shah, which lasted from 1941 to 1978. In the Shah's last year Iran experienced a growing degree of civil disturbance as protests

against his policies became increasingly violent and moved the country towards anarchy. The disturbances polarized the two forces in Iran, those of the military and the Shah in opposition to the more popular structure of the Shi-ite clergy and religious groups, both right and left, who were hostile to the Shah's regime. The unrest created by riots and strikes erupting throughout the land led to social chaos and set the scene for the revolution of 1979. For the Moslem clerics the Revolution, which led to the rise of militant Islam all over the Middle East, gave them an opportunity for power and influence. In Iran power in the hands of the clerics resulted in the persecution of the Bahá'ís. As the Revolution unfolded they became the target of not only the clergy but the ordinary people of Iran.

Shi'ite Islam regarded the Bahá'ís as heretics and because the Shah had placed many in positions of power they were also politically suspect. For example Bahá'ís staffed all army wireless and radar communications and many senior officers were Bahá'ís.¹ A Bahá'í architect had designed the large monument in the center of Teheran, built to celebrate the history of Iran and the power of the Shah. The administrative headquarters of the international Bahá'í community was located in Israel and this fact gave rise to the impression that the Bahá'ís were not only heretics but were also Zionist collaborators.

Outbreaks of violence against Bahá'ís began a few months after martial law was declared late in 1978. In December of that year mobs began to attack Bahá'í communities around Shiraz, a strong centre of Shi'ite power. In Sarvistan lawless mobs looted shops, attacked and burnt homes as the occupants, men, women and children were dragged into the streets and beaten. Others were placed in bags and taken to the Mosque and beaten to force them to recant their faith. In Sa'adi, in the city of Shiraz, a mob of 2,000 people led by Mullahs began to systematically burn houses.² Some Bahá'ís succumbed to pressure and recanted to save their lives and their properties but others, realizing their danger, escaped the city with only a few belongings. Thus began the mass migration of Bahá'ís out of Iran that continued throughout the last decades of the twentieth century.

After the return of the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini to Iran on 1 February 1979, the Revolutionary Guards arrested many prominent Bahá'ís including women. Bahá'ís were dismissed from their jobs, pensions were denied, children were sent out of schools, businesses were closed and all properties belonging to the National Assembly of the Bahá'ís were confiscated and were either destroyed or used by the revolutionary authorities.

¹ Mohammed Heikal, 1981, *Iran: The Untold Story*, Pantheon Books, New York, p. 69

² Olya Roohizadegan, 1993, *Olya's Story: A Survivor's Dramatic Account of the Persecution of Baha'is in Revolutionary Iran*, One World Publications, Oxford, p.5

Graveyards were desecrated. The Bahá'ís were forbidden to leave the country and consequently were forced to use people smugglers to help them escape.³

The forces set in motion by the Revolution that turned thousands of Bahá'ís into refugees occurred during a period of changes in immigration patterns all over the world. Australia, Canada and other receiving countries with histories of large-scale migrant settlement, experienced a pivotal change in immigration policies in the 1970s. Australia possibly experienced the greatest change because as Jupp observed:

The ending of the White Australia policy in 1973 and the extension of refugee and humanitarian status to Lebanese and Indo-Chinese in 1975 and 1976 began a process, which has greatly increased the actual and potential number of distinct ethnic groups in Australia.⁴

The changes in immigration policies in the second half of the twentieth century changed Australian society and created a process that became known as multiculturalism. Although small numbers of different ethnic groups had settled in Australia the overall immigration policy prior to the 1960s demonstrated a preference for migrants who most closely resembled the dominant Anglo-Celtic population. When traditional sources of potential migrants diminished because of the growth of economic prosperity in Europe, there was a growing recognition that non-Northern European countries could provide migrants with the ability to match Australian immigration objectives. Consequently by the early seventies immigration policy changed from a search for European migrants to an acceptance of significant number of people from Asia and the Middle East and an increase in the numbers of the refugee population.

For the Iranian Bahá'ís the humanitarian migration policies allowed thousands of them to choose Australia as a refuge from the terror of being a persecuted minority in their own country. As prospective migrants the Iranian Bahá'ís met with a sympathetic approach in Australian Embassies around the globe. Australian government agencies helped refugees who needed financial assistance with their travel arrangements. The skilled migration scheme also pulled self-sufficient migrants endeavoring to escape from Iran towards Australia, a country far removed from the growing upheaval in the Middle East created by the rise of militant Islam.

³ Lisa Gilad, (ed.) 1989, 'Refugee Voices: A Baha'i Refugee Story, *Journal of Refugee Studies*', Vol. 2, No. 2, 1989, p. 276

⁴ James Jupp, Andrea McRobbie, Barry York, 1991, *Settlement Needs of Small Newly Arrived Ethnic Groups*, Centre for Immigration and Multicultural Studies, Social Sciences A.N.U, p. 14

The perception in Australia that the best potential migrants were those who could assimilate quickly because their culture was similar to the dominant culture shifted towards a focus on migrant settlement needs. Rather than reflecting the expectation that migrants would fit in, immigration studies began to examine the process of assisting migrants to become effective settlers and special attention was given to the needs of migrants with ethnic identities. The changes caused by waves of new immigrants generated new patterns of settlement, occupational mobility and adaptation. Effective settlement is difficult to measure. However one way to look at the process is not through the examination of the problem areas but by looking at a successfully settled group, such as the Iranian Bahá'ís, and ask how and why their settlement process ran smoothly and what factors assisted them in this process.

Aims and Objectives

The central aim of this study was to examine the immigration experiences and the settlement processes of the Iranian Bahá'ís in Australia. The main objective was to find how this ethnic group with a distinctive religious identity achieved an unusually high level of educational and professional achievement and why the majority prospered during their adaptation into the Australian way of life. The study included representatives of all age groups, migrants who arrived in Australia over a period of thirty-five years and individuals living in various urban areas, because it was anticipated these factors would have influenced their settlement process.

The study was carried out with the assistance of Iranian Bahá'ís in Sydney and Canberra. It looked at the reasons for their status as a persecuted minority in Iran and the circumstances that led to their decision to migrate. The narratives of flight experiences are included to explain why many had a strong motivation to become successful settlers and to examine the trauma, which conversely may have disrupted settlement.

The main body of the study focused on the settlement process of the group and was designed to examine how they created new lives for themselves in a host society culturally distant from their country of origin. The study also looked at the changes in Australian immigration policy to determine how multiculturalism was beneficial for the Iranian Bahá'ís.

In addition to examining the reasons for the relatively conflict free settlement process of the Iranian Bahá'ís this study aimed to acknowledge the place the Iranian Bahá'ís occupy in Australian history and provide a record of their experiences. Descendants of ethnic groups that arrived in Australia in the nineteenth and early years of the twentieth centuries have realized in

recent decades that there is a vacuum of knowledge about their cultural heritage. In fact those who tend to write historical accounts of different ethnic groups often have as York noted ‘an ancestral or direct link to the community about which they write’.⁵

Therefore one of the purposes of this study was to capture the experiences of the Iranian Bahá’ís before they are lost, either through deaths of the migrants or through the lack of historical records. It is possible that some official records of Iranian immigration may have already been destroyed. Even as this study began the father of the first Iranian Bahá’í family to settle in Australia died in Melbourne. As noted later in this chapter, there have been few studies of the new migrant groups arriving since 1975 and the end of the White Australia objective, and this work will help to fill that gap.⁶ Research on these groups could include comparative studies on the push, pull and hold factors that influenced the different groups and how these factors impacted on their settlement processes.

Findings.

This study found that although the Iranian Bahá’ís living in Australia share a religious faith they are not a homogenous group. They represent a community originating in different parts of Iran from varied socio-economic backgrounds. The interviewees for the study included landowners, professionals, merchants and some villagers. Although several came from rural areas the majority originated from urban areas and were well-educated skilled migrants from the middle class. The study also included representatives of all age groups; migrants who arrived in Australia over a period of thirty-five years and who were therefore at different stages of settlement; and individuals living in various urban locations in Sydney and Canberra.

Overall the study found that settlement needs of the migrants were satisfied but the most positive outcomes were found among the women in the group. The Bahá’ís believe in the equality of men and women and prior to the 1979 Revolution the community in Iran had played an active role in providing education for female students. Women served on administrative bodies and many acquired a tertiary education. When an Islamic regime was put in place these freedoms were severely restricted. Consequently when they arrived in Australia the women were re-empowered with individual autonomy. They had a heightened appreciation of the benefits of regaining the rights to work outside the home and furthering their education.

⁵ Barry York, 1996, *Ethno-Historical Studies in a Multicultural Australia*, Studies in Australian Ethnic History, No. 13, Centre for Immigration & Multicultural Studies, A.N.U. p. 18

⁶ National 1986 Census statistics.

The group of migrants in this study, apart from their nationality, had one major thing in common: they belonged to the same religious community. The support of the Bahá'í community was a vital factor in assisting them in their settlement. The other factor that appeared to be equally important was the presence of other family members. To Iranians, family is the central feature of their social life and their identity. Their social and economic support systems are essentially connected to their families. Fortunately for the Iranian Bahá'ís the family reunion program allowed those who arrived in earlier periods to bring members of their family to Australia. The largest number of migrants in the group came under the special humanitarian assistance program for refugees, particularly applicable to those Baha'ís escaping from persecution in the 1980s. According to Jupp, by 1988 'about 2,500 had arrived under this and other refugee programs, making up over one-third of the total Baha'i community in Australia.'⁷

The Bahá'í community was already well established before the influx of Iranians. The first Bahá'ís to settle in Australia were Clara and Hyde Dunn who migrated from San Francisco in 1920.⁸ According to Hassall, the Duns 'within a decade attracted a sufficient following to establish 'Local Assemblies' in Sydney, Adelaide and Auckland'.⁹ The National Assembly of Australia and New Zealand was established in 1934 and a separate Australian National Assembly was in place by the early 1950s. Baha'i communities do not have clergy. The faith is administered by a three tier system consisting of local assemblies that administer the community in areas defined by local government boundaries. The national assemblies are concerned with nation wide issues and the international body in Israel administers the global community. These assemblies are established by an elective system. Every year after 1934 an election was held in Australia to ensure the continuity of the national body. Consequently, when Iranian Bahá'ís arrived in Sydney and Canberra the Bahá'í community was well-established. The members of the community were a varied group of Australians, from diverse areas and income groups.

The majority of the migrants who were interviewed mentioned that they would have been lonely without the support of the Bahá'í community. Some indicated that the Australian Bahá'ís provided them with a path towards understanding other Australians and helped with their

⁷ James Jupp, (ed.), 2001, *The Australian People, An Encyclopedia of the Nation, Its People and Their Origins*, Centre for Immigration and Multicultural Studies, Australian National University, Cambridge University Press, p. 441

⁸ Graham Hassall, 1991, 'Outpost of a World Religion: The Baha'i Faith in Australia 1920-1947', *Journal of Religious History*, Vol.16, No.3, June, pp. 315-338

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 59

relationships in the wider community. Initially their social life centered around Bahá'í activities and for many of them it still does, even after years of living in Australia.

It would be logical to assume that a common religion is not sufficient to explain why the presence of the religious community was so important to the Iranian Bahá'ís. Membership in a religious group does not necessarily assist migrants in their settlement process; for example to be an Anglican or a Catholic would not necessarily enable migrants to feel as if they belonged unless they were members of a closely knit community centered around a local church.

Several factors are relevant here, for example size of the group, ideology, and common history. Small religious communities provide their members with more intimate attention than a larger one. In addition the mentality engendered by Baha'i beliefs was crucial to their adaptation. A group with an inclusive ideology concerning the unity of humanity provides a mind set that looks outwards and is accepting of difference rather than maintaining an exclusive membership. Bahá'ís endeavour to interact socially with the wider community and the majority of interviewees for this project who have married since they arrived in Australia acquired partners of non-Iranian origin. In this way the Bahá'ís are different to other small religious groups, for example the Zoroastrians, a small Iranian religious community in Sydney who have a more exclusive cultural pattern than the Bahá'ís. They tend to marry only within prescribed social boundaries and in general do not interact socially with outsiders.¹⁰

As would be anticipated age proved to be a significant factor in the settlement process. Individuals who arrived in Australia when they were relatively young adapted to change more rapidly than older people. They learned a second language with ease and demonstrated the ability to take advantage of the opportunities that were available to them, for example education and vocational training.

The emphasis on humanitarian assistance for refugees in the 1980s and early 1990s meant the migrants were treated well and this tolerant attitude proved to be beneficial both for them and the host society. With the encouragement and assistance the Iranian Bahá'ís received from the Australian authorities some individuals in the group, both men and women, have become very successful settlers, and are now influential in their particular fields including the medical, scientific, business and cultural realms.

Framework.

The study is loosely divided into three main sections, push, pull and hold factors. These three phases correspond to Ager's description of the refugee experience, which uses an appropriate

metaphor of 'birds of passage' to describe the migratory process.¹¹ Other models contributed concepts of use in analysing the experiences of the target group. The three stages are represented as the preflight experience, the flight, and the nesting in a new territory. The image of birds in flight is suitable for this group of refugees who travelled by air in contrast to migrants in the nineteenth century and most of the twentieth who arrived in Australia by ship.

It was difficult to decide how to approach the topic because of the shortage of research that could provide a framework to assist with interpretation, methodology and structure for a study on a group identified not only by their ethnicity but also by their religious identity. In Australia ethno-histories of small religious groups have been marginalized. In 1991 Barry York discovered that he was the only Research Fellow at an Australian university whose brief included the promotion of ethno-historical research. According to him:

Those of us with an active interest in Australia's multicultural history face an uphill battle in our daily research. Our research problems reflect the marginalization of our subject matter, and relate to the fragmentation of documentary evidence and the absence of funding and career opportunities. Australia is alone among the Western immigrant receiving nations in not having a Chair of Multicultural Studies at any university.¹²

In view of these problems the framework needed to be flexible enough to allow the inclusion of other theories for different aspects of the study such as settlement needs.

Within the broad framework of push, pull and hold the first section of the study looks at the persecution of Baha'is in Iran, in other words the push factors that caused them to change from individuals embedded within a family and a familiar culture to people forced to make the decision to leave. The overlying reason for their decision to leave home originated in the political context of persecution with an implicit threat of imprisonment or death, and the more subtle tactics of persecution such as denial of human rights that included denial of access to education and employment.

The first section of the study also includes the flight experiences of both voluntary migrants and those more or less forced to migrate. It covers the details of their departures by commercial transport or through payments made to smugglers and the complications of applying for refugee classification. Not all the Iranian Bahá'ís were refugees. Many came as skilled migrants and had different experiences during their departure from Iran. Those who left before 1979 retained

¹⁰ Interviewee 841912

¹¹ Alastair Ager (ed.), 1990 *Refugees: perspectives on the refugee experience*, Cassell, London, p. 3

¹² York, *Ethno-Historical Studies*, p. 24

their passports and their self-sufficiency, but the largest group escaped after the Revolution and most became refugees.

The flight stage of migration can be described as a state of liminality, that is, one characterized by transition, ambiguity and contradictions. A refugee or migrant pushed into a liminal state must adopt strategies to deal with uncertainty, instability, movement and change. The liminal state affected the study group and the individuals in it in different ways. Some of the migrants had contacts in other countries who helped them during their flight process. Some had sufficient money to meet their living expenses and pay smugglers and others relied on outside agencies. Those who had relatives already in Australia benefited from the security provided by a family network but many did not have this option available to them and were dependent on Government assistance.

The second stage of the study describes the pull factors that caused the migrants to choose Australia as their destination. The third phase of the immigration experience is nesting i.e. the settlement process. The first two stages in the immigration process have similar threads but the settlement process or the hold factors are more complex and result in the migrants adopting multiple strategies for adaptation in their host society.

Heidary carried out a study on the acculturation of Iranians in the United States in the discipline of psychology. He identified four modes of coping strategies adopted by migrants during their settlement process.¹³ These four modes were described as integration or bi-culturalism, separation, assimilation and marginalization. Most of the studies done in the United States included different religious groups whereas this work examines only Bahá'ís.

Only two of Heidary's modes of adaptation strategies, 'bi-cultural' and 'assimilation', appeared to be applicable to the Iranian Baha'is. The bi-cultural mode was adopted by those who, although participating in events in their new home, retained some of their original culture by being involved in cultural events and maintaining some traditional customs. However for this group active involvement in Iranian cultural events gradually weakened as the years passed.

The separated mode, that is those who rejected the culture of their adopted land and literally turned their back on it, did not seem to occur within the group studied. The ideology that 'the world is one country' was mentioned by many interviewees, particularly the older migrants, who used the concept as a strategy to assist their settlement process. The marginalized response of migrants, who do not accept the culture of their host country and reject interaction with their

¹³ Payam Heidary, 2001, "Mix and Match", www.iranian.com/Opinion//2001/August/Cultural.p.2 accessed 3/17/03.

own people, was not present among those who were interviewed. The assimilation mode, that is a response that rejects the past and prefers to adopt the culture of the host country, was found mainly among the second generation, especially those who were either born in Australia or who were small children when they arrived.

Studies in Australia have shown that migrants who chose to adopt the assimilation mode were those with a relatively weak identification with their country of origin. For example Putnis noted that Latvians who settled in Australia after the Second World War displayed this weak identification with their own culture. Negative attitudes displayed by the first generation towards their own country were reinforced in the second generation because of the fear of being identified with communism. When their country was taken over by the USSR in 1945, the connection with their homeland and their culture was lost. According to Putnis neither the first nor the second generation had any desire to travel to Latvia or to retain their ethnic identity.¹⁴

Among the Iranian Bahá'ís there were some signs of weak identification with Iran in the second generation. Older migrants, although not keen to return to live in Iran, appeared to be anxious to return for a visit, particularly those individuals with relatives still living there. Some said they would like to return to live there if the political situation changed. Some young adults also expressed a desire to travel in Iran to study the culture but teenagers wanted to be seen as Australians and expressed little interest in being identified with Iranian culture. Most interviewees preferred to be known as Persians rather than Iranians. The reasons for this identity confusion are examined more fully in Chapter Nine of the study. Nevertheless those interviewees with a weak identification with Iranian culture have for the most part retained their Bahá'í religious identity. This seems to indicate that the religious aspect is not necessarily related to ethnicity, at least for the second generation.

Until multiculturalism was accepted as viable ideology by the Australian government in the late 1970s the assumption that migrants should assimilate was interpreted to mean that migrants must abandon their own identity and become part of the culture of their new home.¹⁵ Social pressure on the migrants to assimilate and become Australian meant they were expected to forget their own country, their culture, their traditions and their language. However in general, the majority of the first generation of migrants who remained in Australia did not abandon their

¹⁴ Aldis Putnis, 1981 'Latvians in Australia: Alienation and Assimilation', *Sociology-themes and perspectives: Australian Edition*, 1996, eds. Michael Haralambos, Robert van Krieken, Philip Smith and Martin Holborn, Longman, Melbourne, p. 642

¹⁵ Gianfranco Cresciani, 2003, *The Italians in Australia*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, p. 70

language or their cultural inheritance but for the most part managed to eventually adapt to a new way of life in Australia.¹⁶

Young migrants during their settlement process tend to adopt multiple identities. They retain an identity within their close connections such as family and religious community and assume other behavioural patterns in the workplace or at school.¹⁷ Migrants who arrived with their families had the benefit of close connections that helped ease the difficulties associated with integration. If they belonged to a religious group they had a spiritual identity that provided them with emotional support, a distinct advantage in their settlement process. Migrants have to seek employment for economic survival and many, particularly the men, had to take employment in an unfamiliar occupation and were forced to acquire a new workplace identity. In the bi-cultural mode of acculturation, used by many Iranian Baha'is, migrants retain some aspects of their ethnic identity such as the use of their own language and culture within the family environment, but not in the work-place.

In a society such as Australia, where a significant proportion of the population was born in another country, ethnic identities, national identities, intermarriage and periods in other countries before arriving in Australia meant that children of migrants needed to adopt multiple identities.¹⁸ This is also an aspect of life in a modern urban environment, not only for migrants, but also for most people. As Hall noted:

Modern people of all sorts and conditions have had, as a condition of survival, to be members simultaneously of several overlapping 'imagined communities' and the negotiations across and between these complex borderlines are characteristic of modernity itself.¹⁹

Favorable and unfavorable factors that appeared to either encourage or discourage the process of identity construction are examined with the assistance of concepts outlined by John W. Berry

²⁰ He noted that attitudes found in the host society towards ethnic minorities, and the social

¹⁶ Geoffrey Brahm Levey and Dirk Moses 2001 'Debate should focus on the apple, not the core: Cultural criteria in determining suitable immigrants are historically bankrupt.'
The Australian, 31 December, p.11

¹⁷ Gregory Melleuish, 1997, 'Universal Obligations, Liberalism, Religion and National Identity',
The Politics of Identity in Australia, ed. Geoffrey Stokes, Cambridge University Press,
Cambridge, p. 51

¹⁸ Doug Kellner, 1992, 'Popular culture and the construction of Post Modern identities'
Modernity and Identity, eds. Lash and Friedman, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 141-77

¹⁹ Stuart Hall, 1992, 'Our mongrel selves' *New Statesman and Society*, 19 June, p.7

²⁰ John W. Berry, 1999, 'Refugee acculturation and re-acculturation', *Refugees: Perspectives on the Experience of Forced Migration*, ed. A.Ager, Cassell, London, p.172

support available to refugees both from their group and their host, are relevant in shaping migrants' social landscape and are significant in the rate of their successful integration.

Acculturation studies, for example work done by Berry, included the personality of the individual migrant as a factor in the settlement process. Therefore, questions designed to locate personality traits were used in the study to test this assumption. The answers provided an impression of the migrants' locus of control and their varied capacity for integration. Attitudes and behavior patterns of the individual are significant in creating the coping strategies used by them during their settlement process. It seems patently obvious that the individual's attitude and behavior will create a climate around them that is either favorable for a smooth settlement or has negative outcomes. However there is a natural tendency to blame others for our lack of progress or our deficiency with social skills, and refugees and migrants are prone to the same mechanism of blame as are those born in Australia.

Time is a vital factor in the settlement process. Migrants and their families who live in a host society for more than ten years or longer can become part of the social landscape and able to interact with the wider society in positive ways. In the majority of cases time allows people to acquire language skills and in many cases to advance economically and to feel at home.

If the needs of the migrants are substantially satisfied it enables them to integrate successfully. What these needs were, both for the individuals and the collective, and how they were met are examined in Chapters 8 and 9 through the framework posited by the Centre for Immigration and Multicultural Studies in the Research School of Social Sciences at the Australian National University to identify needs of small groups of ethnic migrants.²¹ This framework provided a way to examine the settlement process of the group in the study even though measurement of settlement is complex and never exact. As Jupp noted, 'Effective settlement cannot be measured overall, as individuals and groups vary considerably in their experiences and reactions'.²² Nevertheless the 'ideal types' of settlement in the framework provided a way to examine the settlement experiences of the Iranian Baha'is.

Methodology

The major methodology for this study was a process of oral history designed to look at the topic from the migrants' perspective. The data was collected through interviews with Iranian Bahá'is living in Canberra and Sydney. It was necessary during this process to establish a relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee in order to obtain information and

²¹ Jupp, McRobbie & York, *Settlement Needs of Small Newly Arrived Ethnic Groups* pp. 11 & 12

draw out memories that may have lain dormant for years. It was also important to establish trust with people who had experienced persecution and suffered traumas of displacement. The dynamics of the interviews relied on the ability of the interviewer to establish the fact that the interviewee was a valuable source of information and that their point of view and their experiences were important. Thus the study mainly uses qualitative research because it is concerned with personal experience rather than statistical analysis.

This study was based on interviews with eighty three interviewees who included representatives of all age groups, migrants who arrived in Australia at different times over a period of thirty-five years, and individuals living in a variety of locations. It was anticipated that these factors influenced their integration processes.

The interviews were conducted by using a prepared questionnaire (See Appendix 6) containing queries on basic information such as town or region of origin, whether they came directly to Australia from Iran or through another country, family background and date of birth. Other questions were designed to analyse the interviewees' settlement experiences and were shaped to some extent by the concepts considered important in scholarly literature and migration history. Other questions required subjective personal responses such as 'why did you leave Iran?' Although the questionnaire provided a framework for the interviews the latter process followed the usual methodology for oral history, where the interview is an interactive process and the direction of the interview is largely set by the interviewees' responses. The interviews were mainly limited to one hour and when face-to-face interviews proved difficult to arrange, interviews were carried out over the telephone.

Research through interpersonal contact requires knowledge of the people interviewed, their history, their culture and their perceptions of identity. In this particular case the knowledge was acquired not only through a study of Iran and the religious history of the Bahá'í community, but through personal experience. The author of this study has acquired an understanding of the interviewees through membership of the Bahá'í community since the early 1950s. During this time the author was involved with the development of the Bahá'í community in Australia and in Papua New Guinea. Interaction with Iranian Bahá'ís included visits to Bahá'í communities around the globe including a short visit to Iran in 1973. This personal involvement with the Bahá'í community gave the interviewer privileged access to the Iranian Bahá'ís and a special relationship with the interviewees that allowed them to feel they were telling their stories to a knowledgeable and sympathetic ear.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 11

The study analyzed the transcripts from the interviews through an awareness that sensitivity to the participants' own categorization of their experiences such as religious persecution, family life and other details concerned with their experiences in Australia was an essential part of the examination. Sacks argues 'that any number of labels may adequately describe a person or activity'²³ so the choice of label carries social implications. For example the label 'family life' means different things in different societies. It appeared to be best therefore to use categories which emerged from the interviewees' own terminology.

Some of the questions deal with details which seemed trivial to the interviewees, such as those relating to diet and reading material. However the answers to questions about the mundane aspects of their lives enabled the researcher to contextualize the details and analyze how this information represented their state of settlement in the host society.

Questions on cultural issues were applied in a flexible manner so consequently not every interviewee was asked the same questions because it was apparent that particular questions were irrelevant for some. For example, questions about use of English skills were not necessary for migrants who are university lecturers. Questions about participation in events not relevant to Baha'is, such as Christmas and Easter indicated flexibility and an inclusive approach to settlement.

Individual experiences with ordinary Australians and interaction with work colleagues or school friends were discussed with the interviewees to determine whether they felt accepted in the host society. Any experiences of prejudice or discrimination either social or economic would have tempered their enthusiasm for their new land.

First contact was made with the National Office of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Australia in Sydney. The National Secretary was given a copy of the project proposal and was informed the researcher intended to interview Bahá'ís. Subsequently interviewees were sourced through the religious community but the National Office was not involved in the choice of interviewees. The snowball method of interviewee selection was also used.

The first interviews were conducted with people known to the interviewer, and through introductions provided by them contact was made with others willing to be interviewed. This snowball method tended to produce interviewees who come from the same strata of society, for example well educated middle class individuals who recommended their friends with the same social characteristics. In order to obtain interviewees from a wider cross section of the community other people were approached during religious events held in Sydney and Canberra. Those who became involved co-operated in locating a range of potential interviewees, such as

²³ H. Sacks, 1992, *Lectures on Conversation*, ed. G. Jefferson, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, Volume 1 p.41.

those who had been prisoners of the Islamic Republic in Iran and those who suffered extreme hardship as refugees. In addition this process helped to identify individuals who had created successful careers in Australia and people who had been living in Australia for lengthy periods. Others chosen as interviewees were selected because they appeared to represent different sections of society. For example young adults who spoke English introduced the interviewer to their parents who did not speak the language.

The interviews were held with eighty-three people who were also asked questions about other family members. Consequently partial data on a wider range of people than the number interviewed was made available. This is particularly important in order to identify people who chose not to migrate and gain some idea of their motives. Interviews with the secretaries of different communities revealed information about the structure and nature of their community. Australian Bahá'ís were also interviewed about their interaction with the newcomers and the effects of their presence, such as how the Bahá'í communities had changed since the arrival of large numbers of Iranians.

A member of the Zoroastrian community in Sydney was interviewed because the community had some similarities to the Bahá'í community. The Zoroastrians originated in Iran and the Sydney community numbers approximately 1,500 members. The Zoroastrians also experienced religious persecution in Iran, in contrast to other groups such as Shi'ite Moslems who left Iran for economic and political reasons.

Aspects of the host society are relevant in the settlement process so questions about relationships with Australians were included, for example if any member of their family had married an Australian. Interviews with the second generation were shaped to examine how strong family ties were and how child-rearing practices may have changed in Australia. For example, do young adults have a choice with their education, friends and marriage partners?

Many interviews were conducted with only one person present but in the majority of cases another member of the family was present and they were also interviewed. In some cases a young member of the family acted as translator. Some interviewees organized interviews with those relatives not present during the first interview. Most of the interviews were taped.

Some interviewees were nervous about the kind of questions that would be asked and a few were initially hesitant to give permission for the use of the material, but only one interviewee did not want to sign the consent form. As an Australian speaking to nervous 'interviewees' it was necessary to establish credentials of the interviewer as a Bahá'í with Iranian relatives. During the interviews the flexible and relaxed style inherent in the interactive process meant that by the end of the interview individuals were very friendly and appeared to enjoy the

experience. Interviews with those who had academic qualifications or were students went smoothly because they understood the reasons for the research and were the most co-operative.

The number of people interviewed was limited to eighty-three, which is a sample of roughly one in twenty-five members of the Iranian Bahá'í Community in Sydney and Canberra. It was originally the intention to interview one hundred so that the number should represent a reasonable spread of opinions. When it became apparent that stories were becoming repetitive eighty-three interviews appeared to be sufficient for the survey. Within this number interviewees were selected from different age groups, and from different socio-economic levels or from different municipal areas in Sydney. Migrants who had arrived at any time during the period covered by the study were interviewed but the largest number of interviews was conducted with people who had arrived in Australia during the 1980s because the majority of Iranian Bahá'ís living in Australia came during that decade.

Interviewees were referenced by number to keep their identity confidential. The number included the chronology, for example 1 for the first interview and 2 for the second. In addition the number included the date of the interview; for example the first interview, held on 6 June, is numbered 166 and the last interview, conducted on 18 December, is numbered 831812. All interviews were carried out in 2003.

Basic material for the study such as demographic details was included in the questionnaire and the National Bahá'í Office in Sydney provided statistics on Iranian Bahá'ís. Statistics on Iranian Bahá'ís before the 1980s were not available because in this period individuals were listed by name as members of the Baha'i community but details of their nationality and birthplace were not included. When the number of Iranians began to increase in the 1980s, separate statistics of people who were born in Iran were kept. Communities with large numbers of Iranian believers were identifiable and defined by municipal boundaries. The Bahá'í National office provided the contact details for the secretaries of these communities.

Sources other than the National Bahá'í Office such as the Department of Immigration also did not keep separate statistics on Iranian Bahá'ís, because of the small numbers, until 1981. The official census figures tended to count Middle Eastern migrants as one group and until the 1986 did not define small ethnic or religious groups. The Bureau of Immigration Research was closed down in 1996 and the Department of Immigration Library in Canberra has not retained its records. According to the Librarian at the Immigration Department in Canberra the records were made available to the National Library which selected what it wanted and the rest were shredded. Fortunately papers presented in 1994 at a Seminar on Persian Studies at Sydney

University, during the Persian Meheragan Festival, included some statistics on Iranians in Australia.²⁴

Although every effort was made to present the data in the study from the perspective of the interviewees it should be acknowledged that despite trying to present history from the migrant's point of view it is really difficult to do that given that the interviewer could only be sympathetic to their viewpoint. As the interviewer came from a different Baha'i community to the interviewees an opportunity was created to allow interviewees to express their opinions and to be more relaxed about their comments than they might have been if the interviewer lived in the same community. Only a couple of interviewees expressed concern about privacy. Most of the interviewees were happy to answer questions and relate stories of their experiences. It would have been beneficial to take photos of the interviewees, unless of course they objected, first for historical reasons and secondly because images are a valuable resource. Future researchers might have been interested in the changes that had occurred within the group through their images. It would be beneficial if interviews with the same people were carried out in future decades to determine what other factors have emerged in their settlement process in response to social change.

Another methodological problem was that the majority of interviewees were sourced through religious events and interviewees were active members of the Bahá'í communities in Sydney and Canberra. These communities were the first to be established in New South Wales and the study was limited to individuals in those two localities. This meant that Iranian Baha'is who were part of the community but who did not attend regular religious events such as House of Worship services and were out of touch with the administration were not included in the study. This may have biased the findings towards successful settlement being related to religious affiliation.

²⁴ Garry Trompf, Morteza Honary and Homer Abramian, 1994, (eds.) *Mehregan in Sydney: Proceedings of the Seminar in Persian Studies during the Mehregan Persian Cultural Festival*, 28 October – 6 November 1994, unpublished papers held State Library of N.S.W.

Contribution of this study.

There are considerable gaps in the literature on migrant experiences of Iranians, both Bahá'ís and other religious groups, who have settled in Australia. As Jupp commented: 'Very little study has been done on the Iranian population in Australia. There were 16,273 born in Iran at the 1996 census and some 20,000 who spoke the Iranian (or Persian) language'.²⁵ Prior to the 1970s Iranians were regarded as Asiatic and not considered to be suitable immigrants under the 'White Australia' policy, in place from 1901 to 1973.

After the Revolution in Iran in 1979 larger numbers of Iranians migrated to the United States and in the late 1990s psychological studies on acculturation experiences of Iranian migrants were carried out by Gaffarian,²⁶ Hanassab,²⁷ Khalili and the one mentioned earlier, done by Heidary.²⁸ One survey by Feather, Volkmer and McKee in 1992 included Australians and was based on the value priorities of Australians, Australian Bahá'ís, and expatriate Iranian Bahá'ís.²⁹ Davidson carried out a survey in 1988 to assess the process of integration of the Iranian Bahá'ís within the Australian Bahá'í Community.³⁰ Hassall has written most of the historical literature on the Bahá'í Faith in Australia.³¹ He noted that the issues of religious and ethnic identity and the Bahá'í Faith merit further studies.

There is a shortage of literature on the subject of immigration experiences of migrants from the Middle East and only a few studies have been carried out on recently arrived ethnic groups who are also identified by a religion. Religious studies are scarce in Australia and there could be several reasons for this. According to Carey the study of Christianity in Australia has been fairly well researched but of other world religions in Australia only Judaism has received anything approaching adequate historical study. According to Carey, 'Buddhism and Hinduism each have a single volume providing an account of their history in Australia and there are still no

²⁵ Jupp, *The Australian People*, p, 441

²⁶ Shireen Ghaffarian, 1987, 'The Acculturation of Iranians in the United States', *Journal of Social Psychology*, Vol. 127, No. 1, pp.565-571

²⁷ Shideh Hanassab, 1991, 'Acculturation and Young Iranian Women: Attitudes towards Sex Roles and Intimate Relationships', *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, January, Vol 19, pp. 11-21

²⁸ Heidary, 'Mix and Match'.

²⁹ N.T. Feather, R.E. Volkmer, I.R. McKee, 1992, 'A comparative study of the value priorities of Australians, Australian Baha'is, and Expatriate Iranian Baha'is', *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, Vol. 23, No. 1, pp. 95-106

³⁰ John Davidson, 1988, 'An Emerging Identity – The Changing Face Of The Australia Baha'i Community', *Integration & Cultural Diversity*, eds. John Davidson and Marjorie Tidman, Baha'i Publications Australia.

³¹ Graham Hassall, 1991, 'Outpost of a World Religion: The Baha'i Faith in Australia 1920-1947', *Journal of Religious History*, ed. A.W. Ata, Vol. 16 No.3, June, pp. 315-338

historical accounts of Islam or the Western sectarian arms of the world religions such as Bahá'í, Yoga or Krishna Consciousness.³² Little has changed since she wrote this in 1996; there is only an article by Hassall which covers the history of the Baha'i Faith in Australia.³³

This study on the Iranian Bahá'ís aimed to provide a record of the settlement experiences of a particular group of migrants. The social turmoil in the Middle East created a diaspora of Iranians, a people who had not traditionally been prone to migration before the Revolution of 1979, and Australia as a receiving nation accepted these migrants. Iranians are currently a small group and their settlement in Australia along with other such small and newly arrived ethnic groups has created the need for their further study. The topic also needs further investigation to determine whether these people, driven out of their countries by persecution or economic problems as the popular stereotype suggests, become a burden on the public purse and create social and economic problems as recent public reaction would suggest or whether like the Iranian Bahá'ís they eventually become an asset in an increasingly multicultural society.

Chapter Outline.

Chapter One forms the introduction to this study. Chapter Two contains a review of the literature related to this topic. It discusses the background information available on the group and the explanations for their persecution. It includes some studies on Iranian migrants and other migrant groups. It also looks at some theorists who specialize in acculturation issues, immigration, and psychological impacts of settlement.

Chapter Three gives a broad overview of the history of immigration of ethnic groups in Australia until the 1990s. The material for this chapter is taken mostly from secondary sources and is designed to give a context for the Iranian Bahá'í migration.

Chapter Four looks at the history of Iranian Bahá'ís in their country of origin. It examines the historical reasons for the persecution of the Bahá'ís and describes the treatment of the Bahá'ís.

Chapter Five examines the push factors that caused the Iranian Bahá'ís to become migrants and refugees to Australia. It also explains how individual decisions to migrate were made and whether the decision was forced or not.

Chapter Six describes the experiences of both voluntary migrants and refugees while they were in transit from Iran to Australia. Personal accounts describe the trauma involved in using people

³² Hilary M. Carey, 1996, *Believing in Australia: A Cultural History of Religions*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, p. xiii

³³ Hassall, 'The Baha'i Faith in Australia'. pp. 315-338

smugglers to assist their escape. It includes descriptions of transit problems and how those who escaped Iran were able to obtain refugee status.

Chapter Seven is an examination of the various pull factors that caused the Iranian Bahá'ís to choose Australia as their host society.

Chapter Eight examines the individual experiences of the migrants in their settlement process and the factors that influenced the individual integration process such as age, education and psychological factors.

Chapter Nine examines the group experience and the processes that enabled migrants to collectively succeed in the wider community.

Chapter Ten examines the role of gender issues in the migrant experience. It examines the historical restrictions women experienced in Iran as a contrast to the freedoms, such as education and the right to divorce, that Australia offered them.

The last chapter forms the conclusion and summarizes the findings of the study.

* * * * *

The image of nightingales in the title of the thesis was used because Iran has commonly been known as the land of nightingales and roses. This phrase appears in genres from Victorian poetry to tourist brochures. The culture of Iran is greatly influenced by poetry and rhetoric and the nightingale is a constant metaphor. For example one of the better known Iranian poets, Hafiz, often used the metaphor of nightingales in his work: 'All around there are a thousand nightingales that intone the same hymn'. The nightingale is symbolically the messenger of love.³⁴ In Bahá'í literature the nightingale represents the prophet with a divine message and because the religion has no clergy, individuals are given the responsibility to teach the message of divine love and unity. In essence they could all be described as nightingales.

In addition the imagery of a bird in flight is often used as an analogy for migrants. As mentioned earlier Agar³⁵ uses the imagery in his study of migration.

'Terra Nova' represents the new land where the Iranians have settled and whose ideology of freedom of religion allows them to sing their song without fear of persecution. Another well known Persian poet and philosopher, Rumi, links the idea of homelessness and a journey into the unknown in a poem with the image of a singer as a mystical bird.

³⁴ Hossein M. Elahi Ghomshei, 2003 *Poetics and Aesthetics In the Persian Sufi Literary Tradition*
www.artiniran.org/g-elahi.htm

'In the day, my thoughts:
 At night, my words,
 How come I am ignorant of my own heart being?
 From where have I come?
 To where am I going?
 Won't you show me my abode?
 I very much wonder;
 For what have I been made?
 Or what was the aim of making me like this?
 Who is that One who will hear my song?
 Or who is that puts words in my mouth?
 I did not come here on my own,
 So I can't leave by my own choice.
 The One, who brought me here,
 Will return me to my Abode.
 I am the bird of the Angelic Garden;
 Not of this soiled world.
 A cage is built from my skeleton,
 only for a few days.'³⁶

³⁵ Ager, *Perspectives on Refugees*, passim.

³⁶ Mowlana Jalal-Odin Mohamad Balkhi Rumi, *Divan of Shams*, translated by Omid Honari. Morteza Honari, 1994, 'Meheragen in Sydney: An Epilogue', 1994, N.S.W. State Reference Library, p. 137

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This review has three sections. The first is concerned with Iran, its social history and the reasons why the Bahá'ís were a persecuted minority. The second section is about the migration process. Literature concerned with migrants, immigration and diasporas are relevant to this part of the study. The third section is about migrant settlement both individual and collective. Texts concerned with integration and acculturation are examined. The section also contains discussion on literature about groups of migrants in Australia similar to the Iranians. Surveys done on the settlement process of Iranians in the United States are included in the review to compare them with the findings in this study. There is quite a large body of literature about immigration to Australia, which gives a historical perspective on why and how immigration policies were changed. However there is a shortage of information about the immigration experiences of smaller newly arrived ethnic groups, particularly studies using an oral history methodology. This study aimed to fill part of the gap.

Background - Iran and the Bahá'í Faith.

Although at the present time Iran is principally a Moslem nation it has played an important role in the history of other religions. Foltz argues that Iran has been influential in transforming and propagating all the world's universal traditions. In an account of religion in Iran from 4000 B.C. until 1997 he examines the part Iran played in the establishment, development and history of the major world religions.³⁷ He includes an overview of the emergence of the Bahá'í Faith in Iran and how it spread to other parts of the world in the early

³⁷ Richard C. Foltz, 2004, *Spirituality in the Land of the Noble: How Iran Shaped the World's Religions*, Oneworld Publications, Oxford, p. xi

twentieth century.³⁸ His work is valuable in demonstrating the complexity of the religious character of Iran, and its potential for clashes between various religious groups.

The first historical account of the emergence of the Bahá'í Faith in Iran is the narrative by Nabil that covers the period from 1844 to 1853. His chronological style departed from traditional Persian writing. It was not written in a philosophical or literary tone but was a record of events. The original text was in Farsi and the book was translated into English in 1932.³⁹ In addition to its stories of martyrdom, corruption, cruelty and fanaticism the text records the birth and early years of the religious revolution that swept across Persia in the middle of the nineteenth century. The account was translated by Shoghi Effendi, a central figure in the establishment of the Bahá'í Faith as a global religion. Shoghi Effendi was a student in English literature at Balliol College Oxford where he had access to the works of scholars of Persia in the nineteenth century such as Edward Granville Brown,⁴⁰ Lord Curzon⁴¹ and Count Gobineau.⁴² He used these nineteenth century accounts to verify the events reported by Nabil.

Another historical account, *God Passes By*,⁴³ was mainly addressed to the followers of the religion, as it documents the early years of the establishment of the Bahá'í community from a Bahá'í point of view and is therefore a subjective account. It gives the historical context of the persecution of the community and provides an insight into why the Iranian Bahá'ís relate in a personal way to a history of martyrdom and conflict.

Moojan Moomen's historical work on the *The Babi and Bahá'í Religions 1844-1944*⁴⁴ is also important for its perspective on the events surrounding the emergence of the movement. His study provides background information and documents reasons for the hostility demonstrated by Islamic clerics against the Babi's and the Bahá'ís. He believes the rapid spread of the new Faith terrified those who resented any change that might lessen their power and influence.

Literature written by observers in the nineteenth century generally attributes the cause of the hostility displayed by the Moslem clergy towards the Bahá'ís to the rapid conversion of a large percentage of the population. The new faith espoused the notion of individual

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.154

³⁹ Nabil, 1932, *The Dawnbreakers*, (Translated by Shoghi Effendi) The National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States, Tennessee.

⁴⁰ Edward Granville Brown, 1893, *A Year Among the Persians*, A & C. Black Ltd., London.

⁴¹ Lord Curzon, 1892, *Persia and the Persian Question*, 2 Vols. Longman Green and Co., London.

⁴² Comte J.A. Gobineau, 1928, *The World of the Persians*, Minerva, Geneva.

⁴³ Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, Baha'i Publishing Company, Wilmette, Illinois

⁴⁴ Moojan Momen, 1981, *The Babi and Baha'i Religions 1844-1944*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

investigation of truth and the abolition of the clergy, and these revolutionary ideas created antagonism that resulted in persecution for the Bahá'ís. Nash observed that it is possible to overlook the reasons for the fear that arose amongst the Islamic mujtahids and mullas when they marked the Bahá'ís as accursed heretics unless one understands the underlying reason for the persecution.⁴⁵ Heresy terrifies clerics because it is seen as a betrayal corrupting the 'true faith' from within.

The severity of the persecution in the 1970s and 1980s that caused the Iranian Bahá'ís to migrate or to become refugees has been well documented. Texts by Afshari⁴⁶, Sanasarian⁴⁷ and Mottahedah⁴⁸ identify the Bahá'ís as the largest religious minority and record the extreme nature of the campaign against the community. Their observations support the conclusions drawn by Nash who describes the persecution as a type of pogrom.⁴⁹ He write about executions of prominent citizens, assaults on women, mass murders in rural villages, imprisonment and torture of hundreds of Bahá'ís and the disappearance of numerous others who were executed without trial; in summary, a history of multiple contraventions of human rights.

Global interest in the 1979 Revolution in Iran resulted in an extensive body of literature about the causes of the Revolution. Journalists who wrote about Iran during the period, such as Mackey⁵⁰ and Wright⁵¹, included in their texts references to the Bahá'í community. Mackey noted that from its inception, the Bahá'í movement enraged the Shia clergy. They considered it to be blasphemous because its teachings denied Muhammad as the last prophet and the Koran as the final revelation. Like Nash, he saw that 'A powerful corresponding issue for the clerics was that Baha'ism, like Manichaeism in its time, posed a threat to the existing order'.⁵²

Literature about human rights in the twentieth century included Iran as a perpetrator of abuses against minority groups. Ashfari reports that human rights agencies, non-governmental organizations at the United Nations, and Amnesty International were all alerted to these

⁴⁵ Geoffrey Nash, 1982, *Iran's Secret Pogrom: The Conspiracy to Wipe Out the Baha'is*, Neville Spearman Ltd. Suffolk, p.22

⁴⁶ Reza Ashfari, 2001, *The Abuse of Cultural Relativism: Human Rights in Iran*, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.

⁴⁷ Eliz Sanasarian 2000, 'The persecution of the Baha'is', *Religious Minorities in Iran*, <http://www.answers.com/topic/religious-minorities-in-iran>, accessed 2/6/2003

⁴⁸ Roy Mottahedeh, 1985, *The Mantle of the Prophet: Learning and Power in Modern Iran*, Chatto and Windus, London.

⁴⁹ Nash, *Iran's Secret Pogrom: The Conspiracy to Wipe Out the Baha'is*, p.23

⁵⁰ Sandra Mackey, 1998, *The Iranians: Persia, Islam And The Soul Of A Nation*, Plume, New York.

⁵¹ Sandra Wright, 1989, *In the Name of God: The Khomeini Decade*, Bloomsbury, London.

⁵² Mackey, *The Iranians*, p. 130

abuses and produced reports on the persecution of the Bahá'ís. He comments that these reports were not as damning as the prison memoirs that came out of Iran.⁵³

Many ex-prisoners who escaped from Iran wrote about their experiences and these texts corroborate the stories of persecution told by interviewees in this study. Olya Roohizadegan wrote a detailed personal account of the dramatic events in Iran, both leading up to and during the early years of the Revolution.⁵⁴ She recounts her own experiences and some details about the women who were executed in Shiraz because they were Bahá'ís who refused to recant. Olya and her family became Australian citizens and her personal account confirms the assumption that Iranian Bahá'ís had a strong motivation to be successful settlers in their host society because they could not return to Iran.

The regime change in Iran, inspired by the return of the Ayatollah Khomeini, brought upheaval not only to the Bahá'ís but also to the lives of people who were part of the Shah's government and were involved in his attempt to modernize Iran. Sattareh Farman Famaian's autobiography describes how quickly everything changed after the Revolution.⁵⁵ Famaian's account of her life as a member of a nobleman's family in Iran emphasized the importance of family in Iranian society. She confirms the impression that women occupied an inferior place in a masculine dominated society and were expected to remain in the domestic realm. When Farmaian suggested she wanted to go abroad for her education like her brothers had done her father dismissed her request with the comment: 'It would be a waste of money. She is a woman. A woman will be nothing'.⁵⁶

Famaian's account is relevant to this study because it demonstrates how the Bahá'í community was different to the rest of Iranian society when they encouraged women to seek an education that fitted them for a career outside their traditional roles of home and family. Farmaian attended a Bahá'í school in her early years until it was closed down in the 1930s. In spite of her father's opposition to her seeking further education she went to university and was involved in the modernization program during the reign of Muhammad Reza Shah. She was involved in attempts to improve the welfare of women and children. Her work was interrupted by the growing social chaos that occurred in the late 1970s. Her autobiography documents the

⁵³ Ashfari, *Human Rights in Iran*, p. p.xvii

⁵⁴ Olya Roohizadegan, 1993, *Olya's Story: A Survivor's Dramatic Account of the Persecution of Baha'is in Revolutionary Iran*, Oneworld Publications, Oxford.

⁵⁵ Sattareh Farman Farmaian with Dona Munker, 1992 *Daughter of Persia*, Bantam Press U.K. pp. 439-453

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* , p. 130

increasing harshness towards not only Bahá'í women but also other non-traditional Iranian women, which occurred after the Revolution.

In summary the persecution of the Iranian Bahá'ís is a pivotal issue in this study and therefore literature that examines the reasons for the negative focus on the minority community is important to the thesis. The literature which describes the persecution includes texts written by Bahá'ís inside and outside Iran and accounts by scholars and journalists. The material written by Bahá'ís and others covers two stages of persecution: that which occurred prior to the 1979 Revolution and that occurring in the 1980s. The personal accounts of persecution are poignant and immediate and emphasize the details of individual suffering. Outsiders' observations about Iran and the Revolution, both academic and journalistic, include sections on the general persecution of the Bahá'í community and substantiated the material obtained for the project from interviews.

Settlement of Iranians in other countries

The majority of those who fled Iran after the 1979 Revolution were Moslems who opposed the new regime and of these migrants, the largest percentage went to the United States. The Iranians who settled in the United States have attracted the interest of social psychologists. As noted in the previous chapter Ghaffarian and Heidary published articles in social psychology journals on the acculturation of Iranians. Khalili, a graduate student at Columbia University, conducted a survey on identity construction of Iranians in the United States. Hanassab and Mahdi, doctoral students in counselling psychology, also carried out studies on Iranians in the United States, concentrating on gender roles. The data for these studies was sourced from Iranians willing to complete questionnaires. Their conclusions were a useful contrast to the settlement experiences of Iranians in Australia.

Ghaffarian⁵⁷, Hanassab⁵⁸ and Mahdi⁵⁹ in studies done in the United States looked at gender issues including adaptation differences between Iranian men and women, including all groups not specifically Baha'is. Ghaffarian and Hanassab both concluded that Iranian men

⁵⁷ Shireen Ghaffarian, 1987, 'The Acculturation of Iranians in the United States', *Journal of Social Psychology*, Vol. 127, No.6, pp. 565-571

⁵⁸ Shideh Hanassab, 1991, 'Acculturation and Young Iranian Women: Attitudes towards Sex Roles and Intimate Relationships', *Journal of Multi-cultural Counseling and Development*, January, Vol. 19, pp 11-21

⁵⁹ Ali Akbar Mahdi, 2001, 'Perceptions of Gender Roles Amongst Female Iranian Immigrants in the United States' *Women, Religion and Culture in Iran*, eds. Sarah Ansari and Vanessa Martin, pp. 185-210

adapted more rapidly to their new social milieu than the women whereas this study, carried out only with Iranian Baha'is in Australia, found that the women benefited from the freedoms this society offered and have adapted more successfully in many cases than the men in their family.

Mahdi's study also included women of different groups. Like this study, he found that in contrast with the findings of Ghaffarian and Hanassab migration to the United States has been a source of autonomy for Iranian women. Migration provided them with better opportunities for education, employment and personal freedom than they experienced in Iran even before the Revolution. Mahdi's study looks at how cultural gender issues have been affected during the migrants' geographical relocation and their subsequent transforming experiences. He observed that studies on gender roles within immigrant families are fairly new because previous studies have all concentrated on the structure of immigrant families and their patterns of adaptation. He comments that rather than looking at gender issues most studies have been done on the mechanisms migrants create to survive in another culture. He noted that the Iranians in the United States are different to earlier migrant groups because on entry they were largely self sufficient and well educated. Among the individuals in Mahdi's survey, the majority were Moslems and only 4.3% were Bahá'ís. This study adds to Mahdi's findings on gender issues because it corroborates his view that middle class Iranian women benefited from opportunities available to them in an environment that provided them with individual autonomy.

Khalili used a similar methodology to Ghaffarian and Hanassab for her study. She found respondents by using the Internet and advertising in *The Iranian*, a magazine published in English for Iranian migrants in the United States. Khalili's questionnaire focused on dreams, nostalgia, imagination and the notion of 'ghorbat'. Ghorbat is an Arabic word meaning 'being a stranger'.⁶⁰ She explained that dreams are important to Iranians. They see them as a source of inspiration and a trajectory of important messages. They occasionally use the messages received in their dreams as a social control mechanism.

Khalili found nostalgia for a place that only exists in their memories was a constant thread in the responses she received from Iranians. She indicated that the longing for the homeland that migrants experience could delay their desire to be integrated into the host society. However the issue is a generational one and the 'looking back' exists mainly amongst older

⁶⁰ Laleh Khalili, 1998, 'Mixing Memory and Desire: Iranians in the United States', *The Iranian*, [http://www.iranian.com/sections.htmlmailto:TIMES@iranian.com?subject=Khalili's Iranian-American survey](http://www.iranian.com/sections.htmlmailto:TIMES@iranian.com?subject=Khalili's%20Iranian-American%20survey). acc.2004

migrants. According to Khalili, younger migrants adapted more rapidly to the life style of the host society. This conclusion applies in this study, which found young migrants who arrived in their early years and the second generation adapted extremely well to the Australian way of life and did not experience the nostalgia felt by older migrants.

Khalili stressed that family determines individuals' identity among Iranians and although the nature of such families can be claustrophobic the family unit does not appear to be weakened by migration. She commented that the extended family is still a relevant social unit for Iranians and provides them with social and economic support.⁶¹ Khalili's family migrated to Australia when she was a child but she lives in the United States where her study was carried out. Her comments on the importance of family to Iranians corroborate Famaian's experiences and those of this study.

Heidary studied acculturation processes and categorized four different responses to the stress created by immigration: assimilated, bi-cultural, marginal and separated.⁶² He found that assimilated Iranians express difficulty with being able to retain Iranian culture in the United States and feel mostly American. Bi-cultural Iranians are identified as those migrants who have a special way of associating and identifying with Iranian and American cultures simultaneously. Heidary found that Iranians who feel neutral towards both cultures, disliking the American way of life and disappointed with other Iranians who they see as obsessed with material progress and who have forgotten their homeland, use the marginal response. Separated Iranians are the individuals who express unconditional love and longing for their country of origin. They live in a state of homesickness and nostalgia and the expressed hope that they will return to Iran some day. Heidary's framework was useful for designing the questionnaire used as the research instrument for this study.

A study on Iranians in Sweden carried out by Kaladjahi⁶³ looked at the ethnic factor in economic status. He compared the economic status of Iranian immigrants with other minority groups in Sweden, namely the Finns, Chileans, and Poles. The major indicator of economic integration of an immigrant group in a new society according to Kaladjahi is when they attain economic equality with the majority in the host society. The indicators of economic integration used by the study were unemployment, socio-economic status and income. Kaladjahi's findings indicated that the cultural distance from the host society determines the degree of economic discrimination migrant groups experience. The Finns, who had the closest

⁶¹ *Ibid.* p.4

⁶² Payam Heidary, 'Mix and Match',

⁶³ Hassan Hosseini-Kaladjahi, 1997, *Iranians in Sweden: economic, cultural and social integration*. www.su.se/forskning/disputationer/spikblad/hosseini.html. acc. 2004

culture to the Swedish host society, experienced the least amount of discrimination and the Iranians experienced the most.

Kaladjahi emphasizes the importance of cultural distance but such emphasis is rather simplistic. This study found that there are many factors that influence economic integration and they include age, language skills, educational level and family support. The other major factor that assisted the Iranian Bahá'ís was the support of their religious community and the economic opportunities that were provided for individuals through other Bahá'ís.

Iranian Baha'is in Australia

Studies on settlement experiences of minority ethnic groups in Australia, particularly those who arrived after the 1970s, are sparse. A search for published material on the immigration and settlement experiences of Iranian Bahá'ís found only two surveys. One study, carried out in the discipline of psychology by Feather, Volkmer and McKee, looked at value priorities of Australians, Australian Bahá'ís and expatriate Iranian Bahá'ís.⁶⁴ The results of this survey demonstrated that religious affiliation has a strong effect on value preferences. Both Bahá'í groups endorsed values such as maturity, benevolence and spirituality and downplayed values in the power domain. The survey found that secular Australians placed a stronger emphasis on self-direction, stimulation, maturity and hedonism than the Bahá'ís.

Davidson examined the changes in the character of the Australian Bahá'í community caused by the influx of thousands of Iranian Bahá'ís after the 1979 Revolution in Iran.⁶⁵ The study contained the findings of two surveys, the first carried out with the assistance of Local Spiritual Assemblies, the administrative committees responsible to organize the affairs of the Bahá'í community in each locality. The main instrument of this survey was a questionnaire sent to 160 localities. The second survey also used a mailed questionnaire, which was completed by 269 individual Bahá'ís from 28 different localities around Australia. The main aim of the study was explained by Davidson as:

The major objective of the study was to assess the process of integration within the Australia Bahá'í community, the role being played by the Local Spiritual Assemblies, the reactions of Persian Bahá'ís to their new social environment, and also the responses of Australian Bahá'ís to a very substantial migration

⁶⁴ Feather, Volkmer, McKee, 'A Comparative Study of the Value Priorities of Australians, Australian Baha'is and Expatriate Iranian Baha'is

⁶⁵ John Davidson, 'An Emerging Identity: The Changing Face of the Australia Baha'i Community'.

which has left them a minority in about half the metropolitan local Bahá'í communities.⁶⁶

Davidson found that the biggest problem for the groups, both Iranian and the wider Bahá'í community, revolved around language. The seriousness of the problem depended on the number of Iranians in each community. Small numbers of Iranians in a particular locality did not appear to present a problem because translations could be arranged. However when the dominant group was Iranians then most Australians felt isolated because 'everyone prefers to talk in Persian'.⁶⁷

This thesis used a different methodology to Davidson, that is personal interviews, or an oral history process. The interviews in this study were based on a prepared questionnaire but interviewees had a major influence on how the interview was conducted. This method was used because the objective of this study was to examine the immigration experiences through the migrants' perspective. Although the methodologies varied the major findings of this study were very similar to those in the study carried out by Davidson. This study found that this problem is still present although fifteen years have elapsed since Davidson's surveys were carried out.

Other concerns expressed by Davidson's respondents were about social issues for older migrants who did not mix with Australians and missed their own culture. There were some Iranians who experienced problems relating to settlement such as housing and employment. Over time these problems were less evident; that is migrants living in the country for more than five years were less likely to have problems in these areas. Young Iranians, particularly single men, who found it difficult to interact with young women in the wider community, experienced problems. Similar problems were still being experienced by some of the interviewees in this study. Davidson's study also corroborated the findings of this study that there were gradual changes, influenced by the period of residence; for example over time there was an increase in the interaction between the migrants and the wider community, more acceptance of the idea of marriage to a non-Bahá'í, and a significant increase in language skills among the migrants.

Davidson's study found that a common observation of Australian Bahá'ís about Iranians concerned their family relationships. Australians were impressed with the emphasis Iranians placed on family unity and the support and attention they gave to family members. This study corroborated this observation by finding that migrants who had significant numbers of their

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 22

families living in Australia made the most positive observations about their host society. It is evident that for Iranian migrants a family presence and family unity are basic factors in the process of successful settlement. In the study by Davidson Australians indicated that they were also impressed with the level of Iranian hospitality. This study found that Iranian hospitality was a factor in the successful settlement process of the migrants in the wider society.

Migration Theories.

Migration as a general concept is concerned with movement of people from one place to another that is in geographical terms spatial mobility.⁶⁸ There are different kinds of migration such as domestic or international, voluntary or forced. The process is usually divided into three factors defined as push, pull and hold. Economic reasons are generally the most common push factor and include labour migration, poverty and unemployment. Forced migration is created by human crises such as war or persecution by power groups. However it should be noted that the categories can rarely be sharply defined and they can overlap. This study is concerned with forced migration caused by religious persecution such as the Diaspora of the Jews or the expulsion of the Huguenots from France.

The forced mass migration out of Iran after the 1979 Revolution created what can be described as an Iranian diaspora. The size of the exodus allowed it to be compared with other diasporas for the purpose of detecting the common threads in mass migratory experiences.

Cohen's observations on diasporas were useful to this study.⁶⁹ He provided a broad view of various historical diasporas and noted the common factors such as the traumatic dispersal from the homeland, the development of a collective memory, and a creation of idealized myth about the land the refugees leave behind. Cohen looked at the commonality of the creation of a strong ethnic consciousness that is sustained over long periods, and troubled relationships within host societies. He looked at the expectations that sustain migrants during their flight, principally the hope of a creative and enriching new life in a tolerant host society. He also addressed the issue of settlement and supported other writers who believe adaptation without conflict can only occur in a society that embraces an openness or, as in the case of Australia, champions a policy of multiculturalism that values people of different cultures as settlers.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p.24

⁶⁸ Jan O.M. Broek and John W. Webb, 1978, *A Geography of Mankind*, McGraw-Hill, Sydney.p.6

⁶⁹ Robin Cohen, 1997, *Global Diasporas*, UCL Press, London.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 180

Immigration in Australia

Changing patterns of immigration in the second half of the twentieth century created multiple discourses on the topic and a flood of literature. The amount of literature made it problematical to isolate the most useful publications. This study found that for an overview of the role immigration played in Australian history the various publications by James Jupp were the most effective. His book *Immigration*, particularly the second edition, contains a comprehensive history of immigration in Australia and includes the changes both in government policies and attitudes of society towards immigration that occurred in the second half of the twentieth century.⁷¹

Literature about immigration written in the 1960s and 1970s concentrated on migration policies and on the need for improved services for migrants. Conceptual shifts occurred during this period from the idea of 'assimilation' towards 'integration' and settled on 'multiculturalism' in the 1980s. The changes culminated in the *Galbally Report* in 1978 which drew attention to the settlement needs of migrants and suggested ways in which these needs could be addressed.⁷² The attention placed on improved services benefited the Iranian Bahá'ís during the 1980s when government policies were concentrated on selection processes. In the 1980s the literature changed its emphasis from intake to settlement issues. Academic discourse argued for expansion of the migrant program or took a conservative approach that recommended restriction.

Wooden, Holton, Hugo and Sloan comment that the literature on immigration is broad ranging and rich both on the intake and the settlement sides.⁷³ Holton and Sloan observed that settlement issues have in general been treated as a separate body of literature with emphasis on government policy and the services provided for migrants.⁷⁴ Although much of the literature is about old issues and arguments it has historical value and is of particular interest to this study because it outlines the many policy changes that have taken place in the last three decades of Australian immigration.

⁷¹ James Jupp, 1998, *Immigration*, Second Edition, Oxford University Press, Melbourne

⁷² Jupp, McRobbie & York, *Settlement Needs of Small Newly Arrived Ethnic Groups*, p. 1

⁷³ Mark Wooden, Robert Holton, Graeme Hugo, Judith Sloan, 1994, *Australian Immigration: A Survey of the Issues*, Bureau of Immigration and Population Research Government Publishing Service, Canberra, p. 330

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 280

There is a common thread in the literature about immigration that stresses the complexity of issues concerned with settlement. One issue that received particular attention in Australia was the policy of trying to source migrants from countries with similar cultural backgrounds to Australia because it was felt they would assimilate more rapidly. As Kovacs and Cropley note, in the early years of the twentieth century Australia, as a receiving society, was relatively homogenous with 'high levels of self satisfaction coming close to smugness and extreme inexperience with outsiders'.⁷⁵

The emphasis on assimilation that favoured migrants similar to Australians created problems for those who came from non-English speaking backgrounds. Various writers, who were themselves migrants, provided information that indicates such a policy was short sighted and created years of distress for the individuals concerned. The problems were exacerbated because of the pressure put on them to assimilate. This social pressure was applied to migrants almost immediately after they arrived in Australia. Lorigola wrote about his experience as an Italian migrant to Australia in the early fifties and noted that the familiar refrain was 'Leave Italy where it is. Forget it. Become an Australian. Speak English.'⁷⁶

In the mid 1970s Kovacs and Cropley⁷⁷ argued that acculturation stress for migrants in Australia would increase and possibly lead to conflict unless the authorities addressed the problems associated with providing migrants with adequate facilities to assist their settlement. The conflict they were referring to was the type of conflict that occurred in previous decades during the post war migration of the 1950s and 1960s. On entry, migrants were accommodated in camps originally used as internment camps or army camps during World War II such as Bonegilla in Victoria. Cresciani blames the shortsighted policies of the government of the time who did not anticipate that privation would lead to conflict. There were riots amongst the migrants protesting against the camp conditions.⁷⁸

Kovacs and Cropley commented that adaptation couldn't occur rapidly without shared terms of reference. They emphasized what other writers have noted: that interaction between the host society and the migrants is a multi-faceted process and what was assumed to be mainly a matter of adaptation and change on the part of the migrant is rather a two way process and the most essential factor is the part played by the receiving society.⁷⁹ The

⁷⁵ M.L. Kovacs & A.J. Cropley, 1975. *Immigrants and Society*, McGraw Hill, Sydney, p.55

⁷⁶ Aldo Lorigiola, 1993, 'An Immigrant is a two-way Ambassador for Life', *Italians in Australia; Historical and Social Perspectives*, eds. Gaetano Rando and Michael Arrighi, Department of Modern Languages, University of Wollongong, p.100

⁷⁷ Kovacs & Cropley, *Immigrants and Society*, p.12

⁷⁸ Gianfranco Cresciani, 2003, *The Italians in Australia*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

⁷⁹ Kovacs and Cropley, *Immigrants and Society*, p.11

confusion that migrants experienced during settlement became known as acculturation stress and most writers agree that it occurs when the host society does not have a policy of multiculturalism and displays ethnic and economic discrimination.

Kovacs and Cropley argued that problems with settlement would increase unless the authorities addressed them from the migrants' perspective. They stressed that migrants needed assistance and access to services that would facilitate their primary and secondary integration. The primary integration that they refer to is the acquisition of satisfactory accommodation and employment. Secondary integration is through facility with education, which implies that language classes and education are needed to assist migrant families during the early years of settlement. Kovacs and Cropley pointed out that just providing a process of naturalization was not enough because immigrants may become naturalized without any real understanding of the host society's values and attitudes. Acceptance of the need for naturalization may spring solely from the belief that they can never return to their country of origin. They noted that if migrants were naturalized without sufficient understanding of the host society they could be expected to experience difficulties in their adaptation to their new surroundings.⁸⁰

Bottomley argued that the policies of the host country towards ethnic minorities are the biggest factor in reducing stress for migrants and she agreed with the ideas put forward by Kovacs and Cropley, i.e. that legislation should be in place to provide resources for migrants to assist their adaptation.⁸¹ She also believed that adequate theories have not been developed about the integration process of ethnic migrant groups in Australia.⁸² The lack of adequate theories and action arising from them became evident in the 1990s with a policy crisis on refugees and illegal immigrants and created an unsympathetic environment for migrants.

Bottomley's study of immigration was not only research based but came from her personal experience as a child of Greek immigrants. These experiences gave her an understanding of the factors that influence the rate of adaptation and those that create problems for migrants. She noted that although there are obvious factors that create conflict the greatest difficulty is experienced with behavior patterns, of both migrants and the host society, that are unwritten and understood only by each group. As a child in a migrant family she suffered pain caused by her ignorance of unwritten codes of behaviour. She quoted Oso's poignant description of being a child of immigrants in the fifties and sixties: 'Australia's great wall of indifference is

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p.7

⁸¹ Gillian Bottomley, 1992, *From Another Place: Migration and the politics of culture*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge

⁸² *Ibid.*, p.v

protected by the barbed wire of custom and the watchdogs of a savage schoolyard education'.⁸³

Bottomley argued from a feminist point of view that Government policy was influenced by attitudes in a male dominated society. She commented that awards for migrants such as 'Citizen of the Year' were usually given to men whereas the contribution made by migrant women is not appreciated or fully understood. She believed that women experience a more traumatic acculturation process because in many cases they are isolated from the outside world. She pointed out that women play a significant role in the adaptation process because, 'Although women are undoubtedly constrained and marginalized by male dominated structures, they are the creators and guardians of a symbolic universe that has an influence on the wider society'.⁸⁴ Her conclusions about female migrants experiencing discrimination were a contrast to the findings in this study. Evidence indicated that Iranian women benefited from freedoms available to them in Australia and did not experience overt discrimination. Bottomley's notion of a male dominated society is based on her experience in Australia whereas Iran is a male hegemony and consequently Iranian Bahá'í women were liberated by the relatively freer society in Australia.

Australia has traditionally accepted large numbers of migrants but as noted above, there have always been arguments for and against expanding the immigration program. Academic literature has also taken sides in this argument. The main theory in support of expanded immigration intakes during the post-war years was that a sound immigration program acts an engine for economic growth and industrialization. The other popular theory was that Australia needed to increase its population for defense purposes. Wooden, Holton, Hugo and Sloan note that after the 1970s arguments against immigration settled into a number of conservative theories which in general supported reduced immigration intakes and were based on economic factors. One favoured the reduction of expenditure on unproductive immigration; another argument was that non-English speaking immigrants were socially disadvantaged and therefore a greater drain on the public purse. An old argument that surfaced regularly indicated that migration should be reduced in hard economic times because migrants take the jobs that should be filled by Australians. Finally there was an ecological argument that expanding population, caused by migration, would put unnecessary pressure on the environment because Australia is a dry continent and can only support a small population.

⁸³ Anna Maria dell'Oso, 1992 'Scaling the Wall of Indifference', quoted in *From Another Place*, p. 135

⁸⁴ Bottomley, *From Another Place*, p. 76

Cope and Kalantzis interviewed various Australian politicians in 1999 about immigration in the twentieth century and spoke to those who held both the conservative and expansionist views on the topic:

Bob Hawke commented on the high level of immigration in the fifties and the sixties by saying: 'we all knew that migration created jobs. One of the reasons for the high employment rate in those years was the high level of migration'.⁸⁵

Whereas in the later part of the century:

Bob Carr said, 'I think we have been too ambitious in setting immigration targets beyond the capacity of the great cities to absorb their expanding populations'.⁸⁶

The lobby against increased migration included some prominent academics. Katherine Betts, Robert Birrell and Geoffrey Blainey took the conservative approach and according to Jayasuriya⁸⁷ had a hidden agenda that was a powerful denunciation of immigration policy. The conservative element created as Holton and Sloan noted 'strange bedfellows'.⁸⁸ Some argued that a reduced intake should consist of social and humanitarian cases while others wanted Asian immigration restricted. Blainey raised this issue in 1984 and the debates that followed were mainly concerned with the problematic nature of the social implications of multiculturalism. Betts argued that an immigration program designed to increase population is in error because Australia is an arid continent with poor soils and cannot support a large population. She argued that immigration figures showed a concentration of population in the major cities and complained, as did other conservatives, that urban growth would peak when a graying population will create too many dependents for the nation to support.⁸⁹ However the National Population Inquiry on demographic trends concluded that 'A minimum level might be three times the present population; the maximum might well be several times greater depending upon technological developments, expanding markets, and increased availability of resources'.⁹⁰

⁸⁵ Bill Cope and Mary Kalantzis, 2000, *A Place in the Sun: Recreating the Australian Way of Life*, Harper Collins, Sydney, p. 91

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 90

⁸⁷ Laksiri Jayasuriya, 1997, *Immigration and Multiculturalism in Australia: Selected Essays*, School of Social Work and Social Administration, University of Western Australia, p. 71

⁸⁸ Wooden, Holton, Hugo & Sloan, *Australian Immigration*, p. 282

⁸⁹ Katherine Betts, 1988, *Ideology and Immigration: Australia 1976 to 1987*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, p.24

⁹⁰ *National Population Inquiry*, 1975, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, vol.2, p.724

Hogan argued for increased immigration and was in favor of skilled migrants as being the bulk of the intake.⁹¹ According to Hugo, by the late 1980s, debates on immigration issues were conducted on a higher level than the arguments put forward in the 1970s. He saw less bigotry and less use of distorted facts to support arguments.⁹² He agreed with other writers who were concerned about the issues of immigration not being sufficiently researched. He concluded that no one theory has proved adequate to an understanding of the process of adaptation or the social impact of immigration on migrants and the host society.⁹³

Oral Histories of migrant groups.

Oral histories of migrant experiences tend to be anecdotal. The attraction of this approach is that it appears to allow the interviewee to speak directly to the reader, but this is an illusion as the interviewer mediates between the speaker and the reader, whether noticeably or not. This approach also is more powerful and evocative but the disadvantage is that it tends to be short on analysis.

Martin⁹⁴ conducted a study based on interviews with Migration Officers and migrants covering the period 1945-1985. The officers were involved with post-war migrants and worked under the racist objectives of 'White Australia'. He found that official policies began to change in the 1960s but discriminatory practices continued into the 1970s and did not improve until 1975 with a change of Government. According to Martin discrimination in favour of white migrants 'took that long to work out of the system'.⁹⁵

Lowenstein and Loh⁹⁶ used a case study approach and interviewed eighteen migrants who arrived in Australia during the period 1890 to 1970. The text is mainly material taken from transcripts. There was little attempt to analyze or comment on the material leaving the interviewees apparently to speak for themselves. However the process of interviewing and selection of excerpts makes this illusory.

Published literature using oral history of immigration in Australia tended to be concerned mainly with migrants who arrived prior to the 1970s. There is a shortage of material

⁹¹ Wooden, Holton, Hugo & Sloan, *Australian Immigration*, , p. 282

⁹² *Ibid.*, p.3

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p.19

⁹⁴ Harry Martin, 1989, *Angels and Arrogant Gods*, Commonwealth of Australia for the Australian Bicentennial Authority in 1988, Canberra.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.96

⁹⁶ Wendy Lowenstein and Morag Loh, 1977, *The Immigrants*, Penguin Books, Ringwood, Victoria.

published from the perspective of migrants of different ethnic groups who arrived in Australia after the changes in immigration policy occurring in the 1980s.

Literature on Acculturation

Acculturation studies originated in cultural anthropology but after the 1960s the studies became increasingly multi-disciplinary. There was a flood of acculturation literature published in the United States because of interest in the subject shown by different disciplines.

Olmedo found that the main problem with acculturation studies for statisticians and behavioural scientists was the difficulty of measuring the process of acculturation.⁹⁷ Padilla mentions the ambiguities in defining the terms 'acculturation' and 'assimilation' and noted the different attempts to create understanding of the terms across the various disciplines. Models were proposed that incorporated multiple variables at the cultural, ethnic, interpersonal, and interpersonal levels.⁹⁸ The models developed to study acculturation in behavioural sciences in the 1970s gradually became obsolete because of the rapidly changing patterns in immigration. Because acculturation became synonymous with assimilation the literature that focuses on the process changed with the emergence of theories of multiculturalism. However theories about how multiculturalism works and what impact it has on the migrants and the host society are still mostly inadequate and more research is needed in this field.

Recent texts concerned with adaptation and acculturation have a common theme because they all appear to agree that the process is less subject to problems if the host society has a policy of cultural plurality or multiculturalism in place. Social psychologist John .W. Berry was able to summarize effectively the beneficial effects of a policy of multiculturalism based on the Canadian experience:

Multiculturalism benefits the morale and self-esteem for the members of all groups, arising from the knowledge that one's ethno-cultural traditions are being considered; it gives a sense of security arising from the knowledge that a primary prevention program is in place and enforced; builds a sense of collective esteem derived from the citizens of a country that vigorously promotes human rights internationally and assists the increased bi-culturalism of many individuals within Canada.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Esteban L. Olmedo, 1978, 'Quantitative Models of Acculturation: An Overview', *Acculturation Theory, Models and Some New Findings*, ed. Amado M. Padilla, AAAS Selected Symposium no. 39 Westview Press, Boulder Colorado, p. 29

⁹⁸ Amado M. Padilla, 1980, (ed.) *Acculturation Theory, Models and Some New Findings*, AAAS Selected Symposium no. 39, Westview Press, Boulder, Colorado, p. 1

Berry has published articles over a period of thirty years on social and cultural change and varieties of cultural adaptation and acculturation.¹⁰⁰ He is recognized as a senior figure in acculturation studies, particularly with the work done on first and second generation youth and their acculturation and adaptation processes. Berry designed a broadly based framework for the study of acculturation. The framework included details of the individuals and the group in the country of origin and the country of settlement, the coping strategies used by migrants during their adaptation process and factors of identity construction including long term outcomes. This framework was useful for aspects of this study because it did not exclude the possibility of using other theories.¹⁰¹ It stresses the importance of including a study of both the migrant group and the individuals within the group. These suggestions were followed in this study.

Ethnicity

The term 'ethnicity' became a convenient term to define the different groups of people of various cultures who migrated into receiving countries in the second half of the twentieth century. Iranian Bahá'ís are relatively few in number and have different characteristics to other ethnic groups but were listed as Middle Eastern people in the 1970s. By 1986 census figures included Iranians as a separate ethnic group and by 2001 Iranian Baha'is were given a separate status. For example, *The Australian People: An Encyclopedia of the Nation, Its people and Their Origins* edited by James Jupp included a passage on Iranians and mentions the Iranian Baha'is as a special group.¹⁰² The section in the encyclopaedia on the Iranian experience notes that there were small numbers of Iranians in Australia prior to the 1979 Revolution and that this group generally was pulled to Australia for economic reasons. The second wave of Iranians came to Australia seeking to escape Iran because of persecution. The largest group of these migrants were Iranian Baha'is. Others left Iran to avoid the problems

⁹⁹ Michael Harris Bond, 1998, *Unity in Diversity: Orientation and Strategies for Building a Harmonious Multicultural Society*. Keynote address for the conference on Multiculturalism, Diversity in Action Held at the University of Taru, Estonia, May 6, 1998.

<http://baha'i-library.org/unpub.articles/unity.strategies.html>, acc. 2004

¹⁰⁰ John W. Berry, 1974 'Social and Cultural Change', *Handbook of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, eds. H.C. Triandis and R. Brislin, vol. 5, Allyn and Bacon, Boston.

¹⁰¹ John W. Berry, 1980, 'Acculturation as varieties of adaptation' *Acculturation: Theory, models and findings* ed. A Padilla, Boulder, Colorado, pp. 9-25

¹⁰² Jupp, *The Australian People*: pp 441-443

caused by the war between Iran and Iraq in the 1980s. Among the Iranians in Australia other than the Baha'is there are different groups divided by culture, language and religion such as the Farsi, Kurds, Turks, Turkman, or Balooch.¹⁰³ Most of the population in Iran is Shi'ite Moslem and among them are a smaller number of Sunni Moslems. The Iranian Bahá'ís originated from a number of ethnic groups, for example, Iranians with Jewish ancestors, but the majority originally came from a Shi'ite background.

The classification of the Iranian Bahá'ís as an ethnic group can be confusing because of their religious identity, which puts them in the same category as other Bahá'ís. However this study acknowledges that Iranian Bahá'ís are an ethnic group because in addition to their religion they share a common language and a common ancestral homeland, but the inclusive nature of their religion prevents them from becoming an isolated and exclusive group in the host society. As Hassall, the leading authority on the history of the Baha'i Faith in Australia, noted: 'Although Persian Bahá'ís share an ethnic and religious identity, aspects of both their culture and religious beliefs restrain the community from forming a homogenous, insular and ethnic minority'.¹⁰⁴

Schermerhorn published texts on ethnicity and identity¹⁰⁵ and noted the various directions that ethnic research took in the twentieth century as did Ager,¹⁰⁶ Cohen,¹⁰⁷ Guibernau and Rex¹⁰⁸. Overall the increase in refugees on a global scale caused a renewed interest in theories about ethnicity. The use of ethnicity as a classification has created more emphasis on culture and lifestyle than on national origin. A generally accepted idea of ethnicity by the 1990s was:

An ethnic group perceives itself and is perceived by others to be different in some combination of the following traits: language, religion, race and ancestral homeland with its related culture.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰³ *Ibid*, p. 442

¹⁰⁴ Hassall, 'Persian Baha'is in Australia', p.62

¹⁰⁵ R.A. Schermerhorn, 1970, *Comparative Ethnic Relations: Theory and Research*, Random House, London, p.50

¹⁰⁶ Ager, *Refugees*, passim.

¹⁰⁷ Cohen, *Global Diasporas*, passim.

¹⁰⁸ Monserrat Guibernau and John Rex, 1997 (eds.) *The Ethnicity Reader: Nationalism, Multi-culturalism and Migration*, Polity Press, Cambridge.

¹⁰⁹ J. Milton Yinger, 1981, 'Towards a theory of assimilation and dissimilation', quoted in *Sociology: Themes and Perspectives, Australian Edition*, 1996 eds. Michael Haralambos, Robert van Krieken, Philip Smith, Martin Holborn, Longman, Melbourne, p. 639

Literature on ethnicity used several categories to identify the causes of ethnicity. For example, Edward Shils proposed an approach that ethnicity was ‘a primordial attachment to territory’ that included a common history and culture and was an inevitable result of human social life.¹¹⁰ The mobilization theory moved away from the inevitability of ethnicity towards the notion that ethnic identities emerge from political processes when politicians, and especially dictators, use the symbols of ethnic identity to further their own agendas. Examples of this are policies adopted by the Nazis towards the Jews and other minorities and in Bosnia, where the Serbs embarked on a policy of ‘ethnic cleansing’.¹¹¹ Neither of these approaches are applicable to the Iranian Bahá’ís because their identity is not related to territory. Political processes were not responsible for the emergence of the group. However the group share a nationality, a language and a religious identity and some observers saw the religion as a movement protest against the conditions that existed in Iran at the time of its emergence.

Schemerhorn was a consistent exponent of a dialectical approach to inter-group relationships. He stressed features such as reciprocal patterns of interactions between superordinates and subordinates i.e. the dominant and the less powerful group, and how they are interlinked. He maintained that subordinates could retain and preserve distinctive traditions such as language, religion and recreation and the values associated with them. From these ideas he developed a framework for the study of acculturation based on a theory of centrifugal/centripetal process. According to Schemerhorn centrifugal orientations are expressed in demands for endogamy or ‘separatist associations’, an inward looking approach and a restricted range of occupations. Centripetal orientations adopt cultural trends that accept common values and styles of life that are outward looking. Although he stressed that centripetal/centrifugal orientations are a matter of degree the framework is too simplistic and places a rather rigid constraint on the varieties of adaptation that later studies reveal. But his ideas are of interest to this study because McKay used them as a framework for his study on three generations of Lebanese Christians in Sydney.¹¹² This particular group is similar in some respects to the Iranian Bahá’ís.

McKay identified the Catholic Lebanese population as being centrifugal or ideally adaptive to the official policy of the Australian government before the 1970s, based on the notion of assimilation. The Lebanese appeared to be willing to leave behind their own

¹¹⁰ Edward Shils, 1957, ‘Primordial, personal, sacred and civil ties’, quoted in *Sociology: Themes and Perspectives*, p. 640

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 640

¹¹² Jim McKay, 1989 *The Pheonician Farewell: Three generations of Lebanese Christians in Australia* Ashwood House, Melbourne

customs and integrate into the Australian way of life. Other groups, according to McKay, such as the Ukrainians, Poles and Croats were centripetal in orientation and tried to preserve their ethnic Catholic life and would not identify with existing Catholic parishes. They formed their own congregations where they could to preserve their own language and particular style of Christianity.

McKay developed theories on migration and ethnicity after studying Lebanese Christians.¹¹³ He argued that the previous approaches to ethnicity, that is the 'primordial' and the 'mobilization', are not necessarily opposites but are inadequate categories. He proposed a matrix approach that combined the two and distinguished five approaches to ethnicity. These are ethnic traditionalists, ethnic militants, ethnic manipulators, symbolic ethnics and pseudo ethnics. McKay suggests that ethnic traditionalists are held together by a common history and they encourage their children to socialize within the group to maintain their distinctive culture. As an example of this he cites the Tunisian Jews in Israel. Ethnic militants are those who struggle for economic and political goals such as the Quebec separatists. Symbolic ethnicity is a weaker tie and has little impact on the ordinary lives of individuals and their political outlook. In this group people might attend an occasional cultural event and in Australia one such group would be the Irish who occasionally attend a St. Patrick's Day parade. Ethnic manipulators are similar to ethnic militants but have weaker ties to political and economic agendas and McKay places the Scottish Nationalists in this category. Pseudo ethnics, according to McKay, are those who use an identity to create a group such as secessionists, for example the Appalachian Americans.¹¹⁴ Although these categories widen the definition of ethnicity they are not applicable to the Iranian Bahá'ís.

McKay argued that Lebanese Christians are not an ethnic group but an ethnic category. He commented that most ethnic groups tend to be self-contained and cluster together for economic and social support; they maintain a cohesive relationship and cling to the culture of their country of origin. The Lebanese, he concluded, did not cluster in groups in the city. When they first arrived they settled in non-metropolitan areas for economic reasons and depended mainly on their families for social support. They became involved in the major institutions of Australian life and by the second generation were more concerned with being upwardly mobile than being part of a group with an ethnic identity.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p.1

¹¹⁴ James McKay, 1982, 'An exploratory synthesis of primordial and mobilizationist approaches to ethnic phenomena', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 4, pp. 395-420

McKay's conclusions are similar to the findings of this study. Like the Lebanese the Iranian Bahá'ís, at least in the first twenty years, did not cluster together for economic and social support. They also depended to some degree on family support and gradually became involved in major institutions such as universities.

Andrew and Trevor Batrouney also studied the Lebanese Christians and provide more parallels between Lebanese and Iranians.¹¹⁵ For example, like the Iranians, Lebanese migration to Australia occurred in separate waves. According to the Batrouneys the Lebanese migration was in response to religious persecution in the first instance and economic and politic upheaval in the second.

Literature about ethnic groups in Australia includes texts on the larger immigrant groups such as Italians¹¹⁶ and Greeks and a great deal of work has been published on Chinese immigrants.¹¹⁷ However literature about groups who are more recent arrivals from the Middle East is not readily available.

The work done by the Centre for Immigration and Multicultural Studies in the Research school of social sciences at The Australian National University in the late 1980s produced material on the settlement needs of small newly arrived ethnic groups.¹¹⁸ This research was valuable for this study because it posited a framework through which the settlement needs of the Iranian Bahá'ís could be examined. The use of this framework provided a way to look at whether the needs of this particular group of migrants were met during their settlement process.

Iranians or Persians in Australia.

The Iranians who settled in Sydney after the Revolution were concerned that their culture might be lost as they became integrated into Australia society and a group of them formed 'The Persian Cultural Foundation of Australia' with an agenda to promote a better understanding of their culture. The Foundation organized a Seminar on Persian Studies held in Sydney from 28 October to 6 November 1994 during the Mehregan Persian Cultural Festival. Seminar papers were presented on various aspects of Iranian culture. It also included

¹¹⁵ Andrew and Trevor Batrouney, 1985, *The Lebanese in Australia*, AE Press, Melbourne, p.2

¹¹⁶ Daphne Phillips, 1974, 'Italians and Australians in the Ovens Valley', *Social Change in Australia*, ed. D. Edgar, Cheshire, Melbourne, p. 642

¹¹⁷ Diana Giese, 1997, *Astronauts, Lost Souls and Dragons*, University of Queensland, Brisbane.

¹¹⁸ Jupp, McRobbie & York, *Settlement Needs of Small Newly Arrived Ethnic Groups*, pp. 11-12

some studies on Iranians in Sydney. The material from this seminar is the most informative material that could be found on the topic.¹¹⁹ The seminar papers noted that the influx of Iranians into Australia since the late 1970s has resulted in a distinctive minority group. One paper, noted that they were first officially numbered as a separate group in 1981.

The papers presented at the Mehregan festival were useful for the statistics on the Iranian community in Sydney not available from other sources. The festival presented Iranians in a secular way disregarding religious difference. It represented that part of Iranian society that does not focus only on Islamic history and culture but includes the culture that existed before the Arabian conquest in the seventh century A.D. and continued until 1979.

Religion and Ethnic Identity

Religion and Ethnic Identity: An Australian Study,¹²⁰ included articles on minority religious groups in Australia including the Iranian Bahá'ís because they are categorized as an ethnic group by the Australian authorities. Articles in this journal are of interest to this study because they are concerned with small groups in Australia that share a religious and ethnic identity. Rex and Guibernau¹²¹ in their studies on ethnicity support the common thread in these articles, that religious identity endures longer than ethnic identity. Valentine Aghjani, a journalist who carried out a study on Assyrian Christians¹²², also believed a political identity disappears with time but a cultural and religious identity endures. He noted that although Assyrian Christians have not had a political identity for two thousand years they have clung to their heritage, language, customs and traditional belief systems.

Abdul Khaliq Fazal, previously a migration agent who lived in Melbourne for thirty years and was the Minister for Public Works in Afghanistan, supports this theory in his article on Afghan Moslems who settled in Central Australia during the middle of the nineteenth century. He commented that over time the Afghans tended to lose their cultural identity but clung to their religious identity for several generations as a survival mechanism.¹²³

123 Garry Trompf, Morteza Honary, Homer Abramian, 1994, Mehregan in Sydney. Seminar in Persian Studies during the Mehregan Persian Cultural Festival held on 28th October to 6 November 1994. Held in State Library of N.S.W.

120 *Religion and Ethnic Identity: An Australian Study*, ed. Aba Wade Ata, Vols. I-III, 1989
www.biblioz.com/b25762738906.html

121 Rex and Guibernau, *The Ethnicity Reader*.

122 Valentine Aghajani, 1989, 'The Assyrian Church: History and Identity in Australia,' *Religion and Ethnic Identity: An Australian Study*, Vol III, p. 143

123 A Khaliq Fazal, 1989 'Afghans, Their Culture and Religion in Australia'. *Religion and Identity: An Australian Study* Vol. 111 p. 115

Niva Abdelkaddous, a spokesman for the Coptic Church in Melbourne,¹²⁴ is in agreement with other writers who observe that religion and ethnicity play an important role in the adaptation of an immigrant group. His article about the Coptic Orthodox Christians, who migrated to Australia when political and economic problems caused them to leave Egypt in the 1960s, noted that most of the migrants were middle class and well educated people. According to Abdelkaddous, since settlement these migrants have resisted the notion of assimilation and clung to their traditional value system that supported family life, community and religious practice.

Hassall noted that although the Iranian Baha'is share an ethnic as well as a religious identity they are not an exclusive group. They believe in an 'emerging global society' and have not formed an ethnic community within the wider Australian community. He believes that the issue of religion and ethnic identity in relation to the Bahá'í Faith merits further study because the Iranian Bahá'ís in Australia are not homogenous culturally, economically or in their degree of education.¹²⁵

The bulk of published oral history about migrant groups in Australia is concerned with migrants who arrived prior to the 1970s. Although studies of particular ethnic groups such as the Irish, Chinese, Italians, Greeks and Lebanese have been carried out, as stressed earlier, only a few studies have been done on the smaller and more recently arrived groups. Only a limited supply of material existed that was written from the perspective of the migrants who arrived in Australia after the 1980s. It seems obvious that the inclusion of studies written from the point of view of newly arrived migrants should be essential to any discourse that develops theories on the settlement process of ethnic migrant groups. Policies based on the past experiences of migrants have proved to be inadequate to deal with the more recent migrant groups such as those from the Middle East. This neglect became evident in the 1990s when a crisis in policy on refugees and illegal immigrants created a more hostile environment for migrants. This study attempts to present settlement issues from the migrants' point of view. It also examines the process of successful settlement in a multicultural society and provides information on the factors that influence this process.

¹²⁴ Nivin Abdelkaddous, 1989 'The Coptic Church in Australia: Identity and Ethnicity' Religion and Ethnic Identity: An Australian Study, Vol. II, p.128

¹²⁵ Hassall, 'Outpost of a World Religion' pp. 314-338

CHAPTER THREE

IMMIGRATION IN AUSTRALIA – AN OVERVIEW

Immigration, since the arrival of the First Fleet in 1788, has been a central theme of Australian history. The non-indigenous population of Australia has been largely created by successive waves of immigration since the beginning of recorded European settlement. There are two major types of immigration, permanent or temporary. Temporary migration includes many different types of migration such as tourism and itinerant workers. The distinction is made because global migration has been motivated by reasons other than settlement. Contemporary Australia was founded as a group of British colonies and the earliest were established by using convicts as a labour force.

Colonialism created different kinds of migration. Millions of workers were moved from one country to another to develop resources. Labourers from India were shipped to East Africa and the Caribbean to work on plantations or in mines. African slaves were moved to the Caribbean or North and South America to work on plantations. In the twentieth century workers moved from poorer countries to more developed ones. For example migrants from Turkey, Greece and North Africa moved to Germany and France as guest workers during periods of labour shortages. Many of these migrants eventually settled in their host societies but that was not the original agenda of those who hired them. In colonial Australia there was an acute labour shortage and this shortfall was partly made up by indentured workers from India, Java, the Pacific Islands and China. Many of these workers returned to their country of origin. The majority of the migrants however came as intending settlers.

In Australia the history of immigration can be divided into five periods: 1788 – 1850, the years of the establishment of penal colonies when some free settlers were men of capital who used convict labour; 1850 – 1888, the period of free migration when the typical migrant was a miner, a skilled artisan or clerical worker; 1888 – 1948, the era of restricted migration and establishment of the White Australia policy; 1948 - 1960s, the period when the need for more labour saw non-English speaking Europeans as the most common source of migrants; and 1970 to 1990, the period when Asians and other ethnic groups, previously excluded, were admitted in larger numbers.

Ethnic migrants

In this chapter the emphasis will be on tracking the arrival and settlement processes of ethnic groups rather than the Anglo-Celtic majority. Ethnic groups are not just those differentiated by race. An ethnic group is divided from other groups through shared characteristics such as language, religion, the same ancestral homeland with its related culture, or a shared history. A knowledge of ethnic groups in Australia is an important part of the nation's history. As Barry York commented 'ethnic history strengthens Australian history by helping to portray a more complete picture of the past'.¹²⁶

Although Australia was initially settled as a penal colony, from the early nineteenth century there was a policy of nation building through European migration. The majority of the early settlers were predominantly Anglo-Celtic but less well known is the fact that travelling on the First Fleet were at least eight black people, the majority from Africa and the others from Jamaica, Madagascar and North America. According to family traditions five others are believed to have been black but their ethnicity has never been confirmed. There were nine Jews of whom the best known is Esther Abrahams, the wife of Lieutenant George Johnson who later acted as Governor of the Colony when Governor Bligh was sent to England.¹²⁷ From the time of the First Fleet until 1888 Anglo Celtic settlers were the dominant group but among them different ethnic groups played a role in building a new nation.

Irish migrants

Irish migrants, mainly working class people, struggled through issues of religious prejudice and hostility to form what could be described as Australia's first 'ethnic group'. Jupp argues that the turbulent history in Ireland which separated them from other groups in the British Isles was a factor in their being regarded as an ethnic group.¹²⁸ According to Jayasuriya 'the way these conflicts were handled determined to a large extent the 'ground rules' for dealing with, and managing, 'ethnic relations' that were to arise with other groups later on.'¹²⁹

The tensions from within, caused by sectarian differences between Protestants and Catholics, were aggravated by the antagonism of the Establishment towards the Irish migrants.

¹²⁶ York, *Ethno-Historical Studies in a Multicultural Australia*, p. 27

¹²⁷ Mollie Gillen, 1989, *The Founders of Australia: A Biographical Dictionary of the First Fleet*, Library of Australian History Sydney, Appendix 4, p. 425

¹²⁸ Jupp, *Immigration*, p. 44

¹²⁹ Jayasuriya, *Immigration and Multiculturalism in Australia*, p. 52.

The Irish on their part disliked and mistrusted the English and were regarded as rebellious and disorderly. That social divide between Protestants and Catholics lingered in Australian society into the twentieth century. Until the 1830s the majority of free Irish, that is those who were not convicts, were the wives and children of convicts or ex-convicts, brought out in Government assisted schemes or at the cost of the men themselves. However in the period from 1840s to the 1880s, the heyday of the assisted Government passages, many free settlers from Ireland arrived. They were able to take advantage of the assisted passage scheme for family reunion. The Irish migrants to Australia were not as poor as those who migrated to America. The price of passage and a selection process prevented a flood of impoverished and illiterate Irish migrating to Australia. Those who came were mostly people whose economic and social status was threatened by change and a reduction of tillage. Many Irish migrants in those years possessed enough capital to enable them to choose the regions in which they settled and the employment they took.¹³⁰

German migrants

Other than the migrants from the British Isles Germans were probably the largest group of migrants who came to Australia in the nineteenth century. Among them were several groups who experienced a degree of religious persecution in their homeland. One group were Lutherans, known as the 'Old Lutherans' who were pulled to South Australia seeking the freedom to worship in their own way. They wanted to use the liturgy of their choice and left Prussia in 1838 with their Pastor August Kavel and settled in rural areas.¹³¹ These settlers were anxious to preserve their own cultural and religious identity and one place where they lived, Handorf in South Australia, retains a German character up to the present day. Other German settlers eventually became absorbed into the wider society.

Other Non-English speaking European migrants.

Although small ethnic groups sought freedom of religion the majority of the settlers in Australia in the nineteenth century migrated for economic reasons. Opportunities for immigration were created by the availability of land, the discovery of minerals and as

¹³⁰ Bob Reece, 1991, 'Writing about the Irish in Australia', *The Irish Emigrant Experience in Australia*, eds: John O'Brien and Pauric Travers, Poolberg Press, Dublin, p. 236

¹³¹ Ian A. Harmstorf, 1988, 'God Ordered Their Estate', *The German Experience of Australia 1833-1938*, Aust. Ass. of von Humboldt Fellows, Flinders University, South Australia, p. 19

mentioned earlier the great need for labour. Europeans who migrated to Australia such as the Scandinavians, Poles, Russians and Hungarians were independent settlers. These migrants did not attempt to establish themselves as separate ethnic groups and became part of the wider society. The rapid assimilation of Scandinavians and other Northern European settlers could be explained by the absence of family migration, and intermarriage with other groups. The result was that their distinctiveness disappeared and their ethnic identity gradually lessened.



Photo 1. German Family and their cottage in Handorf 1890. ¹³²

Jewish migrants

Small numbers of Jewish settlers arrived in the nineteenth century and then a wave of Jewish immigration occurred in the early twentieth century before the Second World War. Although voices were raised against the intake of a large number of Jewish migrants in the late 1930s, about 7,000 refugees found sanctuary in Australia. They were mostly skilled middle class individuals who achieved a degree of respect from the wider community. Some leaders in the

¹³² Josef Vondra, 1981 *German Speaking Settlers in Australia*, Cavalier Press, Melbourne, .131

Jewish community were concerned about loss of identity but their emphasis on marrying within the religious community enabled them to retain a recognizable ethnic identity. There was no overall strategy to avoid being distinctive except for the religious issues such as not intermarrying with other religions, eating kosher food, and not opening their businesses on the Sabbath. In their community life they endeavored to 'resist the honey and the sting of the wider world'.¹³³

After the Second World War tens of thousands of Jewish migrants, Holocaust survivors, arrived in Australia and were assisted in their settlement process by established Jewish communities in major centers.

Italian migrants

In the six colonies established in Australia in the nineteenth century the different ethnic groups settled in regions where work was available. A small number of Italians came to Australia as missionaries in the early nineteenth century and they were followed by larger numbers who travelled in boat loads from different parts of Italy. For example eighty four immigrants from Sardinia were attracted to Australia by the discovery of gold in Victoria. Other Italian migrants, mostly peasants or working class people, on their arrival in the country tended to move around various locations looking for casual work.¹³⁴ Many moved into regions where fishing industries developed or to agricultural areas such as the Riverina where grapes were grown or in Queensland where they worked in the sugar cane industry. By 1901 there were about 1000 Italians living in Australia. The numbers may not be accurate because the Italian migrants were scattered in rural areas and many were not registered on electoral rolls.¹³⁵

Prejudice against Italians was prevalent because they were willing to work for low wages and were suspected of criminal activity. King O'Malley, who laid the foundation stone of Canberra in 1913, alleged that 'Italians walk with a razor in their jacket and a knife in their boots'. Newspapers printed articles vilifying them. A 1926 edition of *The Smith's Weekly* printed insults such as the Italians were 'a dirty Dago pest'. They were also referred to as 'that

¹³³ Hilary L. Rubenstein, 1991, *The Jews in Australia: A thematic History*, Vol.1. William Heinemann, Melbourne, p. 17

¹³⁴ Gianfranco Cresciani, 2003, *The Italians in Australia*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, p.33

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 54

greasy flood of Mediterranean scum that seeks to defile and debase Australia'.¹³⁶ Italians were the largest group of immigrants from Southern Europe seeking refuge from their war torn countries after World War II. Between 1947 and 1950 twenty thousand immigrated to Australia and by the early 1970s over 300,000 were settled in Australia making them the largest non-English speaking group of migrants.¹³⁷



Photo 2 Italian Family – Victoria Circa 1890¹³⁸

Greek migrants

People of Greek origin are the second largest group of non-British population in Australia. They began to arrive as migrants in the 1850s, originally as seamen or unskilled labourers, and became porters in the markets or agricultural labourers.¹³⁹ The majority came from the Greek islands with more than half of them from Kythera, Ithaca and Kastellorizo. They soon became involved in small businesses such as fish shops, cafes and green grocers in urban areas and country towns. The Greek communities, before the 1950s, were established through chain

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 57

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 136

¹³⁸ Michael Dugan and Josel Szwarc, 1984 *There Goes the Neighbourhood: Australia's Migrant Experience*, McMillan, Melbourne, p.92

¹³⁹ Charles Price, (ed.) 1975 *Greeks in Australia*, Australian National University Press, Canberra, p. 6

migration, a movement of ‘relatives, friends and compatriots’ sponsored by successful settlers.¹⁴⁰ Their strong family ties tended to create cluster communities in urban areas and by 1971 only 7 per cent of Greeks in Australia were outside metropolitan areas.¹⁴¹

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Photo 3. 1987 Greek family from Silkwood¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 21

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 6

¹⁴² The Tasakissiris family, George, Anthoula, Mick and Anna, Silkwood, Q’ld in 1987. Mick was Australian born but his family originally came from the Island of Kastellorizo. His wife Antoula was born in Kalymnos. The photo shows the contrast between Greeks living in Australia in 1987 photo 3 and the refugee family in photo 4 who left Katellorizo in 1944. The refugee family look very tense whereas the family who have lived in Australia for two generations looked relaxed. Alexakis & Janiszewski, *In Their Own Image*, p.93



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Photo 4. Greek Refugee Family ¹⁴³

¹⁴³ The Karageorge family came from Kastellorizian, an island bombed by the British during World War II. This family and other island people were shipped to Palestine and housed in a refugee camp before migrating to Australia in 1949. Effy Alexakis & Leonard Janiszewski, 1998, *In Their Own Image*, : *Greek Australians*, Hale & Iremonger, Victoria, p. 122

Macedonians.

The Macedonians, who were regarded as Greek, began to arrive in the nineteenth century. In 1921 there were only fifty living in Australia but by 1940 the number had grown to 1,290.¹⁴⁴ The Macedonians tended to move into rural areas and among the earlier settlers the most common occupation was market gardening.¹⁴⁵ It was a tradition that Macedonian men went overseas to earn money and when they earned enough they returned home but in Australia, they prospered in tobacco farming and gradually brought out their wives and the rest of their families.¹⁴⁶

Southern European groups were all pressured by policies of assimilation but by the 1970s. were accepted as part of the established multicultural society. The Italians and Greeks are the largest ethnic communities in Australia and are among the most researched groups of immigrants.

Indian and Afghan migrants

In the nineteenth century the British government took a laissez-faire approach to the labour market so that employers had the right to employ whomever they wanted.¹⁴⁷ During the 1830s some ethnic immigrants arrived through schemes of 'indentured coolie labour'. Indian indentured labourers were brought to Australia by pastoralists in the 1830s and 1840s and were usually Dhangars from the mountainous areas of Bengal. Independent Indian immigrants came in a later period and most originated in the Punjab or other places in the north of India. Individuals labelled as Indians or Afghans were often Pathans, tribesmen from within the late nineteenth century boundaries of Afghanistan, who arrived as camel handlers.¹⁴⁸ They were involved in exploration or transport work on pastoral properties in the outback.¹⁴⁹ The people from the Punjab settled in Northern New South Wales and Queensland and although they were either Sikhs or Moslems the local Australians called them 'Hindoos'. They tended to work on banana plantations or in the sugar cane industry.

¹⁴⁴ Peter Hill, 1989, *The Macedonians in Australia*, Hesperian Press, Carlisle, W.A. p. 14

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 21

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 69

¹⁴⁷ Cope, Castles, Kalantzis, *Immigration, Ethnic Conflicts and Social Cohesion*, p.3

¹⁴⁸ Christine Stevens, 1989, *Tin Mosques & Ghantowns: A History of Afghan Cameldrivers in Australia*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, p. 2

¹⁴⁹ Marie M. de Lepervanche, 1984, *Indians in a White Australia: An account of race, class and Indian immigration to Eastern Australia*. George Allen and Unwin, Sydney, p. 12

Lebanese migrants

Migrants from Lebanon began to arrive in small numbers in the 1880s and 1890s. They were pushed out of their homes by a combination of political, economic and religious factors. In the beginning those who came to Australia were either single men or groups of males that included married men who left their families behind. According to McKay most of them did not intend to remain. However if they stayed they then set in process a chain migration and brought wives and children, then parents, uncles and aunts and eventually other elderly relatives to Australia. Among the migrants from Lebanon there was a handful of Druze who settled in rural areas along the Murray River. Other Lebanese migrants were Melkite Christians from Zahle and Baalbeck and the majority were from towns and villages along the coastal plain between Beirut and Tripoli. They were either Maronite or Orthodox Christians.¹⁵⁰ These Lebanese migrants who arrived in the nineteenth century tended to settle in rural areas in order to find employment as hawkers. They opened small shops and as other family members arrived they worked in the family business.

Chinese migrants

The rapid growth in Chinese immigration was fuelled by gold rushes that began in the 1850s after gold was discovered in Victoria. The antagonism to their presence on the goldfields had a deep and intense effect on Australian society. From the beginning there was hostility towards the Chinese miners. They were too different. They were physically, socially and culturally divided from any other ethnic group and they were a serious economic threat to other miners because of their ability to work hard and to endure difficult conditions. The Chinese were also disliked because they were single men who came with the intention of making money and returning to China. This was resented because it was seen as taking wealth out of the country. The majority were hired by labour entrepreneurs and came on what was known as 'credit ticket'. They paid off the cost of their transportation with their earnings.¹⁵¹ They were also perceived as a threat because of their numbers; they accounted for nearly 8% of the population in Victoria and nearly 20% of the men in that colony. Race riots against Chinese miners in

¹⁵⁰ McKay, *Phoenician Farewell*, p.30

¹⁵¹ Jayasuriya, *Immigration and Multiculturalism in Australia*, p. 55

1857 at Buckland River were pivotal events that developed into an expression of white people protesting against 'coloured immigration'.



Photo 5. Chinese Temple, Breakfast Creek, Brisbane 1886 ¹⁵²

The great fear of 'the teeming millions' of Chinese had been as Jayasuriya notes:

....firmly inscribed in the Australian psyche. It was this fear and expression of nationalistic fervour and sentiment that culminated in the Immigration Restriction Act of 1901 decreeing that non-whites were not welcome as permanent settlers.¹⁵³

¹⁵² Michael Dugan & Josel Szwarc, 1984 *There Goes the Neighbourhood*, MacMillan, Melbourne p. 85

¹⁵³ Jayasuriya, *Immigration and multiculturalism*, , p.56

The rising tide of racial prejudice shown towards the Chinese eventually caused restrictive legislation in the 1880s and became widespread through all the colonies by 1888. A critical issue in this restrictive attitude towards immigration was the rise of an organized labour movement that wanted to either maintain or raise wage levels and living standards. If an ethnic group of people was prepared to work for lower wages, it was a threat to other workers that led towards the 'White Australia' approach to immigration after Federation in 1901. In addition there were many more Chinese males in the Colony than females and the threat of miscegenation caused by sexual union between Chinese men and white women was considered to be a serious danger.¹⁵⁴

Restrictions on Ethnic migrants 1888-1948.

Proposals to restrict ethnic immigration were a constant issue in the nineteenth century. As Cope, Castles and Kalantzis noted, Bills attempting to restrict non-European immigration were proposed in the New South Wales Parliament several times prior to 1860. Partially restrictive legislation was approved but it was repealed in 1867.¹⁵⁵ The British Government was against the idea of restricted immigration, particularly that directed at the Chinese, and their opposition was the main reason why the legislation was removed. The immigration of ethnic groups continued through the 1860s and 1870s. However in the 1880s the issue of restricted immigration was revived and finally passed in all the colonies.

Sir Henry Parkes, later regarded as the 'Father of Federation', speaking to the New South Wales Parliament on the *Influx of Chinese Restriction Bill of 1888* said:

I maintain that no class of persons should be admitted here, so far as we can reasonably exclude the them, who cannot come amongst us, take up our rights, perform on a ground of equality all our duties and share in our august and lofty work of founding a free nation I contend that if this young nation is to maintain the fabric of its liberties unassailed and unimpaired, it cannot admit into its population any element that of necessity is of an inferior nature and character.¹⁵⁶

Immigration restrictions for all 'coloured races' were proposed by an inter-colonial conference in 1896. Subsequent Bills however were opposed by the Imperial British Government and it was recommended to the colonies that immigration restriction could be

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 55

¹⁵⁵ Cope, Castles and Kalantzis, *Immigration and Ethnic Conflicts*, p. 3

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 4

carried out through an educational test in the form of a written application and this became the origin of the 'dictation test' which was discriminatory towards those regarded as 'coloured people.' The dictation test was usually in English but examiners could also choose another European language and in this way people considered to be undesirable migrants could be excluded even if they were literate in English.¹⁵⁷

The ideology of nation building contained an underlying policy that settlers should have similar racial and cultural characteristics to the people in Britain. This conflict over desirable settlers created the pressure for restricted immigration and finally resulted in the implementation of the White Australia ideology. After Federation two laws were passed in 1901. The first was the *Immigration Restriction Act* and the second the *Pacific Island Labourers Act*. The second established a time limit for the repatriation of South Sea Island labourers.¹⁵⁸

These two pieces of legislation led the nation, until the late 1940s, into becoming almost but never completely mono-cultural. As Jupp observed there was an assumption that the best society was 'one in which the citizens were as much like each other as possible'.¹⁵⁹ According to Jayasuriya the Act of 1901:

..... remains unsurpassed as the single most important government policy decision in the field of Australian ethnic relations. The effect of this legislation was not unravelled until the 1970s.¹⁶⁰

Migrants after World War II – 1948-1960s

World War II changed immigration to Australia because of the prevailing mood of reform and post war reconstruction. In the late 1940s waves of both Northern and Southern Europeans arrived as migrants and had to be absorbed into Australian society. The migrants from Europe, dislocated by the war were known as 'displaced persons' or in popular vernacular DPs.

The Australian government established the Department of Immigration to deal with the flood of migrants and at the same time the concept of assimilation was established. The first

¹⁵⁷ Haralambos, et. al, *Sociology*, p. 635

¹⁵⁸ Cope, Castles and Kalantzis, *Immigration, Ethnic Conflicts and Social Cohesion*, AGPS p. 5

¹⁵⁹ James Jupp, 1997, 'Immigration and National Identity: Multiculturalism', *The Politics of Identity in Australia*, ed. Geoffrey Stokes, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, p. 133

¹⁶⁰ Jayasuriya, *Immigration and multiculturalism*, p. 56

Minister for Immigration, Arthur Calwell, said, 'Immigrants will not only be taught our language, but must also be initiated into the Australian way of life.'¹⁶¹

It was recognized that the assimilation policy had to be marketed to the Australian public who had been conditioned to believe that social cohesion is only possible through exclusion and 'racial purity'. A change of attitude required the public to accept that people 'deep down' are 'just like us'.¹⁶² While endeavouring to educate the wider population to accept the new migrants the Department of Immigration undertook a well orchestrated program to educate the migrants into the idea of assimilating into the Australian way of life. This program was mainly directed at the migrants and refugees who came on assisted passages. There were pre-migration instructions in the refugee camps and the education continued on board the ships that carried the migrants to Australia. In the reception camps, such as the one at Bonegilla, the education program included basic English and other subjects such as an introduction to Australia social conditions and economic advice.¹⁶³

For the Italians who were sent to Bonegilla, the experience had nightmare qualities:

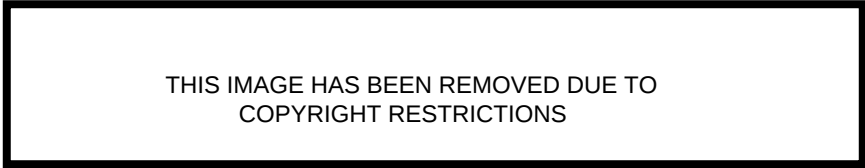
To describe Bonegilla is to talk about hell: ten thousand of us complaining every day we want the job or repatriation. Two months of terror, there in Bonegilla, we used to live with five bob a week. It was winter: cold, humid, and we went through such depression, emotional depression. You were there alone, lonely. Nobody, it looked like, took care – everybody say tomorrow and tomorrow. There were a lot of young, just married men or something like that, which left wife, sister, and mother in Italy. And, I remember one in particular, who decided to end himself. And one morning there was a lot of confusion and they find this young man, hanged. And I think he was depressed and he couldn't pay any debt that he left in Italy. We were very disappointed because Australia for us young men represented a dream. It was the Promised Land of Australia everybody talks about, you know. I hung on, I was only eighteen. But God, it was a disappointment, this Promised Land.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶¹ Cope, Castles and Kalantzis, Immigration, *Ethnic Conflict and Social Cohesion*, p. 5

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, p.5

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, p.5

¹⁶⁴ Morag Loh, (ed.) 1980, *With Courage In Their Cases: The experiences of thirty-five Italian Immigrant Workers and their families in Australia*, Italian Federation of Emigrant Workers and their Families, Melbourne, p. 47



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Figure 1. Cartoon: The Minister for Immigration Arthur Calwell supposedly leading migrants to the 'Promised Land',¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁵ Dugan & Szwarc, *'There Goes the Neighbourhood'*, p. 145

The Minister for Immigration, Arthur Calwell's policy of bringing Europeans to Australia as migrants after the Second World War was not popular with elements of the Australian public and some sections of the media. The Bulletin cartoon (photo 4) is an implied racist criticism that compares Australia to Israel and the Bible Prophecy concerning the return of the Jews to Israel.

The term used to describe British migrants as ‘Pommie Bastards’ that came into popular usage after World War I was not intended to be an affectionate nick name. It was a derogatory term. So After World War II the authorities realized that if the Australian public had negative ideas about English migrants they would be even more negative about non-English speaking migrants. Hazel Dobson, the senior welfare and social services officer of the Department of Immigration said:

...there is a need for co-operation on a wide community basis to ensure that all groups are made to feel they belong equally, and they will ultimately become happily absorbed. The education of public opinion is the heart of the matter.¹⁶⁶

Australian social services were inadequate for migrants from the United Kingdom accustomed to the ‘welfare state’ benefits. They were given hostel accommodation but insufficient financial assistance and in spite of the attempts to educate the public the migrants experienced prejudiced behaviour from some Australians.

Non-English speaking migrants, in the post war years, suffered even more from discriminatory practices and inadequate services. They were expected to give up their culture, their traditions and their language and become Australians as quickly as possible. The pressure of assimilation policies and the way in which assisted migrants were treated created problems for both the migrants and the host society.

The most severe reactions by migrants to their situation occurred in Bonegilla camp and in hostels. The conflicts were not necessarily caused by ethnic differences or discrimination but by employment problems. On 18th July 1952, 2000 unemployed men, mostly Italians, threatened to set the camp on fire if they were not given jobs or repatriated. The Government responded by sending into the camp 200 troops to quell the riot. The same year groups of migrants from Matraville and Villawood hostels in Sydney marched on the Italian consulate in Sydney to protest against their conditions. Police intervention caused a riot and the Government was alerted to the seriousness of the situation.¹⁶⁷

Although it was recognized that Australians must learn to tolerate the migrants, until the seventies, the assimilation policy and attitudes towards migrants were based on the belief that the migrant had the greater responsibility to adapt to their host culture. Assimilatory pressures were designed to destroy ethnic identities and create conformity within the dominant society but were for the most part a failure.

Assimilation was sometimes linked with the notion of acculturation. Originally the word was used by anthropologists and became a way to describe adaptation to another culture. People

¹⁶⁶ Cope, Castles and Kalantzis, *Immigration, Ethnic Conflicts and Social Cohesion*, p. 6

do not need to become part of the dominant culture or to completely assimilate to become acculturated. Acculturation is connected to adaptation but does not require migrants to lose their ethnic identity. Social pressure to see them as the same process caused acculturation stress and long term problems for the majority of migrants. As Levey and Moses noted:

Assimilation is confused with acculturation. Critics assume that national cohesion is a zero-sum game in which migrants must abandon their original way of life and adopt the core 'Judeo-Christian culture'.¹⁶⁸

Many migrant groups, such as the Greeks, were subjected to resentment, discrimination and occasional outbreaks of violence and probably one of the reasons for the hostility was the fact that the migrants stayed Greek and didn't behave like other Australians. Nevertheless they still managed to become effective settlers. Greek cafes in country towns had paintings of the Greek islands on the walls. Greek migrants played Greek music, ate Greek food and built Orthodox Churches.

In spite of their contribution to the economic life of the wider community, in a survey of the Greek community in Sydney in 1985, Bottomley reported that sixty four percent of the people who were interviewed reported that they had suffered discrimination in Australia.¹⁶⁹ The most common discrimination was cited as verbal abuse. Some reported that their children had been called 'wogs' at school and told to 'go home' to Greece. Other more severe forms of discrimination, such as physical abuse, had also been experienced by members of the community. Another study of the Greek community in Australia demonstrated that social and structural discriminatory practices created ethnic neighbourhoods with a lower standard of living than other urban areas.¹⁷⁰

Academics and Department of Immigration officials examined and criticized the notion of assimilation, which by the late 1950s was being seen as an inadequate strategy for ensuring social cohesion and effective settlement. Politicians began to speak of the issue in Parliament:

Mr. Hayden told Parliament, 'One thing that is obvious is that the new Australians have not intermingled as freely as we had expectedThe migrant

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 8

¹⁶⁸ Levey and Moses, 'Debate should focus on the apple, not the Core', p. 11

¹⁶⁹ Gillian Bottomley, 1988 'Multiculturalism in Practice: A Study of Greek Australian Families in Sydney', *Greeks in Australia*, River Seine Press, Melbourne, p. 140

¹⁷⁰ A. Kapardis and A. Tamis, Eds. 1988, *Greeks in Australia*, River Seine Press, Melbourne, p.236

experiences difficulties of assimilation and of contact, and all this might make him look with yearning to the land from whence he came.’¹⁷¹

Changes in settlement policy - assimilation to integration

At a Citizenship Convention held in 1969 a delegate suggested that ‘If we can reach the stage where we can drop the word ‘assimilation’ and use the word ‘integration’, we ourselves have overcome a certain degree of prejudice which some people have worked into the word ‘assimilation’.¹⁷² This idea was generally accepted and a new policy of ‘integration’ became a step towards the emergence of cultural pluralism.

The idea of integration was not popular with everyone. The Liberal Minister for Immigration in 1969, Billy Snedden, was against any shift towards cultural pluralism, ‘I am quite determined we should have a mono-culture with everyone living in the same way, understanding each other and sharing the same aspirations. We do not want pluralism’.¹⁷³

Integration to Multiculturalism – 1970 – 1990s

It took a change of Government to effect the changes in Immigration policy that many saw as inevitable. A new Labor Minister for Immigration, Al Grassby, is sometimes given the credit for introducing the concept of multiculturalism when he used the word in a speech about the ‘family of the nation’. Multiculturalism was a term originally used in Canada.¹⁷⁴

The gradual changes implemented in the 1970s had two major objectives. One was to accept migrants from new places and the other to improve the services available to assist non-English speaking migrants. During this period migrants were coming from impoverished areas in Southern and Eastern Europe such as Yugoslavia, Portugal and Turkey. As Jupp noted, ‘The Turkish inflow after 1968 raised Turkish born numbers to more than 30,000’.¹⁷⁵

The intake of migrants from these poorer regions created problems such as ‘high rates of illiteracy’ and ‘unemployment’. However the overall picture was one of social engineering that according to Jayasuriya was brought about in a ‘short space of time’.

¹⁷¹ Cope, Castles and Kalantzis, p. 10

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, p.9

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 13

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 12

¹⁷⁵ James Jupp, *Immigration*, p. 119

What is most remarkable was the way in which the host society was carefully guided, indeed manipulated towards accepting these policy changes and with it the new migrants. This was a well planned exercise in social engineering based on two main strategies of government policy – dispersal and non-confrontation. The first was not entirely successful. The other was more community orientated involving such measures as setting up community support structures.¹⁷⁶

Dispersal and non-confrontation were designed to prevent migrants settling or clustering in highly noticeable ethnic enclaves. The policy was never very effective as ethnic groups continued to move into the same areas. Non-confrontation was designed to assist settlement and concentrated on providing services through community support structures. Government institutions established language classes, organized housing and provided financial assistance when necessary. They were successful in gaining the co-operation of the community in various ways including the involvement of many churches. The success of the process was partly due, as Jayasuriya noted, to the favourable economic climate of the early 1970s and late 1980s that saw substantial growth and nearly full employment.¹⁷⁷ The economic conditions were not the only influence on immigration figures. Other factors such as Government policy can have a more direct effect. However intake figures show that permanent migration fluctuates in particular years. Major peaks in economic growth in 1971 and 1988 and low points in the late 1970s and early 1990s that coincided with peaks and falls in immigration intakes.¹⁷⁸ Governments tend to discourage permanent immigration during economic downturns and potential migrants are less inclined to come.¹⁷⁹

Ethnicity

It was during the 1970s that minority groups of migrants in Australia began to be referred to as ethnic minorities rather than ‘new Australians’. Although the classification of ethnicity has been used as an alternative to the use of ‘race’ since the middle of the nineteenth century it began to be used in reference to immigrants in the middle of the twentieth century.

At the level of popular understanding the notion of culture has become confused with ethnicity or as Jayasuriya argues the practice of identifying culture with ethnicity has become

¹⁷⁶ Jayasuriya, *Immigration and Multiculturalism*, p.61

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 61

¹⁷⁸ Stephen Castles, William Foster, Robyn Iredale, Glenn Withers, 1998, *Immigration and Australia: Myths and Realities*, Allen and Unwin, St. Leonards, p. 26

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 8

central to the Australian discourse on multiculturalism.¹⁸⁰ Yinger proposed a useful definition of an ethnic group and argued that there are three main types of ethnic groups:

1. An immigrant population sharing a common former citizenship.
An example of this in Australia would be Greek or Italian ethnic groups.
2. Sub-societal groups that share a common descent and cultural background.
3. Groups of persons of widely different cultural and societal origins who share some common features such as language, race or religion.¹⁸¹

The Galbally report of 1978 became the basis of multicultural policies into the 1980s and included ways to deal with a variety of ethnic minorities:

..... immigrant settlement should be based on collective self-help and such self help should be subsidized by the State through 'ethno-specific' organizations run wholly or largely by the immigrants themselves.¹⁸²

Some aspects of the review were criticized because small groups of newly arrived migrants had no ethnic specific organizations to assist them. Consequently services were expanded for these newcomers. The Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs in addition to providing accommodation and English speaking classes provided specific information access and interpreting services, and the assistance of welfare officers directly concerned with helping minority groups to settle. Community settlement centers were established and cash advances were given to everyone who needed them until individuals or members of a family group could find employment and become self sufficient. In these areas, the relevant authorities were quite successful in assisting the settlement process of ethnic groups.

In 1973 new Immigration laws included the Numerical Multifactor Assessment Scheme based on a point selection program.¹⁸³ This new system allowed people of any ethnic background to enter the country provided they had enough points, with an emphasis placed on family reunion and the acceptance of skilled migrants.

There was some degree of opposition to non-European migration in the 1970s but in general all political parties accepted the fact that Australia had to broaden its intake for various reasons, one being the need to improve regional relationships that depended on removing the

¹⁸⁰ Jayasuriya, *Immigration and Multiculturalism in Australia*, p.5

¹⁸¹ J. M. Yinger. 1981, 'Towards a theory of assimilation and dissimilation', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 4, no. 3, p. 250

¹⁸² Jupp, McRobbie & Barry York, *Settlement Needs of Small Newly Arrived Ethnic Groups*, p.3

¹⁸³ Ian Burnley, 2000, 'Diversity and Difference: Immigration and the Multicultural City', *Sydney: The Emergence of a World City*. ed. John Connell, Oxford University Press, Oxford, p.245

label of colour from immigration policy. In academic circles there were some individuals who were opposed to enlarging immigration numbers while there were others who supported the moves towards expanding intakes. (see Chapter 2 for more detail) Opposition surfaced again in the late eighties but in politics bi-partisan support continued.

Government authorities were inclined towards the view that Australia with its large land mass and relatively small population needed more people. At the end of the 1970s the population of Australia was 14,807,370¹⁸⁴, about the same as the population of Los Angeles. The birth rate was declining and the only option for population growth was by migration. In Sydney local businessmen lobbied for an expanding market and looked to immigration to provide the economic growth. Manufacturers wanted more customers and business expansion was created by migrants who had arrived in the 1950s and 1960s. Despite the prejudice shown them earlier, they had made a success of their lives and become part of the social landscape.

The marked change in the composition of migration to Australia in the late 1970s is shown in Appendix 1. The Department of Immigration list includes twenty five countries as the birthplaces of migrants who had not been granted visas before 1975, such as people from Pacific Islands, seven Asian countries and the Middle East. Lebanese were present in large enough numbers to be counted as a separate category in census records, but other migrants from the Middle East including Iranians were put together in one category until 1976 when their numbers increased.

Kurdish Migrants

One group of migrants from the Middle East were the Kurds who began to settle in Australia in the late 1960s and were eventually identified as a separate group when their numbers increased in the 1980s. The most recent Kurdish migrants, who came in the 1980s, were mainly refugees fleeing the Iran-Iraq and Gulf wars. There is a problem identifying how many actually came to Australia because the people do not come from an internationally recognized nation. They originated in Turkey-Kurdistan but were reluctant to identify themselves as Kurds for fear of reprisal. The Gulf War drew attention to the plight of the Kurdish people and created a climate of sympathy that allowed them to declare their ethnic identity. Estimates suggest that there are between 9000 and 11000 with the biggest communities living in Sydney and Melbourne.¹⁸⁵ Kurds did not qualify for special

¹⁸⁴ Anthony Barker, 1988 *When Was That: Chronology of Australia From 1788*, John Ferguson Pty. Ltd., Surrey Hills, Sydney, p. 402

¹⁸⁵ Trevor Batrouney, 1995, *Kurdish Immigration and Settlement in Australia*, Bureau of Immigration, Multicultural and Population Research, Canberra, p.31

humanitarian assistance and most were only declared as refugees on arrival in Australia. Since the emphasis in migrant programs has been on skilled migration the rate of arrival has considerably diminished because the majority of the migrants came from a rural background and most do not have tertiary qualifications or capital. However Kurds who have come to Australia from Europe or under the family reunion scheme have continued to arrive.¹⁸⁶

Zoroastrian migrants

Among the smaller Middle Eastern groups who arrived during the same period as the Kurds there were some Zoroastrians from Iran and India who began to migrate to Australia during the late 1970s. The Zoroastrians are known as 'Parsees', a term that originally meant people from Persia. They are representatives of an ancient monotheistic religious community whose members originally fled Iran because of religious persecution. The Zoroastrians were successful in taking advantage of economic opportunities in their host countries, particularly India and Britain. When they left Iran the majority settled in India, but they had no traditional economic base, they had lost their land, and like the Jews of earlier diasporas they went into business. By the end of the twentieth century there were approximately fifteen hundred Zoroastrians living in Sydney.¹⁸⁷

Religious Diversity

By the late 1970s migrants were coming from Malaysia, Philippines and China and consequently Australians began to notice religious groups other than Christians in their midst. The first Hindu Temple in Australia was opened at Helensburgh in New South Wales in 1976 and in the same year a special broadcasting service was established to provide multilingual radio and television. There were enough Buddhists living in Australia for the Dalai Lama to visit and be present for the celebration of 30 years of Buddhism in Australia.¹⁸⁸ In the 1980s Mosques were being built in various parts of Australia including Auburn and Lakemba in Sydney. The presence of non-Christian religions has created an awareness that there are ways of worship that do not include the Ten Commandments and never mention Jesus Christ. In the 1980s many Australians became members of religious communities such as the Buddhists or Hari Krishnas.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 32

¹⁸⁷ Interviewee 831912

¹⁸⁸ Barker, *When was that*, p.406

Refugees

The Australian Government recognized that people fleeing from the North Vietnamese forces needed assistance and a decision was made to recognize them as refugees. As a result the first Vietnamese ‘boat people’ arrived in Darwin in 1976 seeking asylum.¹⁸⁹ As mentioned earlier, in 1981 the Minister for Immigration announced a special Humanitarian Program for refugees. This program had three components:

Consistent with the United Nations definition, refugee immigrants include persons outside their own countries seeking protection from persecution. Special Humanitarian entrants seek relief from forms of discrimination amounting to a substantial violation of human rights, while the Special Assistance Category permits entry to other overseas persons in particularly vulnerable situations who have close family or community links with Australia.¹⁹⁰

The assistance program for refugees was established in time to assist refugees from Iran escaping from the effects of the 1979 Revolution. The number of Iranians in Australia increased to 7,498 with 60.3% living in New South Wales. Among this number there were 538 Iranian Bahá’ís who were settled in Sydney by 1986.¹⁹¹ In Sydney by 1996 there 8,820 Iranians and 7,300 of these were Bahá’ís.¹⁹²

A multi-cultural society

The reality of a multi-cultural society was evident in 1996. When the population reached 18.3 million, 3.6 million had one or both parents born overseas. There have been times when the percentage of people born overseas was higher than those born in Australia but what was significant was the number of non-English speaking people. Although many of these people came from Europe 2.6 million spoke a language other than English, and 282 major languages and 92 separate religious groups were represented in the population.¹⁹³ Some of these religious groups, new to Australia, came from the Middle East. Political upheaval in the Middle East led to an increase in the number of Moslems from Iraq, Coptic Christians from Egypt, and the Iranian Bahá’ís.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 391

¹⁹⁰ Castles, Foster, Iredale & Withers, *Immigration and Australia*, p. 12

¹⁹¹ 1986 National Census

¹⁹² Figures provided by National Assembly of the Baha’is of Australia, Sydney.

In the late 1980s there was a backlash against expanded immigration and multiculturalism with various voices expressing the view that there were too many Asians in Australia. Representatives of some groups such as the Returned Serviceman's League were saying that Australia was in danger of becoming 'Asianized'. A few academics led by Professor Geoffrey Blainey felt that there was widespread discontent with immigration issues and argued that cultural diversity would affect social cohesion. Blainey maintained that he was not speaking on his own behalf, because the presence of Asians did not affect his job, but on behalf of the ordinary Australian. He thought the presence of Asian migrants in the suburbs would create conflict.¹⁹⁴

The Government did not accept the opinions of the critics of multiculturalism and expanded immigration, but the debates continued. Government response to its critics culminated in the launching of a report in 1989 prepared by the Office of Multicultural Affairs as a National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia.¹⁹⁵ It included key concepts that outlined the policy for managing the consequences of cultural diversity and contained various rights of all Australians such as freedom from discrimination, freedom of speech and religion, and equality of the sexes. It also included economic issues relating to immigration and settlement.

In the late 1970s and 1980s the introduction of migrants from new sources was accomplished with less conflict than was anticipated and multiculturalism, in spite of its problems, was handled fairly successfully. Jupp believes that the policy of multiculturalism has been remarkably peaceful and harmonious. He commented on the future outcome of this policy:

Australia will still be a harmonious multicultural society if it pursues a rational immigration policy consistent with its economic needs and a settlement policy which tries to avoid disadvantage or discrimination. Immigration to Australia will not cause serious problems if it is controlled and planned to utilize the skills and education of new arrivals for the benefit of all.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹³ Kate Walsh, 2001, *The Changing Face of Australia*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney.

¹⁹⁴ Cope, Castles and Kalantzis, *Immigration, Ethnic Conflicts and Social Cohesion*, p. 15

¹⁹⁵ Cheryl Saunders, 1991, 'In Search of a System of Migration Review', *Multicultural Australia: The Challenge of Change*, eds. David Goodman, D.J. O'Halloran, and Chris Wallace Crabb, Scribe Publishing, Victoria, p. 137

¹⁹⁶ James Jupp, 1991, 'Debating Immigration After Two Hundred Years', *Immigration in Australia*, Oxford University Press, p. 108

Skilled migration

The utilization of skills and education of new arrivals was not implemented quickly enough for some migrants. Some were held back from achieving self sufficiency because of the non-recognition of their qualifications, particularly in some professions such as dentistry. Although migrants complained about this problem it was not properly addressed until the 1990s. When the responsibility of handling the issue of recognition of overseas qualifications moved from the Department of Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs in 1990 to the Department of Employment, Education and Training with a National Office on Overseas Skills Recognition the situation improved. Recognition of overseas skills or qualifications became an integral part of national training, competency based testing and accreditation developments.¹⁹⁷

The 1990s

In 1994 Wooden, Holton, Hugo and Sloan¹⁹⁸ believed that insufficient research has been done on the impact of immigration and settlement processes in Australia. They have been proved correct in this assumption because the attitude in the last decade of the twentieth century towards migrants from the Middle East and Asia hardened. The formation of the One Nation party in the 1990s opposing multiculturalism and supporting a reduced intake of migrants from non-white countries showed that racism was on the rise again or had never been reduced – merely hidden. The Middle Eastern boat people scandal and the detention of refugees from places such as Afghanistan demonstrated a degree of prejudice both in the public mind and from the authorities who were gradually closing the open door policies of the 1980s. According to some interviewees in this study a change occurred in the late 1990s towards migrants. Iranian Bahá'ís who arrived in the 1990s experienced a less friendly reception from both the authorities and the public than the migrants who arrived in the 1980s. Levy and Moses agree that since the 'Tampa Incident' and 'September 11' a range of people have called for a debate on multiculturalism and Australia's immigration policies in order to examine whether these policies undermine national cohesion.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁷ Alan Matheson, 1991, 'The Retreat from Reality', *Multicultural Australia: The Challenges of Changes*, p.67

¹⁹⁸ Wooden, Holton, Hugo, Sloan, *Australian Immigration*, , p. 330

¹⁹⁹ Levey and Moses, 'Debate should focus on the apple, not the Core', p. 11

Government policy on immigration shifted in response to a new philosophy of limited migration and the result was a decrease in the number of migrants arriving in Australia and assistance programs being shed. As Castles, Foster, Airedale and Withers commented:

...the major expansion of migration and on-arrival services in the late 1970s and the early 1980s was followed by a gradual decline. In January, 1993, for the first time, the principle of equal rights to welfare services for all Australian residents was broken when the government decided to deny unemployment and sickness benefits to immigrants for the first six months after their arrival. Also, fees were introduced for English language courses for adult migrants, although some categories such as refugees were exempted. People sponsoring their relatives as immigrants had to give a two year 'assurance of support' (i.e. promise to support their relatives if they were unemployed or in need).²⁰⁰

The back-lash against increased immigration that surfaced in the 1990s demonstrated a wide spread prejudice against Asians and Africans migrating to Australia. The majority of Australians have come to tolerate the migrants already settled but reject the idea of increased immigration.

Conclusion

In 1973 the last remaining racial restrictions on immigration were removed and the conditions for immigration were widened to include skilled migrants, family members under the family reunion policy and refugees. As restrictions were lifted migrants from countries previously denied entry began to settle in Australia changing the face of the society. Opposition and debate on the effectiveness of a policy of multiculturalism surfaced in the late 1980s and grew in the 1990s to a narrower door for intending migrants. However the concept of multiculturalism and the improved services for Middle Eastern migrants and refugees that existed in the 1970s and 1980s enabled the Iranian Bahá'ís seeking a refuge from their strife ridden country to become effective settlers in Australia.

²⁰⁰ Castles, Foster, Iredale and Withers, *Immigration and Australia; Myths and Realities*, pp, 104, 105

CHAPTER FOUR

IRAN

The 1979 Revolution in Iran and subsequent rise of fundamentalist Islam in the Middle East created a wave of unprecedented migration both into and out of the country. The social turbulence that resulted in a revolution was created by attempts to change a poverty ridden feudal state, exploited by other nations' interests, into an independent modern industrial nation. At the height of this modernization (or Westernization) program an amazing paradox occurred when the process was interrupted and a revolution created an Islamic state. However the newly created state did not attempt to return to a subsistence economy, nor did it reject the aspects of modernity it wanted to retain. Rather it sought to reject those aspects of modern life that it regarded as 'Westernization'. From an outside point of view there appears to be some confusion between the notion of modernization and Westernization. In Iran some modernization, for example the use of technology, is seen as necessary, particularly in weaponry, as Lewis notes.²⁰¹ Even the most anti-Western fundamentalists embrace the idea of technologies of warfare and propaganda whereas they reject other ideas that they see as evil Western influences. One of the most visible distinctions between modernization and Westernization is the issue of clothing. Men in Iran are free to wear Western clothing. That is not seen as against Islam, but women wearing Western clothing are seen by fundamentalists as in defiance of God's law.²⁰² The wearing of the veil and the chador became symbols of the return to an Islamic state and demonstrates that the majority of the people were prepared to give the government the power to decide what was acceptable modernization and what was unacceptable Westernization; in other words, power to rule over every aspect of life in Iran.

The revolution and the oppression set in motion by the new regime created a push factor that caused thousands of Iranian refugees to flee into Iraq and thousands to Europe. According to a statistical report in 1985 there were 122,890 Iranians living in the United States²⁰³ and according

²⁰¹ Bernard Lewis, 2002, *What Went Wrong*, Wiedenfel and Nicholas, Great Britain, p. 73

²⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 73

²⁰³ J. Momeni, 1985 'A Statistical Note on Iranian Population in the United States' *Iran Name*, vol. 1, p. 8, pp. 17-21.

to the Australia Bureau of Statistics there were 7,496 Iranians living in Australia in 1986.²⁰⁴ Among the latter were approximately 2,500 Baha'is.

The 1979 Revolution created a diaspora of Iranians but it was not the first time that Bahá'ís left Iran to become migrants in other countries. The persecution of Bahá'ís on the grounds of religion is not new. From the middle half of the nineteenth century the Bahá'ís were subjected to waves of persecution that were instigated by conservative Islamic clergy. As previously noted, in the eyes of the traditionalist Moslems the Bahá'ís are heretics who are a threat to the very basis of Islam.

The Bahá'í Faith developed from a messianic movement that grew amidst the Shayki sect of Shi'ite Islam. One of the doctrines of the Shayki movement was the imminent appearance of the Promised One of Islam, the 'Qa'im' to the Shi'ites. A young merchant from Shiraz, Ali Muhammad, known to his followers as the Babb or Gate, announced in 1844 that he was the Qa'im and this claim outraged the Shi'ite clergy. The reason for their hostility can be found in the legends that surrounded the identity of the Qa'im, or the twelfth Imam, who according to Shi'ite mythology disappeared in the year 873 A.D., and there was an implicit promise that when he returned he would take for himself the power wielded by the clergy.²⁰⁵

The Bab's writings were circulated throughout the country and contrasted with the practices of Islam at that time. Although the Koran advocates a system of equality and social justice, the practice of Islam in Iran fell short of demonstrating these principles, so that any protest against the system that prevailed in the nineteenth century was almost certain to create controversy.

The Bab was imprisoned by the Iranian authorities and there was an immediate response to the news of his incarceration. Thousands of people across the country flocked to his support and they became known as Bab'is. The news of the response to his teachings reached senior ministers in the Shah's court and the government joined with the clergy to oppose the movement. The army was called in to wipe out the perceived threat.²⁰⁶

From the period in the seventeenth century when the Safavid dynasty had established Shi'ism as the state religion the Shah controlled the power of the state, but the Shia clergy were the authority that ruled the morals and behavior of the Persian people. The interaction between the two wielders of power in Persia helped to form a nation ruled by a Shah who theoretically collaborated with the clergy.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁴ Trompf, Honary, and Abramian,(eds.) *Mehregan* in Sydney.

²⁰⁵ Nash, *Iran's Secret Pogrom*, p.24

²⁰⁶ Mackey, *The Iranians*, p.130

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p.5



Photo. 6 Muhammad Shah - 1844²⁰⁸

The followers of the Bab took up arms to defend themselves against the Shah's Army but the Bab did not encourage violence and declined to resist his imprisonment. He was moved around the country to various locations and finally executed in Tabriz on July 9, 1850. Therefore his ministry was a short one, from 1844 to 1850. In 1852 a group enraged by the Bab's execution planned to assassinate the Shah. The plot failed but the reprisals were massive and approximately twenty thousand Babis were massacred. The body of the Bab was taken to Palestine and his tomb is on Mt. Carmel in Israel.²⁰⁹

Thirteen years after the death of the Bab a new prophet emerged. His name was Mirza Husayn Ali and he became known as Baha'u'llah, a title which translated into English means the 'Glory of God'. The appearance of Baha'u'llah created a change in the behaviour of the followers of the new faith and they no longer resisted persecution by taking up arms. Baha'u'llah's writings

²⁰⁸ *The Dawnbreakers – Nabil's Narrative*, p. 229

²⁰⁹ Nash, *Iran's Secret Pogrom*, p. 22

emphasized the need for individual investigation of truth and therefore according to Nash the followers of the new teachings represented a direct threat to the clerical power structure.²¹⁰



Photo 7 Nasirid-Din Shah - 1890²¹¹

Baha'u'llah was imprisoned after he became a follower of the Bab but it was politically unwise for the religious leaders to have Baha'u'llah executed. Baha'u'llah's father had been a minister in the court of the Shah. His family were also wealthy landowners. Although all his family lands and wealth were taken from him his illustrious ancestry was so well known that it was expedient to banish him from Persia rather than to kill him. He and his family were exiled to Baghdad and from that city he revitalized the followers of the Bab who changed their name to Bahá'ís. The authorities were disturbed by the response to the exile and consequently the Shah entered into negotiations with the Sultan of Turkey. Baha'u'llah and his family, and some followers, were exiled to Istanbul, then to Edirne in Turkey, and finally to the prison city of Acre in what was

²¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 25

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 316

then known as Palestine. The centre of the Bahá'í Faith was in this way transplanted from Persia to Palestine or Israel.²¹²



Photo 8. Shrine of Baha'u'llah in Haifa, Israel²¹³



Photo 9. Shrine of the Bab in Haifa, Israel

²¹² *Ibid*, p. 26

²¹³ Photos courtesy of Bahai World Centre, Haifa, Israel

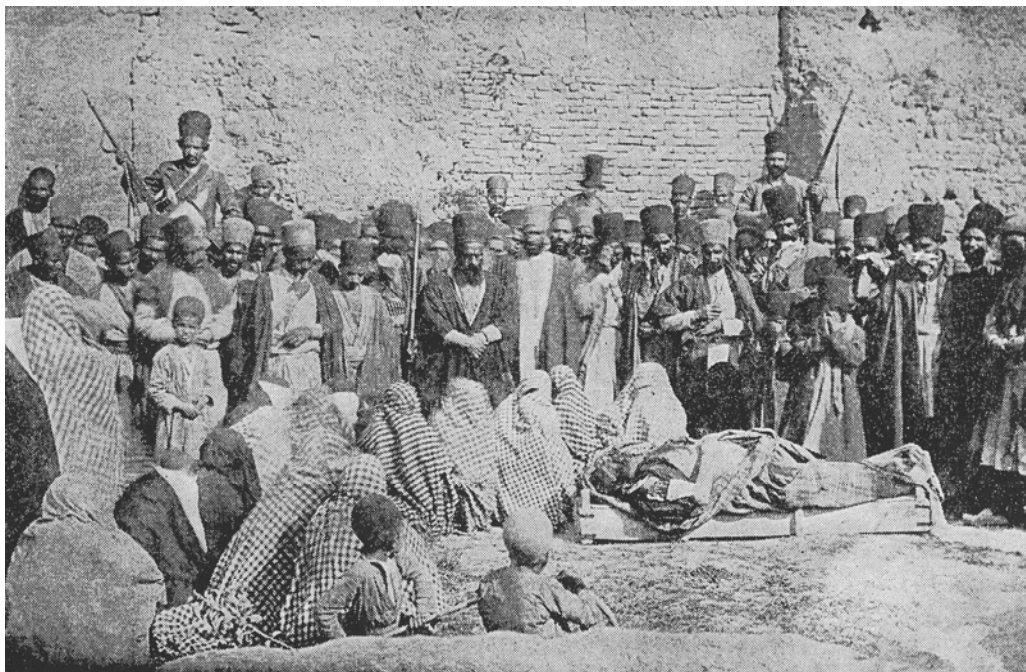


Photo 10 A Bahá'í martyr surrounded by fellow believers.²¹⁴

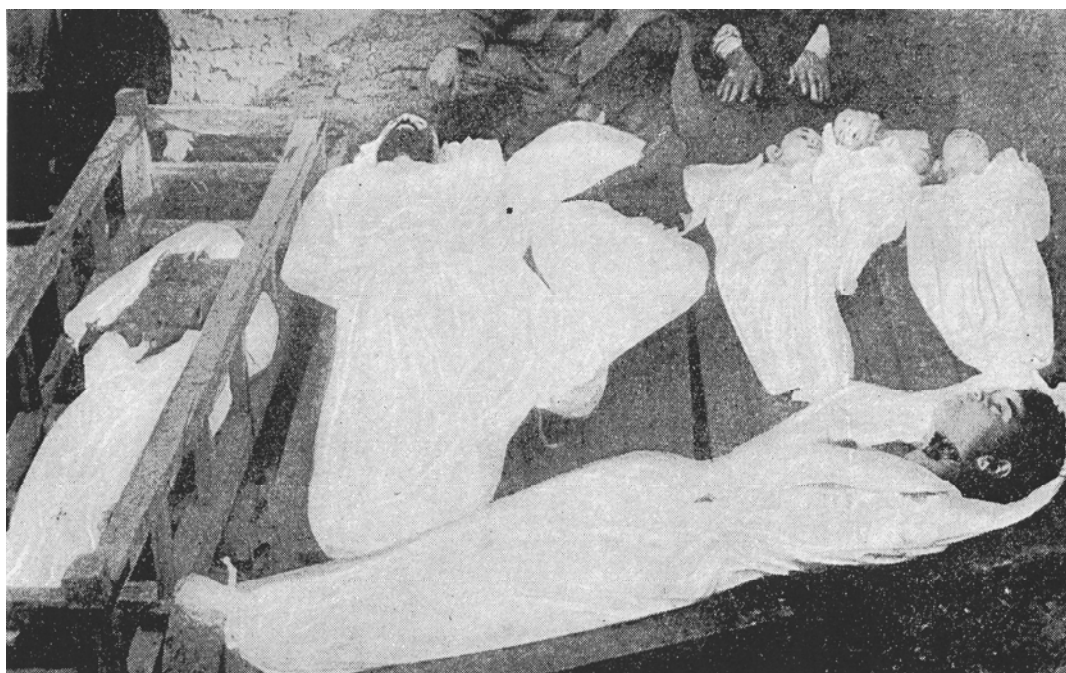


Photo 11 A Bahá'í family killed by a mob.²¹⁵

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 611

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 610

It is a common tactic of political leaders and dictators to label one's opponents as traitors in the pay of an outside power. Since the establishment of the state of Israel the Bahá'ís have been regularly denounced by the clerical and civil authorities as Zionists or agents of American imperialists.²¹⁶

Other minority religious groups such as the Zoroastrians, Christians and Jews, who exist alongside the Shi'ite majority, have been subjected to persecution in Iran. However the Bahá'í Faith met with extreme opposition from the Moslem clerics because unlike the others they were considered to be heretics, a class of people which always invokes extreme responses. The word 'heretic' comes from the Greek word *hairetikos* meaning the freedom to choose and to a fundamentalist Moslem cleric such a freedom was a dangerous option.

A secondary cause of hostility towards the Bahá'ís was created by the fact that significant numbers of non-Moslems were converted to the new teachings rather than to Islam. The non-Shi'ites who became converts to the Bahá'í movement came mainly from the Jewish and Zoroastrian communities in Persia. The conversion of Jews and their involvement with the persecuted Bahá'ís began in Hamadan in the late 1880s. Habib Levy, a Jewish historian, listed one hundred and fifty households involved out of the eight hundred or so there. The conversions spread to other Persian cities such as Teheran, Isfahan, Bukhara and Gulpaygan where, according to Lord Curzon, seventy five per cent of the Jews converted.²¹⁷ This movement of sympathy towards the hated and persecuted minority opened the way for it to be seen as an independent religion and not as a sect of Shi'ite Islam.

The Zoroastrian theologian, Dastur Dhalla, believed that 4000 Zoroastrians converted to the Bahá'í Faith and many of them were members of the elite merchant class in Persia. These numbers were probably only estimates.²¹⁸ Nevertheless this process, that is the conversion of other minorities to Bahá'í teachings, assisted the Bahá'ís in Persia and the outside world to see their faith as a more universal movement rather than a protest against the corruption and oppression of the Shi'ite system.²¹⁹

The attempts to rid the community of the Bahá'ís continued into the twentieth century and during the first two decades Bahá'ís suffered from regular attacks. The problems lessened slightly when the last ruler of the Qajar Dynasty gradually diminished the power of the clergy due to the growing influence of the West.

²¹⁶ Susan Stiles Maneck, 1991 'The Conversion of Religious Minorities to the Baha'i Faith in Iran: Some Preliminary Observations' *The Journal of Baha'i Studies*, Volume 3, Number 3, pp. 35-48

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 36

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 36

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 35-48

The financial problems in Persia at the end of the nineteenth century saw Nasir-ed-Din Shah selling concessions to European companies to raise the money to pay for his lavish life style and the large number of princes and courtiers the court supported. He sold rights to minerals, railways, banking and lotteries to individuals and companies. This exchange of concessions for cash threatened the economy of the whole nation and caused social chaos, laying the foundation of resentment towards outside influences still present in twenty-first century Iran.²²⁰

The rumblings of discontent with the rule of the Qajar dynasty led to the twentieth century revolutions as groups of people began to clamor for constitutional government and reform. A group known as the Constitutionalists instigated the first revolution and was identified as a movement towards the Westernization of Persia by traditional elements of the population. Their concepts had an impact on educated Persians and created considerable unrest which turned into a civil war in 1908. This revolution forced the Shah to establish a Constitution. When the Constitution was published it contained no provision of protection for the Bahá'ís and when electoral laws were drafted in 1906 and 1909 there were specific provisions that prevented them from obtaining the right to vote.²²¹

The new parliament, or the fourth Majlis elected in 1921, after the First World War, did not make as many changes as the people would have liked. The Majlis consisted of landlords and clergy dominated by mullahs who were not interested in change.²²² Consequently it is not surprising that after the chaos and uncertainty created by the war a coup occurred. The coup was instigated by Reza Khan, the military Commander of the Cossack Guard, Persia's only national regiment.²²³

These periods of civil upheaval affected the Bahá'ís because during such periods, particularly the revolution of 1907, clerics would use the unrest as a reason to mount persecution against the Bahá'ís. They had sufficient power and influence over the majority of the population to be able to create a climate of fear of any progressive movement and ally it with the anti-Bahá'í sentiment that existed among the general population.²²⁴

In the twentieth century the introduction of modern technology and Western ideas gradually weakened the power of the clergy and the Bahá'ís were seen as part of this process. From the middle of the nineteenth century Bahá'ís were orientated towards the world outside Iran, especially because of their 'one world' concept. As Foltz commented, 'the Bahá'í Faith is a

²²⁰ Mackey, *The Iranians*, p. 138

²²¹ Nash, *Iran's Secret Pogrom*, p. 38

²²² Ramesh Sanghvi, Roman Ghirshman, and Vladimir Minorsky, 1971, *Persia: The Immortal Kingdom*, Orient Commerce Establishment, London, p. 182

²²³ *Ibid.*, p. 67

distinctly modern religious tradition with a universalizing approach that exceeds, and indeed attempts to subsume, all of its predecessors'.²²⁵ The emphasis on pursuit of education for both men and women created an influential minority that became part of the modernization process and therefore in the eyes of the clerical structure they were aligned with outside powers such as Britain and America, and as mentioned earlier the state of Israel.

The first attempts at constitutional government in Persia had failed until Reza Shah proclaimed himself Shah and thus created the basically secular Pahlavi Dynasty. Once the new Shah was in place he reduced the power and influence of the clergy. The majority of people no longer went to them with gifts or followed their instructions.²²⁶ Reza Shah was determined to pull Iran from its feudal roots and diminish the power of the Shi'ite clergy. He wanted a modern society that needed engineers, doctors, architects, economists, builders and teachers rather than clergy. The need for experts in these fields created a wave of young Persian men leaving home to seek a Western education in Europe and America.²²⁷

The nation was relatively poor until the exploration and development of oil fields occurred in the early twentieth century. In 1901, backed by the British Government, an Australian financier named William Knox D'Arcy persuaded the Persian authorities to let him drill for oil in the southwest of Iran. After seven years he made a strike and the Anglo-Persian Oil Company was formed to develop the field.²²⁸ Other companies, financed mainly by Britain or Russia, gained concessions to develop the vast oil fields of southern Iran. These oil companies were eventually nationalized.²²⁹

By the 1930s Reza Shah had gained complete control of the nation and although he desired modernity he distrusted Britain and other European powers. In 1935 he decreed that Persia would henceforth be known as Iran, the name used during the reigns of Cyrus and Darius, a name to remind the Persians that they were Aryans and they had an ancient culture prior to the arrival of Islam from Arabia. Even the name Pahlavi was a reminder of past glories because it is the name of the script used in Iran until the arrival of Islam.²³⁰

Reza Shah used his army to force many nomadic tribes to settle on land and build semi—permanent mud brick houses. In 1933 he closed all the religious schools, including Islamic and

²²⁴ Mottahedeh, *Mantle of the Prophet*, p.238

²²⁵ Foltz, *Spirituality in the Land of the Noble*, p.xi

²²⁶ Nash, *Iran's Secret Pogrom*, p. 19

²²⁷ Farmaian, *Daughter of Persia*, p.74

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.62

²²⁹ George E. Kirk, 1961, *A Short History of the Middle East: The Rise of Islam to Modern Times*, Methuen & Co. Ltd., London, pp. 238-239

²³⁰ *The Oxford English Reference Dictionary*, Oxford University Press p. 1045

Christian schools. He also closed the Tarbiat, a Bahá'í school for girls. The closure of the schools was part of his attempt to reduce the influence of religion.²³¹

He steadily eroded the financial system that supported the clergy and made every mullah liable for two years active service in the military.²³² He attempted to bring a degree of equality to women, something unheard of in previous dispensations, but in true military style he did it by force and often against the will of the women. Although Reza Shah was in favor of education for women he believed they should be taught only by other women and there was a considerable shortage of women teachers. Nevertheless improvements did occur and by 1933 there were 870 schools for girls in Iran with an approximately 50,000 students.²³³

The status of women in Iran is of particular interest to this study because of the Bahá'í belief that men and women should have equal rights. Women have traditionally endured a low status in Iran and it is fairly safe to say that the situation for Iranian women was as bad as anywhere in the world, so any movement towards equal rights for women had to operate in secrecy. During the Qajar dynasty some women were allowed to read but they were forbidden to learn writing. However during the period of the Pahlavi dynasty, 1922 – 1979, many Bahá'í women became educated and served in Bahá'í administrative positions.

Bahá'í communities do not have clergy. Each local community is administered by an institution, known as the Local Spiritual Assembly, composed of nine members elected every year. There are no particular qualifications for a person to serve on an Assembly except that they must be over twenty one years of age and a recognized Bahá'í. Men and women can be members and this appears to be one of the reasons why Moslems are antagonistic to the Bahá'ís. One Bahá'í, who spent five years in prison because he was a Moslem who had converted, mentioned one question which constantly recurred during interrogation concerned women participating in Bahá'í administration. They said to him, 'You say you are pure. You believe in God but you had women with you and their husbands were there too'.²³⁴ In a strict Islamic society women do not become involved in public events and although there is no mention of this law in the Koran, Moslems believe the rule was ordained by God.

From 1926, after the coup, there was no organized persecution of the Bahá'ís for a period of thirty years. This period of relative peace allowed many members of the Bahá'í community to acquire professional qualifications and to succeed in business. But although there was less

²³¹ Farmaian, *Daughter of Persia*, p. 78

²³² Mackey, *The Iranians*, p. 180

²³³ Eliz Sanasarian, 1982, *The Women's Rights Movement in Iran: Mutiny Appeasement and Repression from 1900 to Khomeini*, Praeger Publishing, New York, p. 62

²³⁴ Interviewee 562411

outward hostility demonstrated the community was not given official recognition or legal representation. Bahá'í marriages were considered illegal, the literature was banned, meetings were forbidden and civil service ranks were subject to regular purges of Bahá'ís.

After the Second World War British and Russian troops occupied Teheran and were virtually in control of the country. They caused Reza Shah to abdicate in favor of his twenty two-year-old son, Mohammed Reza Shah. The Iranians temporarily rejoiced because they had seen the old Shah as despotic and irrational. Traditional women, who desired to cling to the old customs and felt humiliated by the Shah's dress code, wore black chadors and celebrated in the streets.²³⁵

The new Shah restored the power of the Majlis, and promised to return the lands that his father had confiscated. However the living conditions of the majority of the people did not improve. The streets of Teheran were full of foreign soldiers who appropriated properties for their own use and most of the country was suffering from food shortages, poverty and disease. In the provinces the mullahs and religious leaders looked for a scapegoat and found it in the Bahá'ís, and the persecution that had to some extent been lessened during the reign of Reza Shah began again.

During the civil unrest the young Reza Shah left the country for a brief period until he was returned with the assistance of outside powers and the Prime Minister Dr. Mohammad Mossadegh was exiled. These events were instigated and supported by international co-operation that involved Winston Churchill, Anthony Eden and other British representatives along with President Eisenhower, John Foster Dulles and the CIA. This alliance was formed for the purpose of replacing the Prime Minister who was intent on nationalizing the oil industry. This counter coup was known as 'Operation Ajax'. Iranian students believed the head of the CIA, Kermit Rooseveltdt, masterminded it. The coup provided another reason for the Iranians to resent the presence of Westerners in their country. The Americans were also motivated by cold war politics and feared the intrusion of communist powers in Iran. They believed their influence over the young Shah was a useful way to establish control over both the oil fields and Middle Eastern politics.²³⁶

When Mohammad Reza Shah resumed his throne he was anxious to placate the mullahs in full awareness of the power they had over the masses. One cleric in particular, Ayatollah Borujerdi, claimed a reward for the clerical refusal to support Mossadeq, the banished Prime Minister with whom the Shah had clashed, and that was to conduct a campaign against the Bahá'ís.²³⁷ So in 1955 the Shah sent his own chief of staff to make the first strike by destroying the dome of the Bahá'í Centre in Teheran. When the Shah realized that the outside world and particularly the

²³⁵ Chador is a bell shaped type of dress that covers the entire body except the face.

²³⁶ Mohammed Heikal, 1981 *Iran: The Untold Story*, Pantheon Books, New York, p. 23

United States were aware of and opposed to the persecution of the Bahá'í community he began to intervene to stop the official assaults on the Bahá'ís.

Motahedeh argues that the Bahá'ís were pawns in the endless power games that occurred between the ruling Shah and the religious hierarchy. Tolerating the Bahá'ís showed the mullahs who was in control.²³⁸ Reza Shah made some effort to see the Bahá'ís were on the whole left alone during his reign. In 1955 Mohammad Reza Shah failed to stop the persecution for a full year but as he became more confident of his power he stopped official sanctioning of persecution and eventually ended most of the unofficial persecution.

In 1960, there was an election for the Majlis and according to Mackey, the people believed that it was a 'puppet show with the Shah as the only puppeteer'.²³⁹ The election was so 'blatantly rigged' that even some of the winners were embarrassed.²⁴⁰ The Shah became increasingly authoritarian and tolerated no opinion except his own.

As Mackey commented:

Within the Shah's autocratic state, a generation of young intellectuals confronted the issues – the corruption of the Pahlavi regime, Westernization and modernization, Iranian identity and national integrity. In January 1962, the University of Teheran, one of the Shah's institutions of modernization, became the scene of noisy demonstrations against the King. After the military went in to crush the protests, the Chancellor of the university wrote, 'I have never seen or heard so much cruelty, sadism, atrocity, and vandalism on behalf of the government forces. with the same situation as if an army of barbarians had invaded enemy territory.'²⁴¹

²³⁷ Mackey, *The Irianians*, p. 210

²³⁸ Motahedeh, *Mantle of the Prophet*, p. 240

²³⁹ Mackey, *The Irianians*, p. 219

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 219

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 219

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Photo 12. Bahá'í Centre Teheran – Iran – circa 1950 ²⁴²

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Photo 13. Mulla Falsafi assisting with the demolition of the Bahá'í Centre in 1955 ²⁴³

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Photo 14. Military Officer beginning the demolition of the Bahá'í Centre - 1955²⁴⁴

²⁴² *Bahá'í World 1954-1963*, Volume XIII, The Universal House of Justice, Israel, p. 293

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 293

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 294

In January 1963 the Shah began what was known as his 'White Revolution'. This revolution was supposed to include the reorganization of the Government, the privatization of Government owned industries, the enfranchisement of women and land reform. However the revolution was mainly directed at regaining land controlled by an antiquated feudal system which benefited the 'one thousand families' of landowners but left most of the peasants in an impoverished state. Photos were published of the Shah handing land deeds to hundreds of village men who had only previously worked the land for their landlords. The land distribution gave the peasant classes some hope for the future but alienated the rest of Iranian society.²⁴⁵

The Shah did not convince the middle classes, the people who should have been his most effective allies in the process of creating genuine political reform, that his program was beneficial for them. The Shah also ignored the clergy who stood to lose their income from the measures of land reform. Ten thousand villages provided the income of the religious system and the most influential clerics came from the aristocratic classes.

For centuries Shi'ite Islam had virtually stayed out of politics but in the twentieth century clergy began to be involved with the various movements for reform such as the Constitutional Revolution in 1908. In the 1960s the middle tiers of the religious authorities were agitating for the notion that religion should be involved in every strata of society just as Mohammad the Prophet had participated in secular events.

The Shah used his secret police, known as Savak, to control opposition that came from a variety of movements: the Tudeh party who were Communists, the Liberal Moslems, Islamic socialists, and the neo-foundationalist Shi'ite movement under the Ayatollah Khomeini. The Shah's response to the protests organized by the fundamentalists was to have Khomeini arrested and deported in 1963.²⁴⁶

While the elements of opposition were gathering and seeding a new revolution the Shah continued his program of modernizing Iran and neglected to read the signs of the times. In 1974 the Shah quadrupled the price of oil and as a result additional income flowed into Iran. The increased national revenue made the Shah and a small portion of the population extremely wealthy. At the same time he interfered with traditional Islamic institutions and closed down publishing houses that produced religious books. He dispatched secret police into the mosques to arrest, interrogate, imprison and torture large numbers of clerics.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid*, p. 221

²⁴⁶ Ninian Smart, 1989, *Islam Passes Through the Shadows: The World's Religions: Old Traditional and Modern Transformations*, Cambridge University Press, p. 479

During this period the Bahá'ís in business, working for the Government, or in the armed services were to some extent protected by the power of the Shah. During the 1960s and early 1970s some middle class Bahá'ís migrated to other countries and acquired an international education. The community was lulled into a state of complacency. It appeared as though the improvement in the economics of the nation was gradually removing the people from the heavy hand of the clergy and reducing the level of fanaticism. However the forces of discontent were rumbling all over the country and the relative peace and prosperity did not last.

The oppression of religious life horrified the people and their anger at the Shah's excessive spending and life-style began to create civil unrest. The traditional elements in society resented the presence of large numbers of foreigners living in their country outside the laws of Islam and the disenchanted multitudes turned towards the ideological appeal of revolutionary Shi'ism. The clergy were able to capitalize on the alienation of the Iranian masses and a sympathetic wave of fundamentalism swept society. The opposition of the clerical leaders inspired mass demonstrations against the Shah and the retaliations against demonstrators led to violence and a rising death toll. Protesting students in Qom were shot and became instant martyrs and as Mackey comments, '.... by the end of March the breadth and depth of the disturbances became obvious'.²⁴⁷

The Ayatollah Khomeini became the center of the movement for the establishment of an Islamic Republic. The concepts proposed for the new Republic were to be taken from Islamic Law, but it was to be democratic, with a parliament but no king. Its theme was to remove tyranny and worldly aspirations. It enshrined laws about marriage, the status of women and family according to Islamic precepts. Educational institutions were to be run on Islamic principles and public life was to be outwardly pious. These ideas proved very popular with the masses. Although Khomeini had been exiled to Turkey in 1964 he continued to be the symbol of the revolutionary movement. He eventually moved to Najaf in Iraq and continued his program of opposition. The Shah put pressure on Saddam Hussein and Khomeini was forced out of Iraq and went to live in Paris but remained a focal point for the rising opposition to the Shah.

The final stages of the revolution happened in 1979 but some observers believed it began in 1978.²⁴⁸ In that year the country was sinking into anarchy.²⁴⁹ During the year widespread

²⁴⁷ Mackey, *The Iranians*, p. 279

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 277

²⁴⁹ Roohizadegan, *Olya's Story*, p.3

looting of Bahá'í homes occurred. In Shiraz, houses were burnt and people were dragged into the streets and beaten and some were executed by mobs.²⁵⁰

The Shah's response to the riots and demonstrations was to either to suppress them or attempt reconciliation. He tried to appease the mobs by abolishing the Ministry of Women's Affairs and by closing casinos. Then he gave the order that all the Bahá'ís employed by the Government were to be sacked. In August of that year a fire broke out in a cinema and it was believed that the Shah had ordered the doors to be locked because there were Islamic militants in the audience. Four hundred people were burnt to death and the news of this disaster sent thousands of people into the streets to protest. By the end of the year it was reported that a thousand men a day were defecting from the Army and the Shah saw his power disintegrating. By December during the Holy month of Muharram the mobs were shouting for the return of Khomeini and the Shah finally acknowledging his reign was over left the country on January 16, 1979.

Ayatollah Khomeini returned to Teheran on February 1, 1979 and the violence escalated. An officially authorized program of persecution against the Bahá'ís began. By 1981 the campaign against the relatively small community of approximately 300,000 Bahá'ís was pursued with unabated vigour as the authorities proclaimed their intention to eradicate them. Many Bahá'í Holy Places were confiscated or destroyed while community properties and financial assets were seized.²⁵¹

The next stage of the official three point plan of persecution was aimed at individuals and it began with the summary arrests and executions of prominent Bahá'ís. Large numbers were executed by firing squad and many were imprisoned for long periods without trial. Those who were executed were mainly members of local administrative institutions or appointed officers with particular responsibilities.

The arrests increased and included women and children. Many citizens were kidnapped and just disappeared without their families being notified and relatives were unable to locate them or bodies. All properties and belongings of executed individuals were confiscated by the state and were taken over by newly created Islamic foundations.

The intimidation of the entire Bahá'í community spread through the rural areas and hundreds were driven from their homes. Many were tortured, or taken to Mosques where they were beaten, until they recanted or expired from suffocation or other forms of physical cruelty. In the village

²⁵⁰ Reza Afshari, 2001, *Human Rights in Iran: The Abuse of Cultural Relativism*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, p. 121

²⁵¹ United Nations Office of the Baha'i International Community, 1981 *UPDATE: The Baha'is in Iran; A Report on the Persecution of a Religious Minority*, New York, p. 2

of Rustaq, near Yazd, the Bahá'ís were loaded into hydraulic-lift trucks, driven to a mosque, dumped outside, and physically forced to recant.²⁵²

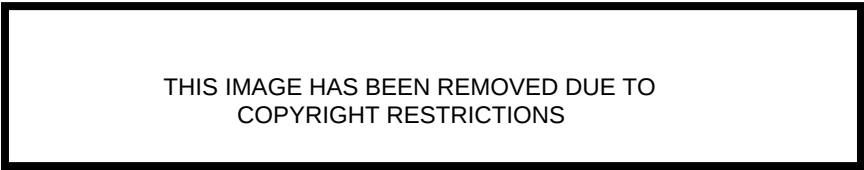
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Photo 15. Prominent Bahá'ís Executed in Iran.²⁵³

Between 26 July and 11 September 1981, 18 Bahá'ís were executed by firing squad after they were tried on spurious charges. Due to the nature of the new administration it was almost impossible to collect accurate figures but it was estimated that many more were shot without their families being informed and 150 were imprisoned.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 2

²⁵³ *Bahá'í World 1979 – 1983*, Volume XVIII Baha'i World Centre, Haifa, p. 14



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Map 1. Showing localities where Bahá'ís were executed in Iran between
1979 and 1983 ²⁵⁴.

In every sphere of their lives Bahá'ís were persecuted. Bahá'í children were harassed at school and eventually denied admission. Students at tertiary institutions were denied their qualifications. Nurses and students with scholarships were ordered to repay the financial assistance they had received during their training. At numerous educational institutions the Bahá'í students were expelled because of their refusal to recant their faith. All teachers and professors were sacked

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 13

because of their membership in 'the misled and heretical sect'.²⁵⁵ In the commercial world Bahá'í businesses were closed down and licences cancelled. Employees in both the public and private sectors were dismissed with their dismissal notices containing the provision that their jobs would be restored if they would publicly recant. Teenage girls were kidnapped and made to marry Moslems and their parents never saw them again:

My daughter did not return home after her final examinations on 29 May 1981. After much searching, it became evident that she had been taken away by Mrs. Safiyyih Asadughli, the teacher of religious instruction, from the village of Balu to the city of Urumihhih. She was placed under the care of Governor of Urumiyyih. My daughter's birth certificate and school records have been forcibly taken from me. I have not even been given permission to meet with my daughter.²⁵⁶

During the Iran-Iraq war Bahá'ís were conscripted and given positions in the front line. If they were not shot by Iraqi soldiers many were reputed to have been shot by soldiers in the Iranian army without any fear of reprisal.

On the international scene consulates around the world were requested to furnish the central government with lists of the Bahá'ís residing in that country and passports were cancelled and renewals were denied. Any finance being sent out of the country for students studying overseas was stopped and in the early 1980s Bahá'ís were denied the right to travel outside the country.

The persecution of the Bahá'í community was reported world wide and in September 1981 the United Nations Economic and Social Council adopted a draft resolution that expressed profound concern for the safety of the Bahá'ís in Iran. They based their protest on statements read in Council that clearly demonstrated the systematic persecution of the Bahá'ís in Iran, including summary arrests, torture, beatings, executions, murders, kidnappings, disappearances, abductions and many forms of harassment. The Council was convinced that the treatment of the Bahá'ís was motivated by religious intolerance and a desire to eliminate the Bahá'í Faith from Iran.²⁵⁷

The amount of publicity the persecution of the Bahá'ís received caused individuals who had been in prison to feel that they had not suffered in vain. The events that occurred after the 1979 Revolution were different in some ways to previous periods of persecution because of the

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p.4

²⁵⁶ Ata'u'llah Aqdasi-As, 1981, Translation of letter written by Mr Aqdasi to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Islamic Republic of Iran, *Update: The Baha'is in Iran*, p.11.

²⁵⁷ 'The United Nations Economic and Social Council, 2 September 1981, Commission on Human Rights: Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, *Update, The Baha'is in Iran*, p. 14

presence of the international media. The rest of the world was kept informed of the situation in Iran and this impacted on the victims:

When my father was leaving the prison a young guard came to him and said, 'I have treated you very badly all these years, I have tortured you and I am sorry, please report me I should be punished' My father replied, 'I have never seen you because I was always blindfolded so I cannot send a report to the High Court about you'. The man then replied 'I should be punished because when I meet my God I will be punished' and my father told him, 'Why should you be punished? I came to this prison a simple man, a farmer, your actions have turned me into a saint and stories about me being in this prison and the fact that I have survived have been sent around the world, a thousand people know my story. So you have made me famous. Therefore I forgive you and if you truly repent for what you have done God will also forgive you'.²⁵⁸

In Australia the news of the persecution was widely reported and in 1981 the House of Representatives made a declaration:

That this House resolves -
to continue to express its grave concern over the persecution of the adherents of the Bahá'í Faith in Iran by the regime of the Ayatollah Khomeini, and notes with alarm and abhorrence the continuing executions of Iranian Bahá'ís purely on the grounds of their religious faith.

- (1) To call upon the Government of Iran to release from custody those Bahá'ís who have been unjustly detained, and to restore the holy places, properties, community centers and companies that have been confiscated.
- (2) To commend the Australian Government for its assistance to Australian Bahá'ís in expressing their protest to the Iranian Government, and requests the Australian Government to lend its support to moves in International forums designed to restore to the Iranian Bahá'ís their freedom to live in peace and practice their religion in harmony with their fellow citizens of other faiths.²⁵⁹

In 1983 another motion was put to the House of Representatives –

- That this House –
- 1 expresses the grave concern over reports of continuing death sentences being imposed on the Bahá'ís by the Government of Iran;
 - 2 notes that such persecutions breach all international conventions on human rights and
 - 3 requests the Australian Government to continue its efforts in international forums to dissuade the Iranian Government from such religious persecutions.

The current wave of persecution against the Iranian Bahá'í community cannot be viewed as some sort of isolated phenomenon. It is a recent development created by the present state of affairs in Iran. Since the inception of the Bahá'í

²⁵⁸ Interviewee No. 562411 Translated by his son.

²⁵⁹ *Hansard*, 1981, P.D., House of Representatives Wednesday, 19 August, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.

Faith in the middle of last century, the Bahá'ís of Iran lived in a climate of constant repression characterized by frequent outbreaks of violence and bloodshed. As recently as June of this year some 16 Bahá'ís were executed and I believe those executions followed the naming of some of those Bahá'ís by the President of the United States of America. Subsequently the Iranian Government took this outrageous action in persecuting those people named. One of the difficulties in attempting to speak on behalf of the Bahá'ís is, in fact, avoiding the use of names, because of this continuing persecution by the Iranian Government.

This motion was seconded by Mr. Peacock (Kooyong – Leader of the Opposition)
The motion was resolved in the affirmative.²⁶⁰

The Government of Iran ignored requests made by the United Nations and other Governments to cease persecuting the Bahá'ís and by 1983 there were still seven hundred-odd Bahá'ís in prison and over two hundred prominent members had been officially recorded as executed. An unknown number were thought to have been killed in secret.

A fresh wave of arrests and executions occurred in 1984 and prisoners were told they could be released if they signed a statement to the effect that the Bahá'ís were a Zionist espionage group. According to Mottahedeh no prisoner chose to sign or believed in the protection that their signature was supposed to give them.²⁶¹

Not all the clerics were in favour of the way the revolution was carried out. Sincere mullahs felt that Bahá'ís were in error but deplored the violence and the vendettas that caused them to be thrown out of schools, sacked from their jobs and all their possessions destroyed. However the majority of the mullahs turned into vindictive judges, ordering floggings and executions with abandon.²⁶² As one poet noted, the problems in Iran, although blamed by many on outside powers, were mainly created by their own internal social history:

That black smoke that rose from the roof – that was our black smoke.
It came from us.
That burning fire that swayed left and right that was our fire.
It came from us.
Do not denounce the foreigner, or lament anyone but us.
This is the heart of the matter – our affliction came from us.
Unknown Iranian Poet 1989²⁶³

The administration of the Bahá'í community could not be carried out in the usual manner by mail and information was sent by hand. Special messengers were recruited to carry out this work. Women were especially suited because they were unrecognizable in their chadors and could

²⁶⁰ *Hansard*, P.D. House of Representatives, Volume 132, 1983 Commonwealth of Australia, p. 541

²⁶¹ Mottahedeh, *Mantle of the Prophet*, p.389

²⁶² *Ibid.*, p.389

easily conceal messages under the voluminous clothing. The regime discovered this system when they were interrogating and torturing some of messengers who revealed the names of the others. One woman who was arrested because she was a messenger said:

This man had my telephone number and they tortured him and he gave them my name. After that six soldiers came to our house. Six men just to arrest one woman, they had guns and they beat me very badly. My two children were there and they took my children. They took my daughter and kept hurting her and many bad things happened. In six months while I was in gaol we didn't see anybody and in seven months I didn't have any visitors. My mother and father didn't know where I was, I didn't know where my children were.²⁶⁴

The response of the Iranian government to international publicity against the persecution of innocent people was to consistently deny that anyone was executed or imprisoned because of religion. The denials presented to the United Nations consistently stated that those who were imprisoned or executed were being punished for acts of espionage or activities contrary to the higher interest of the Islamic Republic. Although young women have often been engaged espionage no international authority or anyone in the Bahá'í community believed the accusations. However this clarified the fact that while an Islamic government was in place no one in the Bahá'í community would ever be exempt from persecution.

The Bahá'ís in Iran were not the only people who suffered from persecution after the Revolution. All social classes, religious groups, political parties, ethnic minorities and special interest groups suffered some kind of human rights abuse during this period. Hundreds of people loyal to the Shah were executed. The exact figures cannot really be known but it is believed that thousands of Tudeh communists were executed in 1982-94. Similarly hundreds, possibly thousands, of Mujahedin²⁶⁵ and other leftist groups were massacred in the autumn of 1988. About a hundred journalists, authors and activists were assassinated both inside and outside the country. Ethnic Kurds, Turks and Arabs suffered persecution and Sunni Mosques were bombed and their muftis were kidnapped and murdered. Christian Armenian and Assuri bishops were kidnapped and Christian charity workers arrested and executed. Some of these groups were put in the same prisons as the Bahá'ís. One woman described the implications of this situation and how it made her period of imprisonment more difficult:

²⁶³ Farmaian, *Daughter of Persia*, p.445

²⁶⁴ Interviewee 45610

²⁶⁵ Mackey, *The Iranians*, p. 197 The Mujahedin are Moslems who combine religion, politics and nationalism and were followers of Ayatollah Sayyed Abol-Qasem Kashani who named his organization Mujahedin-e Islam. He built a following by protesting against the presence of the British. He promoted the concept of religion as politics. He was executed in the early 1950s.

There were Communists, Mujhadin and Bahá'ís in the same prison. The Mujhadin were Moslems opposed to the new regime. They wouldn't use the same place to shower as us, they kept telling us you are dirty – najes. Talk like this makes you feel really bad. Thank God it is over.²⁶⁶

The history of the Bahá'í Faith in its homeland has been one of recurring persecution and there is no evidence that it has finished. Although religious orthodoxy in Iran seemed to be in decline in some decades of the twentieth century recent events demonstrate it wields considerable power and an astonishing influence over the people of Iran. Despair experienced by the Bahá'í community at the continuous persecution led to large numbers fleeing the regime and becoming either migrants or refugees to other countries. Some of them chose Australia as their destination. This history shows that without a pro-Western government prepared to control the Muslim fundamentalists, Bahá'ís will always suffer persecution in Iran. The next chapter examines the individual reasons for migration.

²⁶⁶ Interviewee 45610

CHAPTER FIVE

DECISION TO MIGRATE - THE PUSH FACTORS

Migration can be voluntary or forced and theorists have found it difficult to separate the two because the decision to migrate is usually made for more than one reason. Although a small percentage of the people involved in this study left Iran by choice before the Revolution their decision to leave was influenced by the persecution that they or their relatives had experienced. Therefore all the Bahá'ís who left Iran were to some degree pushed by persecution. Cohen argues that 'mass displacements that are occasioned by events wholly outside the individual's control'²⁶⁷ can be labeled involuntary migration. The traumatic dispersal that affects a particular group because of its identity can be classified by the nature of its severity. Cohen suggests that forced migration is when 'the suddenness, scale and intensity of exogenous factors unambiguously compel migration or flight'.²⁶⁸ Nevertheless in spite of the persecution the majority of the Iranian Bahá'ís decided to remain in Iran. They chose to remain knowing that this meant they could be imprisoned or executed. The lesser consequences of staying meant they were deprived of legal status, education and income. Those who chose to migrate either came to the decision through family consultation or made an individual decision. The factors that influenced these decisions are examined in this chapter.

Bahá'ís who chose to leave Iran before the Revolution for the purpose of assisting the establishment of their Faith in another country were categorized by their community as 'pioneers'. Bahá'í pioneers are neither missionaries nor evangelists, as the term is understood in relation to Christianity. Bahá'í pioneers have a desire to share their belief with others but need to be self-sufficient or must seek employment in their host society. There was no funding provided for them by any Bahá'í institution. Nevertheless the individuals or families who moved to other towns or cities within their own country or to other countries did so with the intention of establishing Bahá'í communities. This role is found within all religions but for the Bahá'ís a pioneer is not categorized as a missionary but as an initiator, or one who prepares the way for others to follow. To become a pioneer is regarded by the Bahai's as an act of

²⁶⁷ Cohen, *Global Diasporas*, p. 180

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 181

devotion. To remain in another country for the purpose of establishing a Bahá'í community in their host society is regarded as living a life of service. Therefore although persecution was a factor in their decision to leave, migrants who left before the Revolution with the intention of becoming pioneers were mainly voluntary migrants.

Families who left Iran in the 1950s and 1960s responded to a plan for international pioneering designed and inaugurated by Shoghi Effendi, the great-grandson of Baha'u'llah, and the Guardian and Administrator of the International Bahá'í Community from 1921 until 1957. His plan, launched in 1953 and known to the Bahá'ís as the Ten Year Crusade nominated suitable destinations in particular countries. Indonesia was one of the destinations assigned to the Bahá'ís of Iran. The Iranian community was given this goal possibly because Iranians were suited to settle in Indonesia, a Moslem country, not too culturally distant from Iran.

A few of the families who pioneered to Indonesia in the fifties eventually migrated to Australia. A member of one family came to Australia on a student visa and after completing his studies decided to stay:

My father was in export/import and was the first in our family to leave Iran. He left to be a Bahá'í pioneer to Indonesia in 1950 and we followed him a few months later. Then when I was old enough to attend university I came to Australia.²⁶⁹

The earliest migrants or pioneers were usually professionals, such as doctors, teachers or engineers who anticipated that their qualifications would enable them to obtain employment in their country of settlement. Opportunities were available in places recruiting qualified personnel such as Indonesia, which needed experts in many fields and was unable to supply them from the local population. Others were pulled to destinations in a process of chain migration. In other words they knew a Bahá'í in that country who could assist them to find employment.

One interviewee in this study, who came to Australia from Indonesia, was born in Bandung. Other members of his family chose to remain in Indonesia. His decision to migrate was not to be a pioneer but to further his medical studies and when he moved to Australia his Indonesian wife and their child accompanied him.²⁷⁰ Individuals in this category applied for student visas to Australia and then as skilled migrants applied for permanent residence after their studies were completed.

One Bahá'í woman who wanted to leave Iran before the Revolution was provided with the opportunity when she was working for an embassy in Teheran. She worked as a personal

²⁶⁹ Interviewee 15167

assistant to the Ambassador's wife. When the Ambassador was transferred to Australia his wife wanted to take her personal staff with her so the Ambassador gave the husband employment as a butler. The Embassy staff arranged the family visa and migration papers and the Shah gave them permission to leave Iran.²⁷¹

As mentioned in the previous chapter during the two decades prior to the 1979, due to the social reforms put in place by the Shah and the increase in the price of oil, Iran experienced a period of economic growth and social transformation. The economic advances enabled the urban generation born during the years of the Second World War to become westernized. Before the Revolution there were schools, colleges and universities available to those who could afford to finance their own education. There were ample business opportunities and many Bahá'ís ran successful businesses. Some Bahá'ís obtained employment in Government agencies and in the higher ranks of the army. The Bahá'í community generally prospered during those years. As Sanasarian noted 'the Bahá'ís were on the average more educated and successful in business than the population in general.'²⁷² Although the Shah had begun to remove these privileges, when he was under pressure from rising opposition in 1978, the Bahá'ís were still resented, particularly by fundamentalist Moslems.

The interviewees in this study who were children when their families left Iran remember enjoying a privileged way of life in Teheran. One woman commented that she resented her parents' decision to pioneer. She was 16 years of age when they left and although she was only young she had a successful career as a professional musician and dancer. Her father was a senior officer in the Shah's army. She performed at the court of the Shah and was also present at the celebration in Persepolis held on October 12, 1971 to celebrate 2,500 years of Iranian culture. Her life was enhanced by contact with the court, its luxury and splendor, and she liked the Shah and did not see the negative side of his regime. She believed he was creating a better life for the people of Iran and when her parents announced they were leaving she said, 'Over my dead body.' She described how sad she was to leave Teheran and cried regularly for months after they left.²⁷³

Other Bahá'ís whose families left Iran before the Revolution held a different memory of Iranian society. They retained negative feelings about Iran even though their families enjoyed middle class status and a higher income than the average Iranian. Social discrimination was present in almost every situation the Bahá'ís were involved in outside their community. One

²⁷⁰ Interviewee 771312

²⁷¹ Interviewee 30299

²⁷² Sansarian, *Religious Minorities in Iran*, p. 112

²⁷³ Interviewee 17167

woman explained how their Moslem friends displayed attitudes that made them feel ashamed. They would not eat from the same plates or drink from the same cups as their Bahá'í neighbours and if they visited them they would bring their own utensils. One woman spoke of the conditions she remembered from her childhood in Iran:

When my family became Bahá'ís we had lots of problems. In Iran the walls are quite high and the village people used to throw stones at our house. Our gates were full of holes like a sieve because of the constant bombardment. We were the only members of our family who were Bahá'ís and the rest turned against us and treated us like lepers. In Iran people do not generally have baths in their own houses they have to go to a bathhouse. There wasn't a public bath in our village and our uncle built a bathhouse but the relatives wouldn't let us use it. There is this belief that Bahá'ís are najes, that is their presence pollutes the water, so we had to go to another village once a week to take a bath. Other times we just washed inside our house.²⁷⁴

As mentioned earlier voluntary migration is a response to different push factors, including the feeling of insecurity created by persecution. If there was a chance of a better life somewhere else then some felt the best solution was to leave Iran. After the Revolution the family in the above story went to England and when they realized they could not go back to Iran they applied for refugee status. When it was granted, they applied for Australian visas. Their decision was based on the belief that Australia provided more freedom than England. Restrictions were placed on people with temporary visas in England. They had to report every six months to the immigration authorities. Living with this system of regular surveillance made them feel insecure so they looked for another English speaking country that would accept them.

One man became very disillusioned when officers of the Shah destroyed the Bahá'í Centre in Teheran in 1955. He decided then to leave Iran as soon as he could afford to take his family out. When he made the decision to migrate in the early 1970s there was no imminent threat to Bahá'ís living in Teheran, but he reasoned it was only a matter of time before persecution would begin again. He wanted to leave while he could take some capital out with him. He was an insurance broker with property and planned to sell it to raise some capital. He believed his wife would not agree to leave out of fear of persecution so rather than admit his fear he told his wife he wanted to be a pioneer. In pre-revolutionary times pioneering was more socially acceptable amongst Bahá'ís than admitting to being afraid either for themselves or their

²⁷⁴ Interviewee 34110

family, because everyone in the community suffered from discrimination and constant social harassment. On that basis that they would be pioneers his wife agreed to migrate.²⁷⁵

When the Revolution of 1979 broke out many people outside Iran were caught in difficult situations. For example in the early 1970s some Bahá'í families sent their children overseas to further their education. Prospective students usually went to either Europe or the United States and many of these students were still overseas when the Revolution erupted. They had to remain outside Iran because it was dangerous for them to return especially if their parents were in prison or had disappeared.

A minority of the overseas students sought education in undeveloped countries, such as the Philippines, because they felt they could be pioneers and at the same time advance their education. When their support funding no longer arrived and they were unable to find employment they were forced to apply for refugee status:

I wanted to go somewhere I could help people. So I studied Dentistry in the Philippines. I left Iran just before the Revolution and my Dad came with me to see that I would be okay. The authorities didn't believe me that I wanted to go to a place where I could help people. They said why don't you go to England? I couldn't tell those Moslems I wanted to be a Bahá'í pioneer. Then after the Revolution we could not return to Iran and so we applied for refugee status and migrated to Australia.²⁷⁶

The Ministry of Education in Iran issued a statement in 1981 that permission to send foreign exchange to Iranian students overseas would only be given to officially recognized religions of Iran. This ruling immediately cut off funds that Bahá'í students needed in order to complete their education. Young children and youths living outside Iran for the purposes of education and whose boarding and school fees were paid from Iran needed immediate assistance from sources outside the country:

I left Iran on a student visa and went to India. While I was in India my parents supported me. Then the money stopped because of the Revolution. In the eighties the Government stopped people sending money out of the country.²⁷⁷

A program was established by a worldwide Bahá'í network to assist the students left without economic support. The international governing body of the Bahá'í community, the Universal House of Justice, paid boarding school fees for Bahá'í students until their parents

²⁷⁵ Interviewee 76112

²⁷⁶ Interviewee 791612

²⁷⁷ Interviewee 68412

were either released from prison or arrived in a country outside Iran and were able to take care of their children. Some relied on relatives to help them but they were in the difficult position of not knowing what their future would be, whether their parents could get out of Iran and join them or whether they would become orphans. The consequences were such that they became migrants without originally intending that outcome.

In addition to young students being affected by the lack of funds many mature age students were also stranded outside Iran because of the Revolution. During the period of modernization Iran was short of specialists in every field and as the economic conditions improved in the 1970s many people went to the United States to further their education. It was considered to be preferable to obtain university degrees in the United States because in the 1970s American educated personnel often received promotion faster when they returned. The most popular courses for post-graduate studies were in science or engineering because there were openings in those fields for top-level employment in Iran. Many of these mature age students were caught without support when their families were prevented from sending money out of the country. If their parents were in prison and their property had been confiscated or they were dismissed from employment their source of income was gone. Consequently the students relying on money from Iran had to either find employment where they were, or apply for refugee status. Some moved to other countries where they found employment:

I was working for the Iranian government in a national telex company and I left and went to America to further my education. I finished my Bachelor of Science in Computer Science and started post graduate studies in the United States. Then my father passed away and there was no money to pay for further education. I obtained a position at a University in Peru and worked there before bringing my family to Australia.²⁷⁸

During 1978 the problems caused by strikes and demonstrations convinced some people that they would be better off outside Iran. Others decided to leave temporarily until the social and economic conditions in the country settled down again as it had done in the past. However the Revolution of 1979 was different to past events because it set in motion militaristic Islamic elements strong enough to depose the Shah and create a new regime. People who left thinking they would only be away for a short period became migrants because of a train of events they had not anticipated:

We left because of the troubles. At my husband's work there were strikes and demonstrations and constant bad news on TV. We decided to leave until things

²⁷⁸ Interviewee 801812

settled down. So we bought tickets for a four weeks holiday in England intending to go back. But when we were out we decided we couldn't go back. We had two daughters one 8 years and one 5 years and we were afraid for their sake.²⁷⁹

The uncertainty of living amidst the deepening social chaos affected those who were not in immediate danger of being persecuted but who felt that they should leave because the disturbances might affect their children. One woman, a Bahá'í married to a Moslem, explained:

My husband suggested we leave Iran and go to America. He thought the children would be better off somewhere else because of what was happening in Iran. We hadn't experienced any personal persecution because my husband was a Moslem but even so I was not necessarily protected. We were fortunate that we left early enough to escape the worst years.²⁸⁰

As noted earlier Bahá'ís who had served the Shah, either in the armed forces or as part of his personal entourage such as his physician, were among the first to be imprisoned. Thus people who were serving the Shah outside Iran were unable to return because they knew they were on the hit list of the new regime:

My father was in the Air Force and he went to the United States as Air Attaché for the Shah, which was a prestigious position in Washington. But after the Revolution it was not safe for us to go back. We had to stay in the United States for a few years before applying for visas to migrate to Australia.²⁸¹

Men who occupied positions of power in the armed forces were faced with a terrible choice and some decided against leaving. One woman's father was a senior officer in the military. He decided to stay in Iran even though he knew he would be killed. He told his daughter he would not run away when others could not. He preferred 'death to dishonor' and was executed on July 9th 1982.²⁸²

In the first year after the Revolution there was a lot of confusion in the country but many Bahá'ís, who thought they might be in danger of being arrested, made a quick decision to leave. It was possible then to obtain visas and move money out of the country. Those who made the decision to migrate then were able to leave the country without the necessity of

²⁷⁹ Interviewee 567

²⁸⁰ Interviewee 40210

²⁸¹ Interviewee 22179

²⁸² Interviewee 592511

becoming refugees and losing all their assets. The majority went to the United States but a few came to Australia:

I don't know exactly what gave us the motivation to leave Iran. I think it was due to several reasons. Before the Revolution I was encouraging my brothers to sell everything and start a new life and I wanted to continue my education at a good university like Harvard for example. So my two older brothers left and I was in the process of selling their properties. Then the revolution closed things down for a few months. Khomeini came back. The Government organizations began working again and I knew the Revolutionary Guards could target us. So we got visas and got out with our money. I was so relieved that I got all my family's money out in time.²⁸³

We didn't experience any problems with our migration plans because they weren't looking for me then. They were very busy at that time looking for the people who had been working for Shah, particularly the secret police - SAVAK. The revolutionary guards were looking for them and all the people connected to the Shah. They told one of the Bahá'ís that their time hasn't come yet but when we have done with these people then we will deal with the Bahá'ís.²⁸⁴

Those who decided to leave Iran before August 1981 were in a position to use their passports for traveling and able to obtain visas for other countries. At the end of 1981 the government of Iran extended their program of persecution against Bahá'ís to those who were living overseas. As noted earlier the Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent instructions to all its consular representatives to send a list of Bahá'ís residing within their jurisdiction and directed that passports of people on the list could not be renewed. Consequently the Iranians living outside Iran were gradually rendered stateless.²⁸⁵

The decision to leave Iran was forced on some people who had been imprisoned by the new regime for being Bahá'ís. They had no desire to repeat the experience and were more or less compelled to leave as quickly as they could. Olya Roohizadegan, who was arrested and spent several months in gaol, described how the Revolutionary Guards arrived at her home one night with a warrant for her arrest issued by the Revolutionary Court.

When she looked at the warrant it contained a list of the people to be arrested in a particular area and she saw seventy names on the list. While they were interrogating her some of the guards took possession of everything valuable in the house including jewellery, credit cards

²⁸³ Interviewee 612611

²⁸⁴ Interviewee 612611

²⁸⁵ *The Baha'is in Iran: A Report on the Persecution of a Religious Minority*, p.4

and all her books. The guards told her to make a list and if she were innocent her goods would be returned:²⁸⁶

After I was arrested I was put in prison for two months. Altogether 100 Bahá'ís in Shiraz were arrested and 33 were executed. Amongst them were 10 Bahá'í ladies who were executed. They were hanged on 18 June 1983. I was with them before they were hung and I promised them that if I were released I would tell their story to the world. They took everything and I was in prison for two months with the 100 Bahá'ís from Shiraz. I was beaten and sometimes during interrogation they were putting a gun to my head and I thought I was going to die but I was lucky because they didn't kill me.²⁸⁷

As soon as Olya arrived in the prison she began to hear accounts of other prisoners' experiences, particularly the constant and regular interrogations:

After they called me out of the cell, they took me to the basement. We walked down a lot of stairs. There I heard a lot of high-pitched screams, and when they removed my blindfold I saw eight wooden tables with chains at each corner. Someone was chained to each table and the guards were whipping them with electric cables. I was terrified. They threatened me with the same treatment if I didn't recant my faith or refused to give the names of other Bahá'ís who were members of the committees. I just fainted, and when I opened my eyes I found myself on the bed in the prison hospital. The doctor had given me an injection. They insulted me again and said, 'You can go now. But we won't leave you alone.'²⁸⁸

One old man who was in prison for five years from 30th October 1983 was never brought before any court nor was ever given any chance to defend himself:

During the years in prison they interrogated him by making him lie down on his back. The way they do it is they tie you up and they whip you on the feet. (bastinado) My father was blindfolded and then occasionally he would hear someone would say, 'he is an old man don't beat him', but he became unconscious. Then next day the Doctor came and asked him 'What happened to you?' and because there were two guards standing there listening my father said 'I fell down the stairs'. He thought if he accused them they would beat him again. He suffered with these beatings and occasionally spent time in the prison hospital with a hernia and various other injuries. The regular interrogations and beatings continued but somehow he survived.²⁸⁹

A woman described the conditions of the prison where she spent two years:

²⁸⁶ Roohizadegan, *Olya's Story*, pp. 60-61

²⁸⁷ Interviewee No. 19129

²⁸⁸ Roohizadegan, *Olya's Story*, p. 74

²⁸⁹ Interviewee No. 562411

The prison was called Aven. We were in a dirty place with six rooms; in one room of about 24 metres there were 52 people. We couldn't find a place to put our feet. They had only six toilets for five hundred people and there was always a queue. It was very hard for the children. We had to let them go first. Only two times a week we had a shower and could be woken up four times a night for interrogation.²⁹⁰

Stories like the above circulated throughout the community and created a state of terror amongst the Bahá'ís, particularly for those who knew they were targeted and could be arrested any day. Even for those who weren't sure they were on the lists, the knowledge that the lists existed helped them to make the decision to leave and plan an immediate escape.

Economic problems caused many Bahá'ís to consider leaving the country because when they became unemployed they had no income. The authorities issued edicts that stated companies who employed Baha'is had to dismiss them. The edicts were signed by Siyyid Rida Lavasani, Judge of the Islamic Revolutionary court of Kirmanshah. Consequently the Zamzam company in Kirmanshah in attempting to obey these instructions notified their employees that:

Concerning the Bahá'í employees and staff members of this company, it is hereby announced that if the Bahá'í workers and employees repent, and write in their personnel files that they adhere to the Islamic Athna Ashari creed (followers of the twelve Imams), and publish the same in the widely circulated newspapers with their photographs, then they will be allowed to continue their work for the Company; otherwise they should be dismissed. The deadline is until the end of Shahrivar 1360.²⁹¹

In spite of the economic hardship caused by the loss of income many chose to remain in Iran. In 1981, 18 prominent Bahá'ís were executed by firing squad. Seven of them had spent up to a year in prison. Those executions took the total executed in 1981 to eighty one individuals.²⁹² Nevertheless the fear of persecution was not enough to cause all the Bahá'ís to make the decision to migrate because as mentioned earlier other factors such as age, gender, education and economic status contributed to the final decision. Older people were afraid to leave their homes consequently only six per cent of the interviewees in this study were over fifty years old when they left Iran and young single men were the largest group of refugees.

²⁹⁰ Interviewee 45610

²⁹¹ Translation of a written statement issued by the Islamic Revolutionary court of Khirmanshah, *Update, The Baha'is in Iran*, p. 18

²⁹² *A Report on the Persecution of a Religious Minority in Iran*, 1981 p. 1

The uncertainty of travelling with people smugglers through unknown and hostile territory was a threat for young single women who could be raped, kidnapped or made to marry a Moslem. The Bahá'ís were aware that some women, Bahá'ís and others, had been subjected to all these experiences.

Information on each individual in this study prior to his or her migration is listed as Appendix 2. The table contains gender, age, educational level, birthplace, place of residence and the date each migrant left Iran. In the group of Iranians interviewed for this study 57 % came from the capital city Teheran, 12% came from smaller towns and cities including Sysan, Gorgan, Sari, Dezeg, Hamadan, Chaloos, Miandoab and Khorasan, 6% from Karaj, 5% from Shiraz, 4% from Kashan, 4% from Tabriz, two from Bandarabbas and one from Isfahan. Six were born after their parents left Iran, two were born outside Iran and 17.3% were children when they left Iran. 21% were students who had completed high school and were denied university entrance and a few were still at High School.

Education levels reached in Iran by the adults in the study included 28.3% per cent with tertiary education and 14.8% with other professional qualifications obtained before 1981. After the Revolution all educational institutions in Iran began a program of harassment of Bahá'í students. They were subjected to indoctrination lessons and attempts were made to get them to recant their Faith. Schools introduced registration forms that included details of a student's religion and admission was refused to those who were courageous enough to put 'Bahá'í' on the forms. Once this program of harassment and denial of education was in place the Bahá'ís were forced to educate their children at home or to study by correspondence. One interviewee studied at the correspondence university established by the Bahá'ís after the Revolution.

The adult interviewees formed basically two different age groups. The first group were under forty years of age and single. They were threatened either by direct persecution or by the possibility of it, and by the ruling of the new regime that denied Bahá'ís the right to education and employment. The second group was composed of parents who could not endure the threat to their children's future created by the new regime. The largest number in both groups left Iran in the 1980s when the persecution was most intense. There were more women than men in the survey and the possible reasons for this are examined in Chapter Ten.

Of the adults and youth in this study who escaped the conditions in Iran, 25% were either in their late teens or early twenties when they left, 12.3% of them were in their thirties or 4.9% were in their forties. One young man, aged twenty years, described why he made the decision to become a refugee:

I left Iran because of the atrocities. When I was three I knew that there was no life worth living for us in Iran. There is no opportunity for education because of our religion. I couldn't even get married because Bahá'ís weren't allowed. We had lots of troubles and all kinds of restrictions. You could be killed at any time that didn't make sense to me. I reasoned that I have sacrificed all these things why should I sacrifice my life? My father went to gaol for a couple of weeks and my brother was arrested. The Bahá'í community in Tabriz suffered a lot. You probably know how many Bahá'ís were executed in Tabriz. About fourteen or fifteen prominent people from the Bahá'í community were in prison. All these things that had happened caused me to think the only solution was to leave the country. So my friend and I decided to leave.²⁹³

An interviewee who lived in Mazindaran, in the North of Iran close to Turkey, described the persecution he and his family lived with all his life and said his final decision to leave came when he was 22 years of age. He had watched his young sister growing up and became angry for her sake. He had learned to live with the difficulties but when his sister was old enough to leave he decided she would be better off outside Iran. Their father agreed to help them and sold a property to raise the money to pay smugglers.

All my life they were throwing stones at us, calling us names then after the Revolution they broke our windows. Then they burnt our house, they took our land, but the main reason we left Iran was for education and the prospect of a better life outside Iran.²⁹⁴

When Iran began a war with Iraq in 1980 it lasted for eight years and during that period young men were regularly conscripted into the army. The death toll on both sides in that war was immense. Aside from the usual threat of becoming a casualty of war, Bahai's knew that being in the Army meant almost certain death. As noted earlier they were immediately put in the front line and if an Iraqi did not shoot them other Moslem soldiers were liable to assassinate them without fear of reprisal. The threat of conscription during the war years was sufficient motivation for many young men to migrate:

I left Iran because they wanted to put me in the army. I had started a plumbing business and it was going well. Then somebody told me they were coming for me to make me go in the Army. They came to my house looking for me and so my brother Rouhollah and I decided to escape.²⁹⁵

²⁹³ Interviewee 24209.

²⁹⁴ Interviewee 29269

²⁹⁵ Interviewee 781412

I was not allowed to do any more schooling. They wanted me to go into the Army and that was the main reason why I left. If you are a Bahá'í they send you straight to the front line. If the Iraq's didn't kill you the Moslems would. I heard this story about one of these killers. He killed a Bahá'í soldier and because he was a Moslem he wasn't punished.²⁹⁶

Married couples with young children, the second big group of refugees, felt vulnerable amidst the social upheaval that erupted all around them. The memories of their own persecuted childhood crystallized into a resolve not to let this happen to their children. They were the ones who had the most to lose if they stayed and the most to gain from settlement in a country that could provide a better future for their children. By reminding themselves they were leaving for their children's sake they could summon the courage to face the hardships of being a refugee.

In Iran the extended family is an important social unit that provides financial support for each member in times of need. Many of the refugees said their families helped them raise the money to pay the smugglers who facilitated their escape from Iran. The price paid to smugglers was 400 and 500 thousand tumans or \$Aus.8 – 10,000. The size of the figure indicates a certain economic status, showing that they or their relatives had assets that could be sold to raise the money. But it was still difficult because even middle class families needed time to sell their assets.

Women were affected by the war between Iran and Iraq in a different way to the men. They were expected to remain at home and although they were free of the fear of being drafted they were afraid for the men in their families. Their daily lives were affected when the cities were bombed and food shortages began. The women most disadvantaged by this situation were women with children and whose husbands were liable to be conscripted:

I was so scared because my father and my brother were out of a job because they were Bahá'ís. If something happened to my husband I would not have any income to support my ten-year-old son and my baby. What could I do? I couldn't do anything in Iran. There were no jobs for women. I was nearly having a nervous break down because of all the bombing. My youngest son was only twelve months old. Every night he would wake up frightened and he stopped talking. Every night one of my relatives' homes would be bombed. We couldn't survive, my sons and me. If the bombs didn't kill me the stress was going to kill me.²⁹⁷

²⁹⁶ Interviewee 67312

²⁹⁷ Interviewee 761112

The Bahá'ís who had not experienced persecution before the Revolution and enjoyed a peaceful relationship with their Moslem colleagues and neighbors found the social atmosphere changed after the Revolution. One man whose mother was a Moslem and who had not been very active in the Bahá'í community felt safe because he did not have a high profile as a Bahá'í. Out of curiosity he asked one educated woman why she had started to wear a chador and when she replied, 'Khomeini says we have to wear chador'. He said to her 'But he is just a simple mullah. Why do you have to do what he says?' Later he was warned that making such comments against the regime was very dangerous and he was informed he was being watched and was possibly even on an interrogation list. He decided he would have to get his family out of the country. He migrated to the United States before applying to Australia for a family visa.²⁹⁸

When the new regime had been in power for a number of years fear was so widespread in Iranian society that people were reporting on others, a situation reminiscent of events that occurred in other totalitarian states. One woman explained how this affected her family:

We lived in Bandarabbas in the South. The city is half Shi'ite and half Sunni. Before the Revolution people were friendly and they lived happily together. Some Bahá'ís were in business with Moslems and some women married Moslems. After the Revolution everything changed. My mother and I didn't suffer any persecution but my brother was beaten up by a bunch of Moslem youth and that is why we left. We were afraid for the future.²⁹⁹

The callous way that family members were imprisoned and executed left relatives, particularly the younger ones, with a desperate desire to escape whatever the cost. The suffering endured by those who had been in prison and the knowledge that many did not survive created a sense of impending doom in the heart of many Bahá'ís:

Our family suffered from heavy persecution. My Uncle was executed because of his contribution to National Spiritual Assembly. They killed my Uncle by firing squad. One morning they rang up and said he was executed but they didn't give his body back to his family. My cousin, his son, went many times there looking for his father's body and eventually found his father's body, not in a mass grave, in an individual grave with no coffin. It was not near the prison where he was executed but a fair way away because Moslems believe infidels cannot be buried with others. My father was sentenced to death, but they never could find him and came to our house looking for him. Then they came back and told us tomorrow you come to court. That was it. We knew we had to leave. We sold some things; some items not many because we didn't have time to get

²⁹⁸ Interviewee 612611

²⁹⁹ Interviewee 41310

properly organized. With the money we paid smugglers to get us out in a hurry. I'm not sure how much, somewhere like five or six thousand dollars.³⁰⁰

The people who had been in prison and were in danger of being arrested again had to make a quick decision to flee:

The Iranian authorities arrested me only because I was a Bahá'í. I was in prison for two months with the 100 Bahá'ís from Shiraz. Many of them were hanged but I was temporarily released and after my release a Moslem neighbour, she was a very good lady, saved my life by telling me that the Revolutionary Guards were coming to get me. So in the night we left without any belongings, just the clothes we had on, and we drove our car to Teheran.³⁰¹

In summary the main push factor that caused the Iranian Bahá'ís to become migrants or refugees arose from the religious persecution the Bahá'í community had been subjected to, not only after the Revolution but all of their lives. However the Revolution of 1979 created what can be described as a diaspora of Iranians. Those who left voluntarily before the Revolution, such as the pioneers, were in a better position economically than those who were forced to escape. The students who were studying overseas were in a difficult situation financially but were assisted by the international Bahá'í community until their circumstances improved but many chose to become refugees. Fear of the further loss of their freedom caused young people to decide they had to leave and create a new life somewhere else. Many families fled to protect their children. The individuals in danger of being returned to a prison where they had experienced interrogation and torture had the strongest motivation to leave. In reality the entire Bahá'í population in Iran threatened by the Islamic authorities after the Revolution had to make a decision whether to leave or stay.

Their decisions were influenced by individual factors such as age, gender, their education level, and their economic status. The people who knew they were on the hit lists of the Revolutionary guards made their decision to escape in a hurry. Some left immediately during the night when they heard the guards were coming for them because if they remained they were facing immediate imprisonment, torture and the possibility of execution. Once the decision to migrate had been made the flight had to be carried out by whatever means available. The flight experience was different for every migrant and these flight stories are dealt with in the following chapter.

³⁰⁰ Interviewee 46710

³⁰¹ Interviewee 19129

CHAPTER SIX

Migration

O Land of ours....
 Remember us now, wandering
 Among the thorns of the desert,
 Wandering in rocky mountains,
 Remember us now,
 In tumultuous cities across the deserts
 And oceans
 Remember us with our eyes full of dust,
 That never clears in a world of ceaseless wanderings.

Jabra Ibrahim Jabr ³⁰²

The act of migration is often pictured in metaphors to convey the emotions that the loss of familiar territory creates. For example Diaspora, of Greek origin, means the spreading of seeds and Cohen uses plant metaphors in what he describes as ‘the good gardener’s guide to migration’.³⁰³ Exiles are described as being uprooted and dispersed. Refugees, victims of persecution, are being “weeded out” because there are too many of them and they are inhibiting the growth of other plants. “Cross pollinating” is used to describe cultural changes when migrants of different ethnicities arrive and enrich one another’s culture. Culture is described as pollen, borne by wind or water, that changes the structure of native plants, and people who search for their ancestors are described as digging up their roots. Ager used the analogy of birds to describe migration, and as noted earlier theorized that it has three stages, preflight, flight and arrival.³⁰⁴ Preflight ends when a decision to migrate has been made and the flight begins. Most analogies have their shortcomings and Ager’s imagery falls down during flight because humans do not have the freedom of birds and need help, creating a stage of dependency. This chapter examines the flight of the migrants and the experiences they had while they were in transit.

³⁰² Jabra Ibrahim Habra, 1953, ‘ Writing the Palestinian Diaspora Through Poetry,’ *Journal of the South Pacific Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies*, 1993, pp. 34-35
www.mccc.murdoch.edu.au/readingroom/litserv/SPAN/34/Duhou.html accessed 2004

³⁰³ Cohen, *Diasporas*, p. 178

³⁰⁴ Ager, *Refugees: Perspectives on the Refugee Experience*.

Refugees and migrants are vulnerable to forces over which they have no control and the degree of danger and vulnerability depends on the circumstances under which they leave. Migrants using commercial transport, such as buses and airlines, may be subject to unexpected incidents but have a safer flight than a refugee. The refugee who pays a people smuggler is completely dependent on the vagaries of a system that is inherently dangerous. During travel, even when refugees are safe out of the reach of persecution they are still pawns in the hands of smugglers or agencies. Their flight experiences influence their ability to reconstruct their new identity in a host society and it seems reasonable to expect that the more severe the experience, the stronger the motivation for a migrant to adapt to their new homeland, because they cannot return.

Iranians use the word 'ghorbat' to describe the feeling of loss and loneliness resulting from exile. According to Khalili the concept of 'ghorbat' or 'being a stranger' is found in both classical and modern Persian poetry:³⁰⁵

One condemned to ghorbat not only suffers the physical condition of distance, but an intense intellectual and emotional alienation as well. The loneliness and loss associated with ghorbat permeates our conscious understanding of the world in which we live and memories of the space we have left. Memory constructs connections which will allow us to access that lost space with which we were as familiar in such a way as to recover our sense of balance and happiness. By becoming a version of reality we can contrast it against the reality of our every day lives in ghorbat. It permits hope and provides an alternative to our powerlessness.³⁰⁶

Some Iranian Bahá'ís came to Australia by choice, others came as refugees, and both groups had a variety of flight experiences. The amount of time they had to organize their departure, a year or a night, determined the degree of control they had during their flight. It influenced issues such as the amount of cash they could raise. If they decided to leave on tourist visas they needed enough money for travel and living expenses while they searched for a suitable destination. The people who decided to pioneer or those who left before the Revolution for other reasons, in the 1950s and 1960s, could choose to travel by less expensive means such as by sea. If they had social capital such as qualifications and contacts and had sufficient time to locate a destination, such as Australia, they became voluntary migrants less subject to the pressures that forced migration creates.

³⁰⁵ Khalili, 'Mixing memory and desire', p. 3

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 3

Among the interviewees twenty per cent were either pioneers or children of pioneers whose motives for migration were basically religious. When asked about the way they organized their journey several mentioned feeling a sense of confirmation when their decision to pioneer was assisted by events. There is a constant theme in these stories, that they were assisted by unseen forces even when it seemed as though many obstacles stood in their way. One man said he felt God had helped him to migrate. He wanted to pioneer but did nothing about it until he was forced to leave. His father-in-law informed him that the authorities were looking for him and a friend offered him a way out by giving him employment in Lesotho in Africa. He saw this opportunity as divine assistance. This man eventually migrated to Australia with his family.³⁰⁷

One woman who had five children and whose husband was in the Army wanted to pioneer but particular problems, such as insufficient funds, stood in the way of her desire. There were restrictions on travel for Iranian army officers who needed special permission to leave the country. She explained how she used a dream to help her fulfill her desire to pioneer:

My husband was in the Army and we did not think it was possible for him to leave Iran. But I had a dream that we would go to pioneering. When I woke up I said to my husband, Habib, we are going to Australia. He just laughed but he must have told his fellow officers because one day his General was in the office and said, 'Do you know who the guy who wants to go to Australia is?' My husband said, 'That is me.' The General said 'Bring me your papers', and he signed so nobody could say anything about us leaving because the General signed the papers. When our visas came to go to Australia my husband was away in Germany. The whole house was packed when he came home. I said him we are going to Australia and he said with what? I said we are going to sell everything. We did it and bought our tickets and flew to Australia.³⁰⁸

As mentioned in Chapter Five many Iranians did not intend to migrate but left the country temporarily because of their concerns about civil unrest both before and after the Revolution. In 1978 and 1979 people holding valid passports were able to fly out of the country as tourists. While they were outside some of them realized they could not go home. They had taken their holidays hoping the situation would stabilize. The disturbances intensified and consequently they had to make the hard decision not to go back to Iran. Seven of the interviewees in this study became migrants under these circumstances.

³⁰⁷ Interviewee 522111

³⁰⁸ Interviewee 26259

Iranians with contacts outside the country could leave on business visas and were able to move money out. The majority of the people who left under these circumstances had sufficient capital to migrate to the United States but two interviewees in this category chose to come to Australia:

We were more fortunate than others. My husband had a business exporting carpets and he had contacts in Belgium. We flew out of Iran to Belgium and my husband started a carpet importing business in Luxembourg. We were there for two years and eventually obtained visas for Australia and we flew here.³⁰⁹

Some migrants applied for visas in two or three different countries with Australia as their second or third choice. The most popular destinations were the United States, Canada, England or other European countries.

Those who were forced to become refugees had only one way to get out of Iran, by hiring people smugglers. Twenty eight interviewees in this study left Iran in the 1980s and 1990s as refugees. People smuggling became a growth industry along the borders of Iran after the Revolution, and the smugglers charged exorbitant fees, as mentioned earlier, approximately ten thousand Australia dollars.³¹⁰ There were two routes used by people escaping from Iran. One route went through Pakistan, the most commonly used, and the other went through Turkey.

The route through Turkey was more difficult and more dangerous than the way through Pakistan for several reasons. It took longer because the mountains they had to cross were steeper than the route through Pakistan. The mountains along the north of Iran reach 16,000 ft. and along the Pakistani border about 9,000 ft. The uncertain weather in the north provided cover for escape but also created freezing temperatures, deep snow and blizzards. One man said his time of departure was delayed several times by the weather. The crossing had to be made at the end of winter when the snow provided a cover for escapees and kept the guards out of the mountains, but the weather could not be so severe that it prevented travel. To use this method of flight individuals needed sufficient cash to meet the smugglers' demands and enough courage and resilience to face the dangers and the difficulties associated with illegal flight.

The people smugglers who accompanied the refugees into Turkey were Kurds familiar with the region. Iranians who made the decision to escape had to find people to put them in touch with the smuggling ring. Then a smuggler would contact them, request money in advance,

³⁰⁹ Interviewee 746

and inform them of the date they would be leaving. The escapees left their homes at night and met up with the smuggler at a pre-arranged place. Eight of the interviewees, all Northern Iranians, escaped through Azerbaijan and over the mountains to Turkey.

In Turkey surveillance of the mountain passes was more concentrated than in Pakistan because the Government had a policy of rejecting refugees. Consequently its police force and army were less tolerant and more efficient than those on the Pakistani border. A successful escape through the mountains to Turkey could only be attempted by the young and fit who could survive the rigors of the journey or extremely desperate.

Well prepared smugglers provided horses for their customers. A woman who travelled with her family through the mountains remembers riding for five days. Once, she said, the horse's foot slipped on the ice and she fell into a freezing river but the smugglers pulled her out and she survived. She also remembered that in her group the men and women travelled separately.³¹¹

The questions put to interviewees about their escapes were usually answered in narrative form:

We left at night and you asked me if I was frightened. The answer is I was scared to death. We were chased by armed guards in the mountains. I could hear the bullets hitting the rocks around us. They saw us from the valley floor and we kept climbing and then we couldn't see them as the mountains got higher and the weather got worse. It was snowing, there was snow everywhere and eventually we couldn't see half an inch in front of us and the guy who was guiding us got lost. We kept going round in circles and the guide said, 'We have to go back. If we stay here all night we will freeze to death'. But we wanted to keep going and we found a village where we stayed for two nights. We couldn't get out because the snow was up to our waists. When we left that village we had to walk at night until five in the morning and sleep in the day. It took about five or six nights. The first night we had to cross a river and it was freezing. We found accommodation in villages and paid them with money we had sewn into our clothes. We had to abandon our luggage and the smugglers said they would send it on to Turkey but they didn't. When we got into Turkey we stayed in the first village we came to and after that we had to walk through the mountains around road blocks. The road blocks were there to stop refugees getting through, particularly Kurds. Some Kurdish fighters took us with seven other guys on a safe route through the mountains.³¹²

Other interviewees in this study, who left Iran through Turkey five years later, had similar experiences but conditions were a little easier because they met no armed guards on the way.

³¹⁰ Interviewee 73612

³¹¹ Interviewee 997

³¹² Interviewee 24209

This difference could be due to the fact that conditions in Azerbaijan had changed, or that they were just lucky. One young man left with his sixteen year old sister. Their father sold a property to raise the money to pay the smugglers and the two of them left their town of Sari in a car. They had to walk through snow in the mountains for eight days, staying in villages on the way, and did not see any guards. They travelled in a group of five refugees, all young Bahá'ís, and when they arrived in Turkey they caught a bus to Ankara and registered as refugees.³¹³

Refugees who left Iran through Turkey had to stay in hotels after they arrived in Ankara. The Bahá'í community in Turkey was not in a position to assist them as they did in Pakistan. Fortunately, in Turkey their applications to migrate to Australia were processed fairly swiftly and the Australian Embassy provided them with plane tickets soon after the visas were issued.

Iranians who escaped through Pakistan also had to contact smugglers through people who knew where to find them. The fee was similar to that charged by the smugglers in the north, approximately ten thousand Australian dollars. Most of these people organized their escape route in Teheran and if the city was not their normal place of residence, they had to go to Teheran and stay with relatives or friends until their travel arrangements were completed:

We had to leave Shiraz with only a few belongings and the clothes we had on because the neighbor told us the guards were coming to get me in the morning. When we got to Teheran we sold our car and gave the money to a Baluchi man to help us escape.³¹⁴

The most widely used route into Pakistan from Teheran went through Zahendan. (See Map 2). This part of the journey could be made in utility trucks owned by smugglers, or the intending escapees could travel to the border with relatives. Most of them were afraid to use planes in case they got caught on the way but some flew to Zahendan and then traveled by road the 150 miles to the border near Kashan.³¹⁵ One interviewee explained that she and her sister left Teheran by plane. They were to meet up with eleven others who were travelling on a different flight. When they arrived at their destination in Baluchistan they discovered that the other escapees had been arrested at the airport in Iranshah. The smugglers told the two girls they to had leave immediately without the others and there was nothing they could do to help them³¹⁶.

³¹³ Interviewee 29269

³¹⁴ Interviewee 19129

³¹⁵ Interviewee 166

³¹⁶ Interviewee 622711

Although there was an element of risk the majority of people smugglers were fairly reliable because their income depended on their reputation:

We didn't have any money. We had given all of it to the smugglers. I only had my jewellery that the smuggler had confiscated when we left Iran. He said when we get to Karachi I will give the jewellery back to you. I didn't think he would give it back but he did. Smuggling was his job and he said if he wasn't trustworthy he wouldn't be hired again.³¹⁷

If there were no mishaps, or the smugglers were confident they could bribe the border police, they would drive all the way but the most common means of travel through the mountains were either walking or riding on camels. One interviewee explained how he was collected by a smuggler who also picked up five other young men and drove them to a derelict building in the hills. They waited for two days and were terrified when a police car pulled up outside. The policeman reassured them that he was working with the smugglers and whenever they came to a check point the policeman would tell the guards that he had arrested the men and was taking them for questioning. Because this group was fortunate enough to find a corrupt policeman they did not have to trek over the mountains or use camels. Nevertheless the refugees were afraid of the policeman, despite his reassurances.³¹⁸

Women were at greater risk than men, especially single girls. As mentioned earlier they were more vulnerable because of the possibility of rape or kidnapping. One interviewee, a young woman, said her parents decided to help her escape with her brother. The smuggler assured them that there would be other girls in the same party. On this condition her brother agreed that she could come. He would not have done so if he had realized that she would be the only female in the party:

When we got to Shiraz there was only me and my brother and three other boys and my brother was very upset and said 'now I don't want you to come with me'. But I insisted because my parents had already paid the smugglers. We travelled by bus and truck. I was sitting in the front with the driver and my brother said, 'If the guards stop us don't tell them we are related. Don't say I am with you. You are on your own'. He was very frightened but nothing happened and we were driven all the way to Karachi.³¹⁹

Some groups were able to travel fairly quickly through the mountains without any problems. For others the journey took longer because of travelling conditions. Either there

³¹⁷ Interviewee 44610

³¹⁸ Interviewee 542211

were guards in the area and they had to hide during the day or they were chased by guards and suffered from tension and fear because of the experience:

It took six days and six nights of travelling because we had to hide in the daytime and travel at night. When we were crossing the mountains we had to walk and were chased by guards in helicopters.³²⁰

One woman described how she left Iran with a group of twelve young people. They travelled for three hours by car and then walked across the mountains, staying in a village for one night. A Baluchi man collected them and they were taken into Pakistan in three cars. This group saw no guards and experienced no problems.³²¹ It was a matter of circumstances and luck.

Those who were children when their families escaped from Iran remember some details of their flight. The memories they have retained depend on either their age or how severe their experiences were. If the journey went smoothly then parents could shield the children from the worst of their fears. One woman who was twelve years old when her family escaped from Iran described why she and her brother were not frightened. They were protected by their parents who acted as though they were having an adventure. They rode horses for part of the journey and she remembers her pleasure at being able to ride.³²² Another woman who was nine years old when her family left said she remembers the hunger, the thirst and the running.³²³ One man who was a three year old child when he travelled with his parents said the experiences were etched into his mind. He said that he remembered the journey quite clearly but realized these memories were reinforced by his parents telling the stories again and again:

We escaped from Iran assisted by professional smugglers who have a network in Pakistan. We were hiding from the border police all the way. We had to ride camels and the smugglers used the stars to find the way but the weather was overcast and my father and I got separated from the rest. We were lost and it took us 14 days to cross the mountains because of the bad weather. When we arrived in Pakistan we rode motor bikes, provided by the smugglers, for the rest of the journey and finally caught up with other members of our family. My parents had some money and they bought tickets to Australia with Thai Airlines

³¹⁹ Interviewee 44610

³²⁰ Interviewee 19129

³²¹ Interviewee 552411

³²² Interviewee 12137

³²³ Interviewee 48710.

but by the time we arrived we had no money left and had to rely on Government assistance.³²⁴

The journey by camel was one of extreme hardship for families travelling with young children. One woman described how terrified she was when they were being pursued by border guards and her small daughter, three years of age, fell off the camel. The smuggler sitting behind the mother said 'We are not stopping for her' and she thought she had lost her child. Fortunately another smuggler was more compassionate and he stopped to pick the child up. The daughter has a scar on her face from a wound she received when she fell to the ground. Other parents gave their children sleeping tablets so that they could not cry out or realize what was happening:

We escaped by walking through the mountains. My eldest son was only one year and a half and we gave him sleeping pills to keep him quiet and my husband carried him on his back. The guards almost caught us and we had to run and then one car picked us up and the driver went very fast and we got through.³²⁵

We left in a big group, my sister and her family and other people. My children were small, the youngest was only four and my sister had four young kids and another family had young children so we had lots of kids in our group and it was very hard to see them suffer and not be able to do anything about it.³²⁶

The smugglers preferred to take people across the mountains in groups because they made more money that way and the extra cash made the risks worthwhile. However the travellers found that this method did not improve conditions for them. The smugglers mixed different people in the groups they moved over the border. This added to the problems for the Bahá'ís. Sometimes people in their group would be Mujahdin opposed to Khomeini. Because they were fundamentalist Moslems they were hostile to the Bahá'ís and resented travelling with them:

We were 32 people together and some were Mujahdin which made the travelling conditions more difficult. They hate the Bahá'ís and treated us badly; consequently after our arrival in Pakistan I was very sick and felt I had made a big mistake. I was sorry I left home and I worried about how we would live.³²⁷

³²⁴ Interviewee 14157

³²⁵ Interviewee 35210

³²⁶ Interviewee 69512

³²⁷ Interviewee 166

The conditions in mountain villages where the fleeing refugees sought shelter were very primitive and some became ill. The villagers sometimes fed the travellers but the food was rough and the water often contaminated:

We travelled in a utility with a covered back but then something unexpected happened, probably the driver heard noises that meant there were other vehicles in the area. The driver told us we had to get out of the vehicle and walk around the mountain and we were forced to spend one night in a mountain village where there was a well but it was full of the hair of the sheep. Luckily one family had something like a tap with running water inside their house and it appeared to be clean. They gave us water and fed us with rough bread and yogurt.³²⁸

My son was only three years of age when we left Iran and he became very ill on the journey with a high fever and I was very frightened for his life. We only had food on one of the nights when the Baluchi man left us some. Some other people who helped us wanted more money but we told them we didn't have any. We kept our money because we thought we would need it in Pakistan. At the border we had to pay bribes to the police and then other police chased us but we kept saying to the driver go faster, faster and we got through and eventually arrived in Islamabad.³²⁹

When the refugees arrived in Pakistan they went to the homes of Bahá'ís whose addresses had been given to them before they left Iran. Several businessmen owned large houses and were willing to accommodate the refugees for varying periods after their arrival. If the travellers had sufficient funds they could fly to Islamabad or Karachi and apply immediately for refugee status at the United Nations office. Some hired motor bikes and travelled overland. Families and people travelling in groups were forced to rent accommodation while they waited for their refugee status to be confirmed and their visas granted.

The conditions refugees experienced in Pakistan varied. A number of people experienced hardship and others were treated very well. One woman explained that she and her brother were treated with kindness by their smuggler because he had political ambitions and he thought the Bahá'ís would be able to help his career:

The smuggler who brought us to Pakistan was of a pleasant disposition. He looked after us and he took us to see some beautiful places and to the Minister's house. He was a political person and he seemed to think by helping us he would receive some credibility so he took care of us because we were Bahá'í refugees. While we were in Karachi we had a really good time because of this man. He spent a few days showing us around and then he took us to the Bahá'í Centre.

³²⁸ Interviewee 69512

³²⁹ Interviewee 19129

We didn't stay long because they didn't want too many people in the one place and so we went to Lahore. We had credential cards that we received from the Bahá'í office in Teheran and it all went fairly smoothly. After six months we received our refugee status.³³⁰

Living conditions for most of the refugees were crowded. One woman described how she and her family lived with fourteen people in the same small apartment. They had to share cooking facilities and use the same bathroom facilities, and the apartments they could afford had only minimal furnishings. For weeks they had nothing to occupy their time except waiting for their visas.³³¹ Most of the Iranians were unaccustomed to the primitive living conditions they had to endure in Pakistan. Several mentioned they were shocked by the poor hygiene and the dirt. They were horrified by the widespread poverty that seemed to be much worse than conditions of the poor in Iran. One woman said her mother was so shocked by the dirt and poverty; she kept crying and saying she was going home.³³²

The months spent in Pakistan were especially hard for those accustomed to a high standard of living in Iran. Individuals who had been in the upper ranks of the army or who worked with the Shah had lived in relative luxury. By choosing to become refugees they lost not only their assets but their status in society. From being people in control of their lives they had to become 'nothing', as one man explained. He was an army officer accustomed to command and after he became a refugee he felt powerless. Although he realized he would be killed if he stayed he said he sometimes wondered if that might not have been a preferable situation. He would have kept his honor and his dignity.

Refugees had to wait from two months to two years for their visas after refugee status was granted, but those who had relatives in Australia were processed fairly quickly at the Australian Embassy.³³³ The refugees who left in a hurry without obtaining credentials had a more difficult time and sometimes had to wait for long periods, up to two years.

Bahá'í refugees with credentials apparently received more favorable treatment than other groups. According to some interviewees some Moslems, who knew about the preferential treatment, claimed to be Bahá'ís hoping to take advantage of this situation but if they did not have the correct credentials their claims only made things more difficult for Bahá'ís without credentials.

³³⁰ Interviewee 44610.

³³¹ Interviewee 19129

³³² Interviewee 41310

³³³ Interviewee 12137

The situation in Iran was well known to the United Nations due to the unceasing efforts by the international administrative body of the Bahá'í community, the Universal House of Justice. Their office in Haifa kept in constant touch with the U.N. Office in New York informing them about what was happening in Iran and of the persecution of the Bahá'ís. In addition Bahá'ís all over the world made concerted efforts to alert the press in their countries to the plight of the Iranian Bahá'ís and resources were provided to help refugees or the children of people trapped in Iran.

The Iranian Bahá'ís who became refugees experienced many different kinds of loss, hardship, privation and trauma during their passage to Australia. These experiences on the journey determined to a greater or lesser extent how well they coped with their settlement process after they arrived in their host society. It would seem likely that the migrants who survived the dangers of the journey and who were no longer victims of a system that persecuted them were provided with a strong motivation to make a success out of living in Australia. The factors that pulled Iranian migrants and refugees to Australia are examined in Chapter Seven.

Map 2. Iran ³³⁴

From the map the two routes of flight taken by the Baha'i refugees can be seen. Refugees, accompanied by people smugglers entered Pakistan through Zahedan on the border of the two countries. The refugees who fled to Turkey entered the country through the mountains to the northwest of Tabriz.

³³⁴ Images 2005 - <http://www.dejkam.com/iran/> accessed 2005

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE PULL FACTORS

Why the Iranian Bahá'ís chose Australia as their Destination.

Theories about immigration have labeled migrant experience or spatial mobility as being influenced by push, pull and hold processes and it is conventional to separate these issues when looking at a group of migrants. However push and pull factors in the migration process work in conjunction. For example, people driven out of their own country by religious persecution are pulled towards countries that provide a refuge from persecution. People from poorer countries are forced to seek work in more developed countries where there is a shortage of labour. After the sixteenth century the native Irish were rendered landless by British law and consequently in the nineteenth century Irish free settlers were pulled to Australia because of the availability of land. For most migrants the push factors have been traumatic and therefore were negative experiences but pull factors are positive i.e. factors of attraction. Attraction can be real or imagined qualities but there are some countries such as Australia, New Zealand, the United States and Canada that are known as settlement societies and have at times been represented as havens for the poor, downtrodden and oppressed. These are the destinations that represent a sanctuary and have attracted people fleeing persecution or those looking for places likely to welcome migrants. In addition to being seen as a safe haven there were other factors that pulled the Iranian Bahá'ís to Australia. For example it was seen as a place where opportunities for skilled migrants were known to exist. Other pull factors included language, educational opportunities, media images, social mobility and the international reputation of Australia as a multicultural society. The availability of farm land was not a factor as it had been for migrants in the nineteenth century. The majority of Iranians who migrated to Australia were urban dwellers with particular skills that did not include agricultural qualifications or farming experience. In addition the absence of mandatory military service was a factor for some refugees during the Iran-Iraq war and a few chose to come to Australia because it was seen as a peaceful country. Finally the issue of family reunion pulled a significant percentage of the Iranians to Australia. Chain migration operates through informal channels and is more than just

family reunion. It is often motivated by information received from friends already settled in the host society who recommend it as a suitable destination.

Because the major push for the migration of Iranian Bahá'ís was religious persecution their migration can be compared to other historical diasporas caused by this factor. The best known diaspora was that of the Jews. Their history of migration and persecution began with the Babylonian Exile in 597 B.C.³³⁵ and continued into the twentieth century as they sought a succession of safe havens. Many groups of people subjected to religious persecution migrated to the United States. British, Dutch and Swedish religious groups³³⁶ migrated to America when William Penn guaranteed that no Christian would suffer from religious discrimination in the region that became Pennsylvania and Delaware.³³⁷ As mentioned earlier the first group of people to migrate to Australia to escape religious persecution was the German Lutherans who settled in rural areas in South Australia. The Germans became successful settlers and the town of Hahndorf still retains its ethnic character. It is a tourist attraction because of its unusual ambience. As with other migrants who escaped persecution the settlers demonstrated that the push factor of persecution tends to give those involved in the process a strong motivation to make a success of settlement.

Freedom of religion was not the only freedom that made Australia an attractive destination for migrants from Iran. One woman said she heard about Australia in Turkey and was impressed that the Australian government guaranteed not only freedom of religion but also freedom of speech. She indicated this information surprised her because she had not heard about Australia before she went to Turkey:

Why did we come to Australia? Because here it is free. Iran is like a prison. If you say what you like in Iran you are dead. It is as simple as that. When we arrived in Turkey we heard that Australia was free and so we decided to apply for refugee visas to come here. Here you are free to say everything. You are free to believe whatever you like and say what your religion is.³³⁸

Refugee Assistance Policy

³³⁵ James Parkes, 1964, *A History of the Jewish People*, Penguin, London, p.11

³³⁶ Howard B. Furer 1972 *The Scandinavians in America 1866-1970: A Chronology and Fact Book*, Oceania Publications, New York.

³³⁷ Allan Nevins, Henry Steele Commager and Jeffrey Morris, 1951 *A Pocket History of the United States*, Washington Square Press, New York, p.9

³³⁸ Interviewee 36210

The special humanitarian refugee assistance program for Bahá'ís allowed almost three thousand Iranians to obtain visas during the 1980s. Among the interviewees in this study the largest number were refugees. This was a contrast to the overall migrant entry groups of whom the largest number came through the family reunion scheme.

In both Turkey and Pakistan many Iranians who preferred to migrate to the United States were advised to apply at the Australian Embassy. Australian offices in Pakistan and Turkey were kept informed of the program and this meant that applications from refugees for visas to Australia were handled quickly and in a positive way.³³⁹

One group of young Bahá'ís who arrived in Ankara in Turkey after the crossing the mountains said their first choice of destination was the United States but the lawyer they hired, a Bahá'í from Iraq, recommended trying the Australian Embassy first. He told them about Australia's policy of helping refugees and pointed out that they were more likely being accepted as migrants by the Australian authorities. The group had two interviews and a medical checkup and was given refugee status almost immediately. The Australian government paid their airfares and provided accommodation for them on their arrival:³⁴⁰

We had no problems acquiring Australian visas in Ankara. First time we applied we got it. I am not bragging about myself, that is not the Persian way, but our interview was with a man, an Australian called Simon, who was very friendly. We didn't really have an interview in the formal sense, we just chatted. He just told me that he had to send us for a medical examination but he never did send us for that examination. I think he was embarrassed about it. He was so nice and I got the impression that some of our friends who complained about their reception were maybe exaggerating the problems.³⁴¹

We were living in England when the war between Iran and Iraq began. We couldn't return to Iran and we weren't allowed to stay in England. My mother suggested we apply for Australian visas. I had a new baby who was bright and bubbly. The gentleman in the Australian Embassy talked to me for three hours. He really liked my baby and we received our visas in five minutes without any problems.³⁴²

The special humanitarian program of 1981 showed preference for refugees with family already established in Australia or groups singled out for special attention, such as the Bahá'ís. Most of the refugees who arrived in Australia in the 1970s were from Vietnam or the

³³⁹ Robert Holton and Judith Sloan, 1994, *Immigration policy – intake and settlement issues*, Bureau of Immigration and Population Research, Australia Government Publishing Service, Canberra, p. 289

³⁴⁰ Interviewee 29269

³⁴¹ Interviewee 24209

surrounding countries. Middle Eastern migrants were only 9% of the total. This pattern changed in the 1980s and by the 1990s 28.7% of the refugee intake came from the Middle East and Africa.³⁴³

Economic migration

Historically, economic reasons are the most common cause of migration and groups of people facing poverty have regularly migrated to countries that held out the promise of employment and a better life. As mentioned earlier the discovery of gold in Australia pulled hundreds of thousand of migrants to Australia, the majority of whom came from Britain. It also pulled ethnic groups particularly the Chinese. After the Second World War many different groups such as Greeks and Italians migrated to Australia for economic reasons. Iranian Moslems, who had acquired a Western education and sufficient capital, came to Australia both before and after the Revolution in 1979 to maintain the standard of living they had known before the social upheaval. Among the Iranian Bahá'ís, economic reasons were not a major issue but a few mentioned they were pulled to Australia to find employment:

We were living in Argentina but because of inflation we could not afford to live there anymore so we decided to come to Australia.³⁴⁴

Although economics are a vital factor in determining most migratory patterns, for the particular group in this study it was not an important issue.

Language

The problem of having to learn another language is one of the biggest hurdles for migrants to overcome. If they can neither speak nor read the language of their host country they cannot read newspapers or road signs, understand television programs, apply for social services or obtain most types of employment. Prospective migrants are aware of this and consequently Australia was a desirable destination for Iranian Bahá'ís literate in English. The majority of the migrants of working age, who came on skilled migration visas, knew English in varying degrees and chose Australia as their destination for this reason:

³⁴² Interviewee 25239

³⁴³ Jupp, *Immigration*, p. 124

³⁴⁴ Interviewee 31299

We left Iran and went to England as tourists intending to apply for Australian visas after we were out of the country. We wanted to come to Australia because it is an English speaking country and both my husband and I were fluent in English.³⁴⁵

Education

The relatively low cost and the quality of Australian education was an attraction for some Iranians living outside Iran and in close proximity to Australia. Five families living in Indonesia sent their children to live with Bahá'í families in Australia when they were university students. These students eventually changed their visas to become permanent residents. One family, living in a remote area of Indonesia in 1957, brought their nine year old daughter to Australia and appealed to the National Assembly of the Bahá'ís to find a family she could live with while she was attending school. This child lived with such a family for three years and attended Canberra Grammar School as a primary student.

In the 1960s there was a movement to encourage Asian students to study in Australia, known as the Colombo Plan.³⁴⁶ It received its strongest support in Melbourne and it is not surprising that the first Iranian students to study in Australia attended university in Melbourne which at that time had a reputation for being more tolerant of Asian students.³⁴⁷ Others went overseas to England or the United States for an education and after the Revolution, when they could not return home, applied to Australia for further education. One interviewee, currently living in Canberra, was in her third year as a chemical engineering student in Iran and completed her degree in Australia at Melbourne University:³⁴⁸

Media Images of Australia

Movies were very popular in Iran before the Revolution and almost every household in the major cities had a television set. One interviewee said that when she was young in Iran in the 1960s she went to the movies four or five times a week. Consequently most Iranians had seen some images of Australia either on the wide screen or on their television sets. Promotional images of Australia and films about the way Australians live, especially those promoting the notion of freedom, sunshine and wide open spaces, attracted some middle class Iranians. One interviewee mentioned that she thought Australia was like Iran in geography and climate.

³⁴⁵ Interviewee 40210

³⁴⁶ Jupp, *Immigration*, p.112

³⁴⁷ Interviewee 15167.

³⁴⁸ Interviewee 622711

Australia also appeared to be a society where women were free to be educated and to dress as they pleased. The colour of the images was very appealing to people living in a country where after the Revolution women were forced to wear black clothing, where music was repressed or forbidden, censorship was rigid, and swimming costumes absolutely forbidden. The life in Australia represented in media images was, and still is, a pull factor especially for children and youth:

I was in love with Australia since I was 8 years old. I loved the pictures of the outback. I was fascinated by a documentary on the school by radio. I was initially disappointed with Perth, our first destination. Because of the movies I expected it to be like the outback with kangaroos and desert.³⁴⁹

Elderly people or people with conservative views were not attracted by these images for themselves nor did they find them sufficient motivation for migration, but some recognized that the images represented a place that could provide a good life for their children and grandchildren:

My father was not happy in Iran although he had a computer company and was doing very well financially. As soon as I was born he started looking for a country to migrate to. His father told him to apply for an Australian visa. He said, 'I think you would like it there. It is a good place for children.' My Grandfather had learnt about Australia from documentaries he had seen on T.V.³⁵⁰

The growth of rapid communication in the last decades of the twentieth century enabled intending migrants to obtain information about desirable locations not available to previous generations. The availability of information on television or on the Net influenced some Iranians to choose Australia as a prospective destination. Details about life in Australia were also communicated to Iranian Bahá'ís by letters or emails from friends and relatives in the 1980s and 1990s.

Social Mobility

A pull factor for young people was the possibility of social mobility. One interviewee said she had the impression that Australia was a young country. Although they were unaware of exactly what that meant, the idea of a place where young people could make a success of their

³⁴⁹ Interviewee 10137

³⁵⁰ Interviewee 51710

lives and not be hindered by a structure that promoted people because of their age, their social status and their money sounded appealing:

I heard that Australia was a new country and young people could do well here. Someone told us that you don't have to be rich to be respected in Australia. I like that idea and the thought of being a young person in a young country was attractive. A lot of people came here before us and they liked it so I persuaded my brother not to go to America but to apply for visas for Australia and it took eight months before we received them, but they paid for our plane tickets.³⁵¹

Multicultural Society.

The encouragement of migrants from places other than traditional British or European localities caused dramatic changes to Australian culture and helped develop a visibly multi-racial society. Because of these changes Australia was perceived as a multicultural and tolerant society by educated Iranians especially those who travelled overseas, who read English newspapers or who were in a position to watch international news on television in Iran. Five people mentioned multiculturalism when asked why they chose Australia as a destination and why they liked living here.

Changes in Immigration Programs

The policy shifts on immigration, discussed in Chapter Three, provided better facilities for intending migrants such as those outlined by Holton and Sloan:

1. The setting of annual planning levels, including levels for particular categories of immigrants.
2. The creating of selection rules, including a points system for various categories and sub-categories of migrants; and
3. The encouragement of potential immigrants through various media, the creation of Immigration Agreements with various governments, overseas-based migration officers, assisted passage for refugees and settlement assistance arrangements.³⁵²

The migrant recruitment, implemented by migration officers and Australian Embassy officials, received wide publicity and Iranian Bahá'ís in the process of making their decisions to migrate, both before and after the Revolution, were made aware of these policies through the

³⁵¹ Interviewee 44610

³⁵² Holton and Sloan, *Immigration policy – intake and settlement issues*, p. 281

media. Articles about the Australian recruitment of skilled migrants were printed in Iranian newspapers:

We applied to Australia for migration visas because we read in the paper Australia needed 70,000 skilled migrants. It took six months for the visas to be issued and then we flew to Australia.³⁵³

The Bahá'ís living in difficult locations heard about the possibility of acquiring visas under the skilled workers program. Some of them applied for visas at Australian Embassies in different countries and were successful in their applications. One interviewee, who had fled Iran because of persecution, was living in Africa. He wanted to leave to further his children's education. When he heard from other Bahá'ís that Australia was recruiting skilled migrants he successfully applied in this category and his family came to Australia in 1989.³⁵⁴ Several interviewees mentioned that they were impressed by their reception at the Embassies:

We went to the Australian Embassy to inquire about the possibility of becoming migrants under the skilled migration scheme and the Immigration Officer who interviewed us was Greek. He was very friendly and helpful and I thought it was amusing that he was obviously not an Australian by birth. The fact he occupied an official position made me realize that Australia was truly multicultural and gave us hope that they would accept us. We were successful in our applications to become skilled migrants and because we were self sufficient we didn't need any financial assistance from the Government. We never had any problems with any Australian officials. They were always helpful.³⁵⁵

Among the group interviewed for this survey, eighteen were pulled to Australia as a result of the skilled migration process.

Australia as a destination preferable to the United States.

Some migrants chose Australia as a destination rather than the United States because of their concerns about the American life style. One man³⁵⁶ said his father found life in the United States too stressful. He wanted the family to move to a country where life was less frenetic. It was an Australian, a Bahá'í counsellor and university lecturer, who advised them to migrate to Australia. Even though they had never visited the country and knew nothing about it they were

³⁵³ Interviewee 897

³⁵⁴ Interviewee 522111

³⁵⁵ Interviewee 31299

prepared to follow the counsellor's advice. For this family there were several pull factors but the main reason was the father's concerns. He was worried about the family's future because he disliked the American way of life.

The perception that America is a more materialistic society than Australia was mentioned by many when asked why they preferred Australia to America. One interviewee ³⁵⁷ said she was living in the United States and disliked the capitalism in the United States. She said she could not cope with it and it worried her. Others made similar comments:

We preferred the idea of Australia to the United States. My parents believed America was too materialistic and they heard that Australia had better values.³⁵⁸

Most of the refugees we knew wanted to go to America but we chose Australia as our destination because we thought it was a better place. We wanted to have a family and we thought Australia would be a good place to raise a family. In America they just want to get rich.³⁵⁹

We were living in America after the Revolution but my sister was living in Gatton. Her letters were full of good stories about her life in Australia. We were not happy in the United States. It was like a rat race. So we decided to come here and applied for visas. We received them after two years and we are very happy here.³⁶⁰

America was perceived by some as a more dangerous place than Australia, possibly due to media images or reports from Iranians already living there:

America is not a safe place. If you leave your child for a minute they might be stolen. People said Australia or New Zealand were safe places but we preferred to come to Australia.³⁶¹

I escaped Iran with my brother and he wanted to go to America but I didn't like the idea of America. It is too busy and is not safe. People don't care about each other there.³⁶²

³⁵⁶ Interviewee 22179

³⁵⁷ Interviewee 72612

³⁵⁸ Interviewee 66212

³⁵⁹ Interviewee 552411

³⁶⁰ Interviewee 612611

³⁶¹ Interviewee 552411

³⁶² Interviewee 44610

Family Reunion

A significant number of the interviewees, that is twenty migrants, responded to the pull factor of family reunion. Positive information about Australia that Iranians received from their relatives encouraged them to migrate. In addition if an intending migrant had relatives in Australia, willing to sponsor them, it fast tracked their applications. Some had family members in a position to provide assistance such as accommodation and money, and some helped with employment:

.

My father's sister and her family were living in Australia and they liked it very much. They encouraged my parents to come here. My uncle owned a café and he gave my father a job when we first arrived here and we lived with them for a while. To be with other family members was the main reason why we came to Australia.³⁶³

I came to Australia because my brother was already here and he said it is a very good place. He helped me to become established after I arrived. I don't think most Australians know what a good place it is. I think they should appreciate it more.³⁶⁴

My family chose Australia as their destination because they had relatives living in Australia who sponsored them.³⁶⁵

As mentioned earlier the 1973 Immigration laws included the Numerical Multifactor Assessment Scheme based on a point selection program.³⁶⁶ This new system allowed people of any ethnic background to immigrate providing they had enough points, with an emphasis placed on a family reunion scheme and the acceptance of skilled migrants. The family reunion scheme allowed settled migrants to bring even elderly members of their family to Australia. One man, whose mother was in prison, came to Australia as a skilled migrant and when his mother was released the rest of his family escaped as refugees. In Pakistan they applied for visas through the family reunion scheme.³⁶⁷

Older people usually migrated to join their families. In this survey the main reason the people over 50 gave for their decision to migrate was to be reunited with their children or other family members:

³⁶³ Interviewee 66212

³⁶⁴ Interviewee 622711

³⁶⁵ Interviewee 997

³⁶⁶ Burnley, 'Diversity and Difference', p.245

³⁶⁷ Interviewee 18177

I came to Australia to be with my children. Two of my children with their families live in Canberra. Another son and my daughter live in Adelaide and one son lives in Perth with his family.³⁶⁸

Two women interviewed for this study married foreigners employed by oil companies and became Australian citizens when the social disintegration in Iran first began. After becoming settlers they were in a position to help their families obtain visas through the family reunion scheme.

Appendix 3 lists the various pull factors that drew the migrants to Australia, and the factors that facilitated their journey such as whether they needed refugee finance or whether they were self funded migrants. The table shows means of travel and travel facilitation and demonstrates that the majority of the interviewees in this study came to Australia as refugees. However as mentioned earlier pull factors can have several aspects. For example some of the migrants who came as refugees in search of a safe haven also had family living in Australia. Some migrants with skills also had family living in Australia. Some refugees had a choice of Australia or the United States and chose Australia for the reasons mentioned earlier in this chapter.

The majority of the migrants in this study were pulled to Australia through the humanitarian refugee program. The second largest group came through the skilled migration scheme and the third largest group came through family reunion. A small percentage of the interviewees were born in Australia. The percentages are shown in Figure. 1 The majority of refugees, after arriving in Pakistan or Turkey, had the second stage of their journey financed by Australian aid. Some of the migrants who received refugee visas paid their own air fares out of Iran and the rest had to pay people smugglers to facilitate their escape. The majority of the migrants who came for family reasons paid their own travel expenses with just a few needing Australian aid.

³⁶⁸ Interviewee 562411

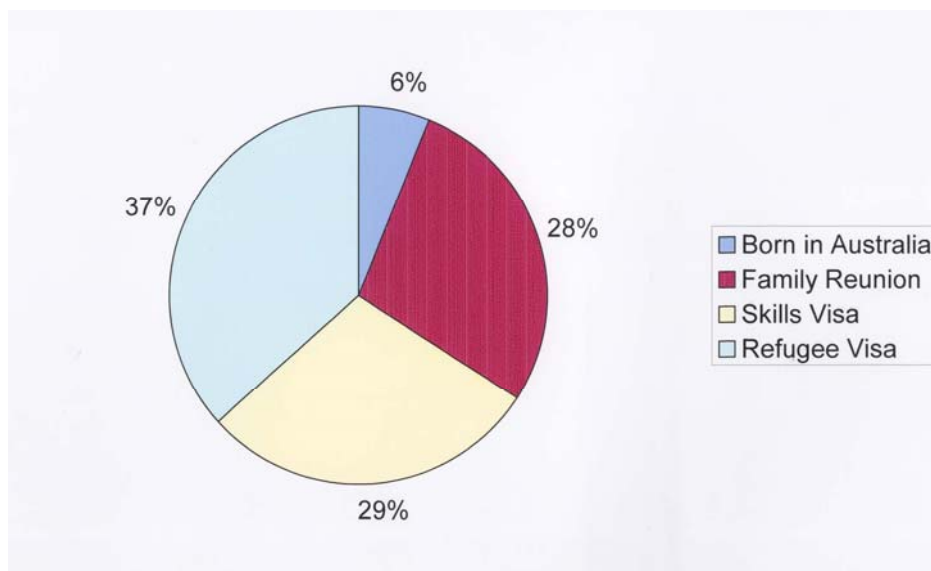


Figure 2. Demonstrates how the Iranian Baha'is in the study group arrived in Australia.

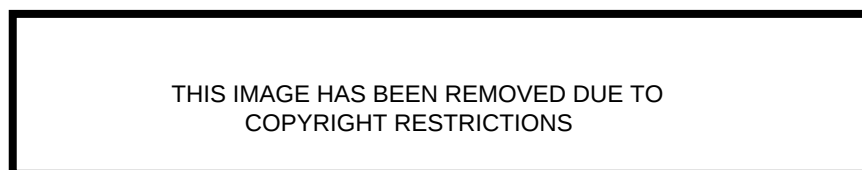


Figure 3. All settler Arrivals in Australia 1981-82 to 1996-97³⁶⁹

The largest group of migrants in the general program came under the family reunion scheme.

³⁶⁹ Castles, et. al., *Immigration and Australia*, p. 15

Australia has built up to its current population levels by immigration through the various pull factors that have influenced prospective migrants to choose it as a destination. The freedoms that Australians enjoy such as freedom of religion, freedom of speech and freedom from military conscription are decisive pull factors for migrants fleeing persecution and war in their own country. When immigration policies began to concentrate on the idea of skilled migrants the opportunity arrived at the right time for the Iranian Bahá'ís equipped with qualifications, language facilities and capital. The addition of humanitarian policies for refugees was timely for the Iranians and many took advantage of it. Other pull factors were the availability of education, media images and the values Australian society manifested. A big factor is the impression given to outsiders of Australia as a friendly place because it has a very attractive ideology of multiculturalism.

CHAPTER EIGHT

INDIVIDUAL SETTLEMENT

The third stage of migration is the arrival in the host society or in metaphorical terms the nesting process. This third stage, that is the rebuilding of a new life in another country, can be a positive or negative experience for migrants. If they are welcomed by the host society and their needs are met the result is positive. If new migrants are treated with hostility or neglected the experience is negative. The first impressions the Iranian Bahá'ís gained on their arrival in Australia were favourable because of the contrast with Iran. The contrast was extreme; they left a society that persecuted and repressed them and came to a society that, at least in the 1980s, welcomed them and provided them with a sanctuary. Although they had been pushed out of their own country by traumatic experiences the same experiences also gave them the most powerful reasons to adjust to a new country. They could never go back to Iran. They could not immerse themselves in nostalgia for their homeland or allow themselves to imagine that they would go home when things got better. Consequently these migrants had a strong incentive to 'nest' successfully. Judging whether the settlement process of a group of migrants is successful is complicated because individuals vary in their response and their ability to adapt but it is fairly safe to say that their experiences were more likely to be of a positive nature if their needs were fulfilled by their host society. Therefore this issue is examined in this chapter.

The examination of the settlement experience of individuals is structured according to 'ideal types' of settlement for small newly arrived groups posited by the Centre for Immigration and Multicultural Studies (CIMS) at the Australian National University.³⁷⁰ A small group is defined as a group not exceeding 15,000 members and 'newly settled' is defined as those migrants who arrived in Australia after 1975.³⁷¹ The CIMS criteria provided a framework to look at the factors that either assisted or hindered individuals achieving a lifestyle better than or similar to that which they enjoyed in their homeland. However the CIMS structure, as written, approaches the problem from the perspective of the

³⁷⁰ Jupp, McRobbie and York, *Settlement Needs of Small Newly Arrived Ethnic Groups*, p. 11

³⁷¹ York, *Ethno-Historical Studies in a Multicultural Australia*, p. 23

immigration authorities and the host society, whereas this study attempts to assess settlement from the perspective of the migrants. The study is not about whether the group presented a problem for the host society but why and how the group became effective settlers.

The CIMS criteria for minimalist ³⁷² settlement of the individual migrant are mainly concerned with basic needs such as self-sufficiency and the ability to function satisfactorily:

1. A migrant needs safe accommodation and employment.
2. A migrant needs to be self-sufficient.
3. A migrant needs employment that suits their physical and psychological conditions.
4. A migrant needs to be accepted within the wider society.
5. A migrant needs social acceptance amongst their workmates and neighbors.³⁷³

Employment and satisfactory accommodation are the first steps towards self-sufficiency because a migrant who is employed and fits comfortably into the workplace does not experience long-term problems or feel like a burden on the 'public purse', and is less likely to experience alienation and depression. Accommodation, the other primary need, links to employment because the type of accommodation a migrant can afford depends on his or her employment level. Many unemployed migrants are forced to seek cheap accommodation or rely on government-subsidized housing. They can experience hardship and become disillusioned if their accommodation is inadequate. For example an Italian migrant describes how inadequate treatment of migrants in 1952 led to violence:

...we thought that the government would send us to a hostel but we never expected to be sent three hundred and fifty kilometers from Melbourne. At the camp we found thousands of other migrants waiting for us because there was not much work at the time. Before we left Italy we understood that within seven days of our arrival we were entitled to a job, so we expected work soon. But seven days passed, two weeks, three, one month, two and no work and conditions weren't the best. Bonegilla had been a prison camp; we heard that Italian prisoners of war from Africa built the huts. They had tin ceilings and walls and in the day they were boiling hot, in the night freezing cold. And we weren't used to the food. Porridge for breakfast, I'd never had it in my life.

³⁷² Minimalist is a theoretical construct particularly relevant to the predominantly English-speaking migrants in previous decades and was used to illustrate the adequacy of existing approaches. It examines minimum needs of migrants during their first years in the host society. 'Settlement needs and provision: A summary'. Jupp, McRobbie, and York, *Settlement Needs of Small Newly arrived Ethnic Groups*, p. 11

³⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 11

And lumps of cheese and cold salad. It was fair enough if you were used to it but ninety per cent of us came from peasant families and were used to cooked food and our own bread. Some of us complained and they started to cook spaghetti but the cook was an Australian and I don't think he ever saw spaghetti in his life. And we had nothing to do all the time that was the thing, so we got militant.³⁷⁴

The response by the migrants to the conditions was a similar response displayed by detainees in camps in Australia in recent years. However the Australian authorities learned from experience and in the 1980s, at least, migrants were more likely to have satisfactory experiences with Government accommodation.

The third CIMS criterion focuses on the need for employment that suits the individual migrant both physically and psychologically. Of course the goal of achieving employment that suits a migrant's physical and psychological needs cannot be necessarily satisfied within a short period. For some it takes years and for others such an ideal may never be adequately fulfilled. Other CIMS minimalist needs for effective settlement are concerned with the ability to socialize, not only with colleagues and neighbours, but also with the wider society. Socialization issues focus on whether migrants are psychologically comfortable in the host society, or in other words, if they are able to fit in. This ability varies with each individual and although socialization is a minimalist requirement it runs into the maximalist criteria because socialization is also a long-term issue.

The maximalist criteria, according to the CIMS, could take a lifetime to fulfill and are not likely to be fully achieved by the majority.³⁷⁵

1. A migrant needs to be employed at the same level of qualifications and experience as before departure (or better)
2. A migrant needs to feel that their lifestyle is better than it was in their homeland as measured by their own judgment.
3. A migrant needs full command of the majority language.
4. A migrant needs to become a citizen and to be content with the idea of remaining in the host society
5. A migrant needs to be accepted without feeling any trace of discrimination.³⁷⁶

The examination of the individual settlement process in this chapter attempts to broadly follow the CIMS criteria but adds other factors that influenced effective settlement. As mentioned earlier every individual is different and therefore their reactions and responses vary according to age on arrival, education and skills, language ability and whether the

³⁷⁴ Morag Loh, *With Courage In Their Cases* p. 47

³⁷⁵ Jupp, McRobbie and York, *Settlement Needs of Small Newly Arrived Ethnic Groups*, p. 12

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 12

migrant arrived alone or as part of family group. Other issues that influenced effective settlement in the 1970s and 1980s included the means of entry: the skilled migration recruitment program, the family reunion scheme, or the refugee assistance scheme.

The first criteria in the CIMS minimalist category concerned with safe accommodation had a particular relevance to the Iranian Bahá'ís. Because of their experiences safety was initially not so much about accommodation but about their escape from persecution. One interviewee expressed the feelings that many of the migrants shared:

I will never forget the day we arrived. It was 17 January 1985. That night I said to my wife, 'This is the first time after seven years that I am putting my head on the pillow without being scared. There is no one here who is going to break into the house to arrest us without warning in the middle of the night.' That was the best sleep I had in seven years.³⁷⁷

The attitudes of the Australian authorities surprised some Iranians because they left behind them a country where bribery was the main route to dealing with the authorities, and arrived in a society where officials were friendly, helpful and honest:

When we first arrived in Australia I had such a wonderful experience. We had 13 parcels of luggage and in one parcel we had all our jewellery and all our academic certificates and that one parcel was lost on the plane. We drove to the airport and they said we will try to find it and I thought how could we manage without these things? I thought they had been stolen. Two days later they rang us and said your parcel has been found. The airport authorities opened the parcel in front of us and said check it and see if everything is there – the box had been opened but everything was there. They didn't take advantage of us as Bahá'ís. They did not help themselves to our valuables, as the Revolutionary Guards would have done. I was amazed. I thought I have come to such a wonderful country. Nobody steals anything.³⁷⁸

The Government provided accommodation for the Iranian Bahá'ís who arrived under the refugee assistance program. The standard of accommodation for refugees by the 1980s, as mentioned earlier, had improved on that provided for refugees in earlier decades. The improvements were due to changes that occurred in policies on assistance for ethnic migrant groups. The policy towards such groups in the 1970s initially placed emphasis on 'self help'. The theory underlying this policy indicated that 'self-help' was to be subsidized by the State through 'ethno-specific organizations' run wholly or largely by immigrants

³⁷⁷ Interview 522111

³⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 522111

themselves.³⁷⁹ It soon became apparent that the smaller newly arrived groups, particularly those who arrived as refugees under humanitarian policies in the 1980s, did not have 'ethno-specific' organizations to help them because those ethnic groups were not present in Australia prior to 1975. The Bahá'í administrative bodies did not have sufficient resources to take care of all of the Iranian Bahá'ís and the number of Iranian migrants who arrived after the 1979 Revolution was overwhelming for the established Bahá'í community. Therefore a significant percentage of the migrants had to rely on Government assistance.

Safe accommodation is listed as a first priority in the CIMS criteria but accommodation problems did not affect all of the interviewees in this study. Many of the migrants were self sufficient on arrival and a significant number came under the family reunion scheme and found accommodation with relatives. The remainder of the group, mainly refugees, were initially accommodated in government hostels and then moved to private accommodation within approximately six weeks. Some stayed with other Bahá'í families, while others were provided with subsidized accommodation in urban areas until they could attain self-sufficiency:

We went to Adelaide first and the authorities were really good. They helped us, they gave us a house to live in near the beach with furniture and it was very nice. They really looked after us.³⁸⁰

When we arrived they took care of us. We only spent 17 days in a hostel and were provided with meals. They found a furnished apartment for us that we lived in for 100 days and they gave us \$240 in cash that helped us through the first few days. A church organization found a house for us to rent at half price.³⁸¹

We came empty handed and they gave us monetary assistance of \$1000 that we paid back soon after my husband got a job.³⁸²

Only some of the migrants required immediate cash assistance and were not obliged to repay it but some felt it was the honorable thing to do. Some Bahá'ís helped some to find accommodation and/or employment:

When I came here I went and shared a flat with one rich Bahá'í who was single. I got social security and then after about six months I worked for the

³⁷⁹ Jupp, McRobbie and York, *Settlement Needs*, p. 1

³⁸⁰ Interviewee 48710

³⁸¹ Interviewee 166

³⁸² Interviewee 977

Ford Company and after that I worked with a Bahá'í who was a painter and finally obtained my own license as a painter.³⁸³

I lived in a hostel for four days and then went to Mildura and worked for a Bahá'í who lived there.³⁸⁴

Self-sufficient migrants did not need assistance either from the Bahá'í community or the Government. They could afford to purchase adequate accommodation and a business or create a new one:

We didn't need any help. We were financially self-sufficient. Although my husband was an engineer he changed his profession and established a Persian carpet shop in Lane Cove.³⁸⁵

Elderly people and youthful migrants needed assistance for longer periods than those of working age. Among the interviewees one elderly man is still living in subsidized accommodation in Canberra and youthful refugees who arrived in Australia without their parents were provided with free accommodation and the Government paid their education expenses:

When we arrived in Australia I was twenty-two but my sister was only sixteen. The authorities put us in a hostel and then in a house in Auburn for three months. They paid for us to go to College and TAFE and our expenses were met through Austudy. My sister went to Cheltenham girls school at Normanhurst, then Meadowbank TAFE and finally to University where she studied medicine.³⁸⁶

This particular interviewee appeared to resent the fact that he and his sister had to rely on Government support because the Bahá'ís could not help them:

The Bahá'ís didn't help us with our needs. They were negative about our prospects. Some Bahá'ís said to us, 'How could your sister go to med School? It is very hard to get in.' But she did it. We did it. We did it on our own with the help of the Australian Government. We didn't get any help from the Bahá'í Institutions, no emotional or financial support. But we had Moslem friends and they didn't expect help from anybody such as other Moslems so by following their example we managed. But it didn't discourage us, we are still Bahá'ís and we go to the Temple every weekend when we can.³⁸⁷

³⁸³ Interviewee 68412

³⁸⁴ Interviewee 542211

³⁸⁵ Interviewee 746

³⁸⁶ Interviewee 29269

³⁸⁷ Interviewee 29269.

The main concerns expressed by individual migrants about safety were not so much about living in secure buildings but rather the location in which they lived. Most of the migrants, both those who were self-sufficient and those who were placed in subsidized accommodation, initially lived in low-income areas. Some problems were caused by the presence of other migrant groups living in these areas. The most common problem was concern about safety of children and youth. One woman explained that her son suffered from depression because his friend had been murdered in a car park while they were out together.³⁸⁸ Other mothers were worried about allowing their children to mix with children from disadvantaged sections of the society. They felt the kind of freedom available to Australian children was greater than children experienced in Iran and consequently they were concerned what might happen to their children if they were allowed to socialize outside the Bahá'í community. The generally higher crime rate in low income areas also affected some migrants. One woman said their house had been burgled once and when she was out shopping one day, her car window was broken and handbag stolen. She was philosophical about the incidents saying that such things can occur anywhere.³⁸⁹

Some of the migrants experienced incidents indicating Iranian Bahá'ís could become targets of persecution by Islamic fundamentalists. One woman believed her daughter was murdered by Moslems. She thought her daughter became a target of abuse because of the publicity about a multi-cultural festival she had helped to organize. The death of the young woman was treated by the police as suicide but the mother refused to believe it.³⁹⁰ Another family, whose achievements received some publicity, was subjected to threats by a group of Moslems and received poisoned food in the mail. On another occasion a firebomb was thrown at their house. The family was given police protection for a period of six months and no further incidents occurred.³⁹¹

As noted earlier the ability to find satisfactory accommodation links to economic capacity. Because the majority of the Iranian Bahá'ís were able to find employment within six months of their arrival in Australia they rapidly acquired self-sufficiency. This outcome was mainly due to their own determination and the high level of skills they had achieved in Iran. Among the group twenty five per cent acquired higher education qualifications before leaving Iran, nine of whom had either engineering or science degrees. Four were accountants and thirty had achieved high school certificates or were university or college students. The remainder

³⁸⁸ Interviewee 19129

³⁸⁹ Interviewee 761112

³⁹⁰ Interviewee 30299

³⁹¹ Interviewee 17167

possessed skills such as business, secretarial and trade experience such as hairdressing and plumbing, and one had a diploma in agricultural machinery maintenance. Only one interviewee was a farmer and the others were children when their families left Iran.

(See Appendix 2)

Although the majority found employment soon after their arrival a significant proportion had to accept work that did not utilize their skills and qualifications. A study carried out by the Australian National University identified a major concern of Iranian women living in the inner city suburbs in Sydney, which were the difficulties experienced in gaining recognition for their qualifications. These women pointed out that the long period it took to receive recognition was frustrating. They felt the lack of recognition of their skills prevented them from becoming self-sufficient and thus they were a burden on the Australian society.³⁹²

Iranian Bahá'ís experienced various difficulties with recognition of professional qualifications. Accountants and engineers fluent in English were able to obtain work in their fields. Medical doctors and dentists had to study to obtain Australian professional qualifications but could obtain temporary work as long as they did not apply to become Australia citizens, which seemed to them to be a contradictory policy:

I am a medical doctor working in a local hospital in Bankstown. As long as I am not a resident my qualifications are recognized but if I take out Australian citizenship my Indonesian qualifications are not recognized. I wanted to do my physician's degree and the College told me if I became an Australian I couldn't work – if I planned to study and return to Indonesia then I can study and work but I have to support my family and haven't found the time to study.³⁹³

The building boom of the 1980s created a need for people with experience in that field and many Iranians who were qualified builders or engineers found employment within months of their arrival:

Because we were self sufficient and able to start our own building business we had no economic difficulties at all.³⁹⁴

Many of the Iranian migrants who obtained visas as skilled migrants had been living and working in countries other than Australia and Iran. They were the ones who for the most part could speak English and were in a position to make comparisons between Australia and

³⁹² Jupp, et. al. *Settlement Needs of Small Newly Arrived Migrant Groups*, p. 53

³⁹³ Interviewee 771312

³⁹⁴ Interviewee 567

the other countries where they lived. They appreciated the economic opportunities available to them in Australia because they found it easier to obtain loans and employment than it had been for them in other countries:

We were living in Japan and in 1982 we heard that Australia was looking for skilled migrants. I had qualifications in computer science and we had no difficulties in obtaining visas. Australia is a very easygoing life. There is no dominant culture here like Japan where everything is set – there when you do something wrong everyone notices, here no one cares. There is more opportunity here and you can start a business if you want to even if you don't have much money. To invest in Japan is too difficult. Here you can acquire a bank loan without any problems and it only took me two months to find a job. We arrived in September and by the end of the November I was working for Telstra. Now I have my own business. ³⁹⁵

The migrants who arrived with families and no relatives to assist them often could not afford to wait for employment opportunities matching their qualifications or their skills. They had to rent cheap housing and live in circumstances of a lower standard than the conditions they were accustomed to in their homeland.

When we came here my husband and I had professional qualifications. I was a dentist and he is an architect but we came here with absolutely nothing because we had to leave everything behind in Iran. We were used to having servants in Iran and when we came here I did cleaning jobs and other things I never thought I would have to do. It was tough but it taught me so much. ³⁹⁶

Refugees without capital or professional qualifications were forced to work in manual labouring jobs or un-skilled or semi-skilled occupations and many have remained in that position even after being in Australia for twenty years. Nevertheless their disadvantaged situation is difficult to change because people in semi-skilled occupations work long hours and unless there is some strong motivation to improve their life, or if they do not have the ability to study as well as work, they cannot raise their status. The migrants in this situation interviewed for this survey did not blame Australian society for their inability to improve their social standing. They did not feel dissatisfied, because the conditions under which they lived in Australia were favourable compared to conditions for unskilled labourers in Iran. Although the cost of living is higher in Australia than it is in rural Iran, the difference in pay is obvious to a new migrant.

³⁹⁵ Interviewee 64112

³⁹⁶ Interviewee 791612

This was not a new situation. Italian migrants who returned to Italy in earlier decades commented that in Italy they found a greater difference in wage scales between professionals and unskilled labourers, whereas in Australia even unskilled workers could achieve a decent standard of living.³⁹⁷ Trade union protection in Australia has created a climate of respect for all workers and employers could not exploit their workers to the same extent they did in Iran.

Men with professional qualifications who took semi-skilled work to support their families took their responsibility as wage earners seriously and were able to accept the fact that although their working conditions were not as favourable as they had been in Iran, they could work towards improving the life of their children. In addition the ideology of the Bahá'í community that 'work is worship' provided some of the migrants with a coping strategy that seemed to be very effective:

I was a refugee and couldn't speak the language. The authorities put me in English classes and in a hostel with other Iranians for about six months. I found a job – we worked in a factory that manufactured cars. I was happy just to have a job. Baha'is believe that any work is a way to worship God.³⁹⁸

Iranian Bahá'ís from middle class backgrounds might be expected to feel isolated or alienated if they had to work in factories or semi-skilled occupations but their membership of a religious group provided them with a social network that prevented them developing anomie. Anomie was identified by Durkheim as a depressed and suicidal state that can arise when an individual finds life meaningless.³⁹⁹ Active members of a religious community are valued because they can assist the community with various projects. In the Bahá'í communities in Sydney and Canberra Iranians were encouraged to become involved in administrative tasks, or act as tourist guides at the Bahá'í House of Worship in Sydney. In both localities, Sydney and Canberra, they could help with building maintenance or gardening at the Bahá'í properties. The involvement and the sense of being useful, even though they were new comers, prevented them from feeling that their life was without meaning.

By the time this study began, although some migrants were still employed in occupations that did not allow them to use their professional qualifications the majority had achieved

³⁹⁷ Stephanie Linday Thompson, 1980, *Australia through Italian Eyes*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, p 193.

³⁹⁸ Interviewee 67312

³⁹⁹ Gordon Marshall, 1980 *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Sociology*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, p. 16.

employment that utilized their skills. This survey found that over fifty per cent of the adult migrants in the group felt that they had regained the social and economic status they enjoyed in Iran. (See Appendix 4)

Many individuals in the group were able to take advantage of the opportunities available in Australia to improve their educational status. For example one young woman half way through an engineering course in Iran migrated to Australia in the early 1980s and enrolled in a science degree at Sydney University. She said that people at the University were extremely helpful in putting a newcomer 'on track' and she completed her degree in science followed by a degree in Law, and now has her own legal practice.⁴⁰⁰

Language

Language skills are basic for achieving self-sufficiency in a host society and fortunately for the Iranian Bahá'ís their language inadequacies were given immediate attention and they were notified that classes were available to those who needed them. 'Soon after we arrived in Australia we were given social welfare benefits and went to language classes.'⁴⁰¹

Full command of the language as listed in the CIMS maximalist criteria is a condition that some migrants may never achieve. Nevertheless although language difficulties present a problem, these difficulties need not necessarily be a barrier to a fulfilling life. Some of the older migrants, with only a limited command of English, displayed a positive approach because of other factors such as family support. One seventy-year-old woman, who was in prison in Iran for two years and became a refugee, chose Australia as her destination for family reasons. Although she needed her family to communicate satisfactorily with the wider community she was not content to interact only with family members. She studied English every day using language study books, watched language programs on television, and had English lessons.⁴⁰² Despite her lack of full facility with English, she visited Bahá'í communities in Australia and the Pacific Islands to talk about her prison experiences and was interviewed by the media in cities she visited. She believed she had a responsibility to tell her story and also believed that God helped her to communicate when she was being interviewed.

Language difficulties increase with age and some elderly migrants never learn to speak the host language. One man, aged 89 years, never learned any English but did not appear to be

⁴⁰⁰ Interviewee 72612

⁴⁰¹ Interviewee 73612

dissatisfied with his life because he had family nearby. He lived independently in a small unit, subsidized by a government agency, situated close to his son's home in Canberra. He spent his time gardening, visiting his family, reading Iranian newspapers and listening to ethnic radio programs in Farsi. Because this man's family was effectively settled he did not feel motivated to learn English and called on family members if he needed a translator.

Ability to speak the dominant language may be achieved after a few years' residence but for many complete literacy may never be achieved. One way to measure the degree of literacy is to examine the choice of reading material. If a person regularly reads books in their second language they demonstrate a deeper ability than that possessed by those who only read newspapers or magazines.

With the exception of the elderly man, mentioned above, all of the Iranian Bahá'ís interviewed read Bahá'í texts in English, 58% read English books regularly including a few academics who said they mainly read texts applicable to their profession, 22% read English books occasionally, 10% read only newspapers and 6% of the women mainly read what they described as gossip magazines such as *Women's Day* and *New Idea*. The remaining 4% were teenagers who said they only read books for school. The figures indicate a high degree of fluency in the host language. There are several reasons for this. Most learned some English at school in Iran and in addition a large percentage of the Bahá'í texts studied by the community in Iran were translated into formal English. One young woman mentioned that she learned to write English by studying a particular text in Farsi and then comparing it with the English translation.

Age as a settlement factor

Age is a significant factor affecting not only language skills but also other factors that prevent an individual from achieving a satisfactory settlement. Young people have the advantage of a longer period of education in the host society. They have a greater ability to learn a new language than those who are middle aged or older and the stronger motivation to be like their peers. Among the Iranian Bahá'ís in this survey 25 were in their 20s when they left Iran, 11 were in their 30s, 4 in their 40s, 4 in their 50s and 1 was 80. In the study group 31 were either students or children and 6 interviewees were born after their parents left Iran. (See Appendix 2)

⁴⁰² Interviewee 45610

Although age issues were not included in the CIMS criteria, older people can be more affected than young ones by the experiences that caused them to become refugees. Long-term psychological problems can be caused by persecution trauma and a few interviewees suffered from these symptoms. Several people over sixty spoke about their migration experiences in pessimistic terms and even after spending years outside Iran they were still haunted by the events that forced them to migrate. One man, aged 73 years, continued to live through his trauma in his mind. The Revolutionary Guards imprisoned his wife and when she was taken away in the middle of the night he had to leave work to care for his three-year-old son. He said, 'I cry, cry, it is a terrible thing for a man to lose his wife that way and not be able to do anything about it.'⁴⁰³ When his wife was released from prison the family escaped and became refugees. He was a mechanical engineer in Iran but has not worked since he left, more than twenty years ago.

The family first migrated to England before coming to Australia but he was unable to find employment in England, even though he became reasonably fluent in English. In Australia he spent his time reading and watching television:

We had a very good life in Iran before the Revolution. Since we are in Australia I have a problem with my heart and blood pressure. I am a disabled man and my wife looks after me. I love to go back to Iran because many of my family still live there. Iran is Baha'u'llah's country and we love Iran so much.⁴⁰⁴

Clearly his experiences in Iran and the fact that he was forced from his homeland were preventing him from living a fulfilling life in Australia. Another older man wanted to return to Iran. He was anxious to explain that he was not unhappy in Australia but wanted to return to Iran for family reasons. One of his sons had disappeared and he nurtured a desire to return to Iran to look for him.

Other elderly migrants however found ways to deal with their traumatic experiences for example by being thankful to be alive when so many died. One woman imprisoned in Iran for two years explained how she found a safe haven in Australia:

I had no problems after arriving in Australia. No thank God Australians are good people. They helped me when I came to Australia and for four years I was sick from the effects of prison and they took care of me and I got better. God Bless this country. It is a very peaceful country and very just. I tell everybody to

⁴⁰³ Interviewee 19129

⁴⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

pray for this Government and pray for this land. Iran is a very bad country. Nobody here knows how bad it is.⁴⁰⁵

The CIMS criteria relating to the need to be accepted within the wider society are harder to achieve for elderly migrants. Retired people who live alone were more likely to suffer loneliness than migrants in the work force. Making new friends or meeting people was particularly difficult for older people living in an apartment complex with no independent means of transport. For example one woman over sixty, who lived alone in a small apartment in a big complex on the North Shore in Sydney, left Iran before the Revolution with her family. She spoke fairly good English, but her quality of life deteriorated after she became a widow. She was lonely because her children lived in other cities. She explained how she tried to make friends by attending meetings of the local historical society but did not find them friendly and consequently relied on the Bahá'ís for social interaction:

Australians don't make friends with non-Australians. That's it, full stop. In this place they just live in their own apartments. They don't speak to their neighbours; they just live in their own holes. But I have the Temple, I attend Bahá'í functions and everywhere we go I have friends. No one else would care.⁴⁰⁶

Another elderly woman compared Australians with people she met in England:

We don't have any trouble with Government here but people here I don't find them friendly. They say English are reserved but if they trust you they are friendly in England. Here I went to a women's club and tried to speak to people but they didn't accept me and did not want to know me. I tried to be friendly but they didn't show any friendship. They think they are superior. Australia may be a multi-cultural society but honestly I find the English friendlier than here. I am not talking about the Bahá'ís. Bahá'ís are different. I have Australia Bahá'í friends but I have not made friends with any other Australians.⁴⁰⁷

Elderly migrants living with other family members are not as isolated as those who were forced to live alone. One of the few elderly individuals who spoke in positive terms about her life in Australia was a woman in her seventies. She said she was never lonely because she lived with her two daughters, her brother lived nearby and a granddaughter lived in the same area. The woman learned new behaviors from her granddaughter such as eating fast

⁴⁰⁵ Interviewee 45610

⁴⁰⁶ Interviewee 43310

⁴⁰⁷ Interviewee 27249

food. When she went shopping she ate at MacDonald's. She believed that people are friendlier in such places than they are in better class restaurants. She explained that she would talk to other women sitting nearby, make friends with them and invite them to her home for a meal. She said although Australians hardly ever invited her back she did not mind because she was happy to show hospitality. She felt Australians were interested in her life and being a migrant had not been a problem for her.⁴⁰⁸ She had a distinct advantage because she spoke good English. Nevertheless her experience demonstrates that even for older people there were a variety of ways to interact with others.

As would be expected there was some degree of generational tension amongst the migrants. Middle-aged migrants who found their integration process difficult were inclined to be critical of the young Iranians who behaved like Australians. One young woman commented on the way some older Iranians experienced problems because of their attitudes. She believed they did not want to change and would not change. She found that such older people were more likely to be critical of young people who gave up their old cultural ways.⁴⁰⁹

Australian Community Attitudes

The need to be accepted within the wider society and among workmates and neighbours listed as number four in the CIMS minimalist criteria is initially satisfied if the wider community demonstrates a positive attitude towards newcomers. It is axiomatic that friendly experiences with members of the host culture will excite a more positive attitude towards that culture. As the Iranian migrants came in contact with the wider Australian community they formed opinions about attitudes towards migrants. "Friendly" has different interpretations in different cultures and although recognizing that the term is loaded, it seems the interviewees did find Australians "friendly". Iranians are for the most part extremely polite, probably more so than Australians, but it is a more formal type of courtesy and obviously not always extended to outsiders. Consequently when the migrants compared their reception to Iranian conditions they found the contrast favourable for Australians:

Australians were generally speaking very friendly. When I think about how Iranians are towards foreigners Australians are very friendly. It is a big contrast

⁴⁰⁸ Interviewee 26259

⁴⁰⁹ Interviewee 51710

in Australia to Iran. Ordinary Australians were very friendly and helpful. Some are prejudiced but not towards me or the other members of my family.⁴¹⁰

To us Australia is like heaven. Everywhere you see friendly smiling faces. In the villages in Iran it is not like that, everyone is serious, sad or angry. First place we lived in the owner was so nice. He gave us beds, a refrigerator and all the other furniture we needed. We couldn't believe that he could help us so much. A stranger that doesn't know us but because he saw we had five children he was so sorry for us.⁴¹¹

Others spoke of extraordinary acts of kindness. One man, who was young when his family arrived in Australia, has never forgotten how impressed he was with the people who lived next door:

Our next-door neighbour helped us financially for four months when we ran out of supplies. We were so grateful for their assistance and are still in touch with them.⁴¹²

The expression of friendliness manifested by Australians and spoken about by the migrants differed in degree according to the age of the Australians and the Iranians. There was a fairly consistent pattern that made friendliness an age issue. Some individuals found that young Australians were less welcoming towards newcomers than older people:

Most Australians were friendly to us, some older people helped us but some young people acted hostile, but they never called us names.⁴¹³

The hostility manifested by young people towards newcomers is apparently not new. In an oral history study of Italian migrants, comments were made by the interviewees on this difference between the attitudes of young people and older Australians towards newcomers:

There was no discrimination in Australia. There is just a different way of thinking. The young people always thought we were enemies but the older people were tolerant. But the younger people are prouder.⁴¹⁴

⁴¹⁰ Interviewee 23199

⁴¹¹ Interviewee 26259

⁴¹² Interviewee 14157

⁴¹³ Interviewee 166

⁴¹⁴ Thompson, *Australia Through Italian Eyes*, p. 172

As would be anticipated not every Australian treated the migrants with kindness. Some of the migrants had negative experiences with unscrupulous business people who took advantage of them. One man remembered the exploitation his family experienced:

The real estate agents took advantage of us as migrants. Because we didn't know anything about the local conditions and prices they over charged us.⁴¹⁵

Although the Bahá'í community was not able to provide the migrants with all the resources they needed to assist their settlement process they provided a buffer to the community at large and helped ease new migrants' transitions into their new home. As mentioned earlier the first Iranian Bahá'í family to arrive in Australia came to Melbourne via Indonesia in 1960. They were followed by two other families from Indonesia who moved to Sydney. That small group grew in the 1970s when three other families came directly from Iran. The first Bahá'í family to settle in Canberra also came directly from Iran in 1966. These Iranians had experience of living in Australia and were able to welcome the Iranians who arrived after the 1979 Revolution:

The first day we arrived there was a meeting to welcome us. Dr. Forghani was on the Persian Committee and he was very helpful. He told us the basic facts of living in Australia and where it was best to live to serve the Faith in Australia. We didn't need financial help because we were self-sufficient but my parents were grateful for the welcome.⁴¹⁶

Some Iranian Bahá'ís were surprised to find that in Australia religion is regarded as a private concern, not the main focus of society. What a person believes and how that belief is expressed is regarded by Australians as a matter of individual choice. As long as the practice of religion does not interfere with others and is not too extreme, violent or disturbing, people in Australia are content to leave religious groups to themselves. One interviewee in this study, a businessman, said that in Iran there were discriminatory practices in the market place. Most Moslems would not buy from his shop but in Australia no one cared what his religion was and when he bought a fast food business in a country town customers did not ask about his religion; they were only interested in his product.⁴¹⁷ Another migrant spoke of the relief he felt to be away from the social restrictions he experienced in Iran:

⁴¹⁵ Interviewee 14157

⁴¹⁶ Interviewee 22179

⁴¹⁷ Interviewee 522111

I liked Australia as soon as I arrived. Here you can say what you like. In Iran every day you have problems. You don't have much freedom. Everybody is watching you – particularly the Revolutionary Guards. People spy on you on the street. They want to make friends with you and they want to see what you say and they report you. You don't know if they mean friendship or something else. It is a very hard life in Iran.⁴¹⁸

According to Jupp one key to religious tolerance in Australia 'lies in the apathy of the great majority towards active denominational participation'.⁴¹⁹ But in spite of the lack of interest in religion some prejudice has developed towards Moslems in Australia. In 1989 a survey carried out by the Office of Multicultural Affairs showed considerable prejudice. It is partly based on cultural practices such as women wearing veils that identified them as 'the other' or in recent decades, the linking of Moslems with terrorist groups. This type of prejudice has not been experienced by the Iranian Bahá'ís:

Often when Australians find out I am Iranian and I explain I am a Bahá'í their expression changes, they are relieved I am not a Moslem. They know about Bahá'ís and know we are peaceful people.⁴²⁰

The attitudes towards migrants from the Middle East hardened in the 1990s. Their societies were perceived as hosts to terrorists. In addition their regimes pushed people out of their own countries and caused individuals and families to become 'asylum seekers'. Some Iranian Bahá'ís who found Government organizations such as Centre Link extremely helpful in the 1980s commented on the change in attitude in the late 1990s following the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre and Bali. There is a degree of hostility towards people who originate in places where the culture opposes equality of women or freedom of religion.

Family Support

The issue of family is not specifically included in the CIMS criteria but it is implied because 'life style' includes a social network. As mentioned earlier the migrants who were surrounded by a family network had the most effective support system. For Iranians the family has a central role in their society. As Khalili noted:

⁴¹⁸ Interviewee 67312

⁴¹⁹ Jupp, 'One Among Many' p. 129

⁴²⁰ Interviewee 28249

Iranians who meet outside Iran for the first time question each other about their hometown and if they happen to be from the same geographic region, they often trade their genealogies and family trees until a mutual friend or kinship link is discovered. Iranian families provide financial and emotional support for each other in times of need.⁴²¹

The families in this study provided both emotional and financial support for members thus enabling each person to adapt to the conditions of the host society. Migrants with this support became socially mobile faster than individuals without it. One young woman, who lived in an expensive suburb in Sydney, described how her family helped her:

My parents helped us to buy a house by giving us the deposit and my brother who works in real estate found this house for us. He bid for it and got it for a cheap price.⁴²²

Family bonds are central issues for Asians and people from the Middle East. For example studies done on Asian migrants showed that first generation migrants sacrificed their personal desires, their independence and their individual ambitions for the sake of maintaining family obligations.⁴²³ The centrality of family for Asian families was similar to the importance that Iranians placed on families. For example many professional Iranian men with families worked in manual and semi-skilled occupations as soon as they arrived to support their families. Many remained in those occupations because their families needed the income:

I couldn't find a full time job for eight months and I needed an income to support my family so I did any casual work I could find. I became a painter although I was a Laboratory Technician in Iran.⁴²⁴

First we lived with my uncle and then my father hired a one-bedroom apartment in Waverton, which is a fairly expensive suburb, but it was important to my father that his children should live in a good area and go to good schools. We all slept in one room because he could only afford to pay for a small flat. We eventually moved to Forestville and my father is paying off our own home but he still works as a painter.⁴²⁵

⁴²¹ Khalili, 'Mixing memory and Desire', p. 4

⁴²² Interviewee 34110

⁴²³ G.R. Roysirca Sodowsky and M.V. Maestas, 2000, Acculturation and Ethnic Identity
Acculturative stress: Evidence and measurement, ed. R.H. Dana, *Handbook of
Cross-cultural and multicultural assessment*, New Jersey, pp. 131-172

⁴²⁴ Interviewee 166

⁴²⁵ Interviewee 66212

The willingness to take inferior employment in order to take care of their families was not demonstrated only by men. Many professional women obtained employment in low skill occupations:

My father and mother went straight to work when we came here. They couldn't find work in their professions; in Iran my father was an engineer and my mother worked in a high paying job in Import/Export. They took any work they could get. My uncle had a café so my father worked as a waiter and then he learnt to be a painter and my mother worked in a hospital.⁴²⁶

Women found some compensation in the unskilled or semi-skilled work available to them because it brought them into closer contact with the wider community. Male occupations in the building trade or factories tended to limit social interaction, whereas female work was more likely to be in retail or service occupations where interaction with others is frequent. Women thereby improved their language skills. For example they obtained positions in nursing homes, hospitals or in day care centres working with children.

As noted earlier in other contexts the most positive comments about their settlement experiences were made by people with family members around them. A woman who arrived in Australia in the 1980s attributed her happiness in Australia to the fact that most of her immediate family also lived here, that is her five brothers and sisters, their families, and her mother. Large families who migrated together, or who were involved in chain migration, had the most effective financial and emotional support system. A large family living in close proximity to each other resembles a self-contained small community. Even if migrants were only accompanied by one or two members of the same family, they supported each other and were the most effective means of banishing loneliness and the sense of isolation that is part of the immigration experience.

Citizenship and Intention to Remain

The intention to remain in Australia and take out citizenship is listed in the CIMS maximalist measurement of successful settlement. Every interviewee involved in this study had become Australian citizens and saw no problem with the idea of renouncing their allegiance to their country of origin and becoming an Australian. There is strong religious support for the idea of the Iranian Bahá'ís adopting Australian citizenship. Every interviewee when asked if they were happy to become citizens mentioned that they felt like

⁴²⁶ *Ibid.* 66212

world citizens because it is a basic concept of their faith. So for them to adopt Australian citizenship was seen as an affirmation of their core belief. Baha'u'llah, the founder of the Bahá'í faith, wrote:

‘Let not a man glory in this, that he loves his country; let him rather glory in this, that he loves his kind’.⁴²⁷

The notion of being a world citizen is reinforced by slogans all Bahá'ís are familiar with. Phrases such as ‘the world is one country and humanity its citizens’ and ‘one planet one people please’ are frequently used to promote the ideal. The majority of the members of the Bahá'í community may find it difficult to put this into practice but they are aware of it:

Because Bahá'ís believe they should love everyone and consider every one as brothers and sisters, it makes it easy to adapt. No one is a stranger. The earth is one country. My Grandmother told me she wanted her family to be Bahá'ís because they would have friends everywhere. I didn't understand what she meant when I was a child but I know now she was wise.⁴²⁸

Discrimination

The CIMS criteria mention the issue of discrimination. They include the statement that migrants are successfully settled when they feel that they are not experiencing discrimination. Prejudice or hostility displayed to people who are different has been a feature of Australian life throughout its cultural history. Some sections of the community in the late twentieth century appeared to fear the presence of the newest migrants such as those from Central Asia and the Middle East.

According to Shergold, groups like the ‘Immigration Control Association’ published negative comments about newcomers in the 1970s.⁴²⁹ However among the interviewees in this study there were only a few who mentioned having discriminatory experiences. This seemed to be a contrast to findings in surveys on Iranians in the United States. Khalili wrote that of her American respondents, almost half spoke of various forms of discrimination they had suffered simply because of their ethnicity. They wrote about fights in the playground, difficulty in obtaining employment, and unfair treatment in the universities by professors. Some respondents commented on the indignity, humility and hardship they suffered because

⁴²⁷ Foltz, *Spirituality In The Land of the Noble*, p. 152

⁴²⁸ Interviewee 32110

⁴²⁹ Peter R. Shergold, 1985, ‘Discrimination against Australian immigrants: an historical methodology’ *Immigration and Ethnicity in the 1980s*, Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, p. 64

they had a different appearance to the majority. Those who did not experience discrimination spoke good English and were light skinned.⁴³⁰

The Iranians in Australia mentioned the same experiences. Those who had European colouring and were fluent in the host language did not experience discrimination. The few migrants who experienced incidents of discrimination also related the incidents to their color and their language. For an example one woman, whose family arrived in Australia in the early seventies when she was at high school, spoke of her experiences as a teenage migrant:

My first three months of my life in Australia were hell. The other kids thought I was an Indian girl. We lived in a good area on the North Shore in Sydney and they didn't call me names but they played tricks on me. My English wasn't very good and they told me to call the teacher a 'dickhead'. They said he would really like that. I did it but he took it fairly well and I was not punished. Perhaps he understood my language difficulties. I also did other silly things out of ignorance but I eventually got wiser. I decided to study Shakespeare to improve my English and kept reading Julius Caesar with the aid of a dictionary. I found it hard at first and it took a while before I thought Shakespeare was good.⁴³¹

A dark complexion can cause a migrant to experience discrimination but some did not feel disadvantaged because of their skin colour. One man thought his skin colour was irrelevant. He felt advantaged because he was born in Australia. His parents left Iran in the 1970s before the Revolution and were self-sufficient. He had a successful professional practice in the city, did not read, speak or write Farsi and felt culturally Australian. He had an Australian accent and though some people called him a 'wog' at school he ignored it. He used to reply 'the first Australians were black' and that usually stifled the teasing. He believed that problems for migrants are often self-induced.

We are all in the same situation. Not much difference between them and me. I feel the Bahá'í teachings helped me in life but some Bahá'ís make themselves separate and distinct, especially at University. I find some young Bahá'ís holding tight to their values and defensive about being different. It is better to be part of the world.⁴³²

One man with a dark complexion, who was a student when he arrived in Australia, said he never experienced discrimination. He achieved high distinctions in his university exams and

⁴³⁰ Khalili, 'Diaspora and Transnationalism', www.iranian.com/Features/May/98/iranians.p.8 accessed 2004

⁴³¹ Interviewee 602611

⁴³² Interviewee 13157

become a cardiac surgeon.⁴³³ Again he had a self-sufficient family and lived in a better socio-economic area than most migrants. He also attended school in a middle class suburb. Young people who attend expensive schools and live in higher income areas may escape discriminatory practices because prejudice may be more covert than it is in low-income areas. They have less interaction with neighbours, shop in more expensive areas, and tend to associate with their colleagues with similar incomes who are less likely to display antagonism to those who are different.

The migrants who were young children when they arrived in Australia and who looked European blended in because there was nothing except perhaps their name to identify them as an outsider. One very attractive light skinned woman of twenty-four was one year old when her family left Iran. She laughed when the issue of discrimination was mentioned and said she never experienced it. She had several advantages as well as family support; she was beautiful, talkative and confident, and radiated a strong self-esteem.⁴³⁴ She had a commerce degree, worked as an accountant with a legal firm in the city and regularly travelled to different parts of the world, and believed Australian society was the best she had seen.⁴³⁵

Individuals who were very young when their families arrived in Australia scarcely remembered their birthplace and considered themselves as part of their host society. For example one young man, also with a light complexion, achieved the highest aggregate school mark in the state, received a scholarship, became a medical student and ran his own computer business in his spare time. He said he felt like an Australian and intended to marry an Australian girl.⁴³⁶

Young people with marketable skills used them to assist their settlement process and to overcome the problems that could have been created by discrimination. One young woman who was a musician in Iran found that her musical ability enabled her to be accepted in Australia. She continued to excel in the music world with a few triumphs that included being the manager of the choir at the Bahá'í House of Worship in Sydney. She was the first Iranian woman to conduct a symphony orchestra in the Sydney Opera House.⁴³⁷

It seems the ideal conditions that assisted younger migrants to settle in and overcome any tendency towards discrimination included a light skin, language skills, a self sufficient

⁴³³ Interviewee 31299

⁴³⁴ Interviewee 51710

⁴³⁵ Interviewee 51710

⁴³⁶ Interviewee 467

⁴³⁷ Interviewee 17167

family, a healthy sense of self esteem, the opportunity for higher education and the ability to take advantage of it.

Life Style

The CIMS criteria concerning life-style were based on subjective analysis, that is, whether the migrants felt that they had achieved a lifestyle in the host country similar to or better than that they experienced in their country of origin. Life style can be assessed by different factors but one factor that is a fairly obvious indicator is residence. Among the interviewees in this study there was a considerable amount of intra-urban movement during the years the migrants had been in Australia. The trend was towards the majority living in more expensive houses and better suburbs than those they initially occupied on their arrival.

To understand this measure of social mobility it is necessary to know something about the residential areas of Sydney and Canberra. In Sydney, the Northern Suburbs contain the most expensive housing. Central city accommodation has also become expensive in recent years and low cost housing is now found mainly in the Western Suburbs. In Canberra the expensive suburbs are those which have been developed, in recent decades.

The tendency to move from initially basic accommodation towards more expensive areas was a pattern adopted by the majority of the interviewees. All of the migrants initially lived in either hostels or rented accommodation in low-income areas.

By the time of the survey, apart from the thirteen who were living with their parents, 50 % of the adults were living in homes they owned in expensive Northern suburbs in Sydney or in better areas in Canberra. One family was living in a central city apartment in Sydney. Three owned their own homes in more expensive sections of the Western Suburbs. Four were living in their own apartments in expensive areas and the remainder was living in rented accommodation. Of the latter, fourteen were living in rented houses in low economic areas in the Western Suburbs, two were living in rented houses in the Northern Suburbs, nine were living in rented apartments in Western suburbs, one was sharing a low cost apartment in a Western suburb and one was living in Government accommodation in Canberra.

(See Appendix 4)

More than half the migrants interviewed believed that they had achieved similar or better conditions than those they experienced in their homeland. In other words, people who experienced high standards of living in Iran had worked towards re-creating a similar life style in Australia. Those employed as artisans or whose parents lived in rural areas in Iran

appeared to be reasonably content to live in similar conditions in Australia. The individuals who through circumstances of employment or other reasons had not been able to advance economically were those who lived in rented or shared accommodation in the Western suburbs in Sydney.

The interviewees born in Australia or who were children in Iran have no basis of comparison but could draw the conclusion that they were better off in Australia given the current situation in Iran regarding education and employment. It could be argued that they are all better off in Australia than they would be in Iran under the present Administration but any comparison is based on the interviewees' memories rather than on factors that could be currently quantified. See Appendix 4 for information on how the interviewees felt their life had improved because of their migration to Australia

The suburban mobility experienced by the Iranian Bahá'ís according to Cameron McAuliffe, is caused by class aspirations created in Iran:

The tendency to move to the North Shore from initial entry level accommodation in places like Parramatta ties into class 'aspirations' related to migration on one hand and the class separations found in Iran. I have found similar class related spatial settlement patterns in both Vancouver and London.⁴³⁸

Cultural Issues

Cultural integration is discussed in more detail in the next chapter because it is relevant to group issues. However although cultural issues are a group issue cultural practices are part of each individual's life style. The migrants who preferred Australian entertainment were those who displayed a degree of contentment with their new life style. Therefore this chapter looks at Iranian participation in Australian culture and the next chapter deals with the preservation of Iranian culture as a collective factor.

The demonstration of willingness to participate in the cultural events celebrated in the host society is also an age issue. Young Iranians were more easily influenced by their new environment and consequently some created a dual cultural identity. If they lived at home with their parents who clung to Iranian cultural patterns, the younger Iranians created another cultural identity in the world outside demonstrating that the second generation can

⁴³⁸ Pers. comm., Cameron McAuliffe, 2004, Phd candidate in the discipline of Geography at Sydney University, currently studying migration issues amongst Iranians in Sydney, Vancouver and London.

become functionally autonomous. Young Iranian migrants although acknowledging their ethnic identity preferred to read English magazines, listened to pop music and watched different television programs to those that their parents watched.

Parents tolerant of cultural differences made it easier for their children to integrate into the culture outside their family. Other young people, whose parents found it hard to change, adopted the culture of their friends or peer group, leaving their parents living in another cultural world. For example one woman who left home when she was young and spent some time in other countries married an American and became completely integrated into the host society. Her integration has created a rift between the daughter and mother:

I am absolutely in love with the Australian way of life. Australians are honest with no pretensions. In addition I feel very comfortable with other nationalities but I feel absolutely uncomfortable with Iranians and they feel uncomfortable with me. I cannot talk to my mother anymore and she is very upset about that.⁴³⁹

Young people who either arrived in Australia as children or who were born here were not interested in listening to traditional music and indicated a preference for all types of popular Western music. However a type of modern Iranian music used for dancing developed in Western countries. The music is a composite style, which is a blend of Eastern and Western music. It is recognizably Iranian because of the use of minor keys and traditional rhythms but is played on Western instruments. The Iranian community in the United States has pop stars who have retained connections to their ethnic culture and sing songs written in this popular genre. The style is popular with young Iranians in Australia and is played in Persian restaurants, and for dancing on festive occasions such as weddings. The individuals, who only listened to traditional Iranian music if someone else organized it, preferred other music styles. Those who mentioned classical European music tended to add that they mainly listened to it on ABC Classic FM while driving.

The preference for television programs and movies in Australia was a lesser indicator of cultural transmission because people in Iran watched international television and were regular moviegoers before the Revolution. Individual preferences varied, much the same as they do for Australians. Television sets were present in almost every home and 38% of those interviewed said they mainly watched news and documentaries. The response could indicate a belief that it is not a social advantage to admit spending time watching frivolous programs such as sitcoms or soaps. Only women admitted to liking these programs. One woman said

⁴³⁹ Interviewee 72612

her husband told her she should not tell people she liked watching soaps because it made her appear shallow. Among the women, 13% were confident enough to admit to watching them, and the soaps they watched were mainly American or English series such as *The Bold and The Beautiful* or *Days of Our Lives*, and the Australian series *Neighbours*, *Blue Heelers* and *McLeod's Daughters*. S.B.S. was the preferred channel for 5% of the interviewees and a few, both men and women, watched life style programs such as gardening and history. 15% said they never or rarely watched television with the main reason being lack of leisure time. Some said only the children in the house watched television.

Gender preferences for certain programs were similar to Australian preferences. Men watched sport programs and women preferred romantic comedies and talk shows. Men preferred news and science fiction to romance and both sexes watched current affairs. The movie *A Beautiful Mind* was mentioned as a favourite movie by both sexes but the movie *Titanic* was mentioned only by women. Some young men nominated *Matrix* and *Star Trek* as their favourite movies and young women specified *Bridget Jones* and fantasy series such as *Charmed*. Teenagers of both sexes liked *The Simpsons*.

Preferences for reading matter were similar. Older men said they mainly read newspapers and Bahá'í books, older women read Bahá'í books and women's magazines, while younger women said they read romantic novels. Some women mentioned that they preferred particular authors such as Jane Austen, John Grisham and Geoffrey Archer, while young men liked science fiction and a few mentioned *Lord of the Rings*. As for films, the group's literary preferences tended to reflect the age and gender preferences of the wider society.

Socializing with workmates and neighbours.

The CIMS criteria for socialization only mention workmates and neighbours but imply the wider community. Iranians make friends by inviting people to a meal and this is an enduring cultural pattern that has continued in Australia. It was the way that the majority connected with the wider community. The contrast to Australian ways of making friends was commented on by many interviewees who observed that Australians rarely ask people to dinner or return invitations. This surprised them because Iranians regard reciprocity as part of courtesy; acceptance of hospitality indicates it will be returned. As a result 45% of the interviewees believed that Iranians are more hospitable than Australians while 53% had varying views on this issue. Many indicated they thought Australians were more sincere. If

they showed friendship or hospitality they were indicating friendship, not just formal courtesy:

Iranians are not necessarily more hospitable. Australians are more honestly friendly.⁴⁴⁰

Iranians appear to be more hospitable because of their culture. Australians are more honest – if they are friendly it is because they like you, not because of Tarof.⁴⁴¹ Iranians are outwardly friendly even if they don't like you.⁴⁴²

Friendships with members of the host society indicate degrees of socialization. 85% of the interviewees said they have had Australian friends while 15% said they did not know any Australians personally and all of their relationships were with Iranians or people from other migrant groups. Young people had Australian friends they met at school, but some commented that their best friends came from other migrant families. People in the work-force said they had Australian friends among their neighbours and colleagues:

We have many Australian friends, neighbours, business associates. We always make friends by being friendly and we ask Australians to our house all the time.⁴⁴³

We have many Australian friends. My colleagues are mostly Australians. We have often invited Australians to our home and I think Australians are more hospitable than English people. But it is changing. When we came to Australia in the 80s people were more open and friendly than they are now. I think it is because in those days foreigners were a novelty.⁴⁴⁴

Openness and showing friendliness to strangers is one of the basic principles of the Bahá'í scriptures and the writings make many references to befriending strangers:

See ye no strangers rather see all men as friends for love and unity come hard when ye fix your gaze on otherness. Abdu'l-Baha.⁴⁴⁵

This aspect of Bahá'í scripture is reinforced by Iranian culture:

⁴⁴⁰ Interviewee 746

⁴⁴¹ Tarof is a traditional style of elaborate courtesy, which is discussed in Chapter Nine.

⁴⁴² Interviewee 41310

⁴⁴³ Interviewee 14157

⁴⁴⁴ Interviewee 31299

⁴⁴⁵ *Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Baha*, Baha'i Publishing Trust, p.24

Iranians are very courteous and this comes from Islam – the guest is the ‘Beloved of God’ and we offer to the guest the best we have. This is our culture.⁴⁴⁶

The willingness of the Iranian Bahá’ís to show hospitality and to make friends with the wider community is apparently different to other Middle Eastern migrants who have settled in Australia. A study done on relationships between Australians, Asians and Middle Eastern migrants found that there was little interaction between Australian-born respondents and Middle East migrants:

The study found a different pattern of overall response to that which emerged concerning Asian migrant neighbours and Asians generally. While there was a general recognition by 70 per cent of these Australian born respondents that Middle Eastern migrants were a hard working people, and a further acknowledgement by 60 per cent that they as migrants were prepared to do the sort of jobs no one else wants, little interest emerged in the development of closer contact or communication with Middle Easterners, either at the neighbourhood or wider societal level.⁴⁴⁷

Cultural Engagement with the Host Society

Although Australia is supposedly a multicultural society the culture is still largely European and cultural events celebrated by the majority are Western and Christian. One example of a ubiquitous Western cultural event in Australia is Christmas. Some Iranian Baha’ís displayed a willingness to engage with the host society and participate in cultural events. 60% of interviewees said they attend Christmas parties, give gifts or send cards to their friends and relatives who are Australian, while 40% said they never get involved in Christmas activities. The majority of workers attended office Christmas parties and others said that for the children’s sake they attended school events. Some interviewees mentioned they gave gifts to customers, neighbours and close friends who are not Bahá’ís to be sociable. One woman said she prepared a Christmas tree for the children’s sake. Another said her daughter wanted to talk to a store Santa Claus and she felt obliged to explain to the man that they were not Christians and therefore do not celebrate Christmas, but honor it as a religious event. Another expressed similar sentiments:

⁴⁴⁶ Interviewee 43310

⁴⁴⁷ Daphne Kerkin, 1986, *Migrant Attitudes Survey: A Study of the Attitudes of Australians and recently arrived migrants from Asia and the middle East, in close neighbourhoods in Sydney and Adelaide*. Volume 1, Summary Findings, Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, Canberra. p. 19

At Christmas I send cards to my friends and when people ask me if we celebrate it I say yes we do but not commercially. We celebrate because it is the birth of Christ.⁴⁴⁸

There is a fine line between custom and a religious occasion among the Iranian Bahá'ís and even among Australians. Some people send Christmas cards because it is customary, but only a minority becomes involved in the religious aspect of Christmas by attending Church. However it is difficult to avoid cultural Christmas events in Australia during the holiday season. Only a few Iranian Bahá'ís indicated that they were against the idea of celebrating Christmas and they were either single people or people without children. Families with children appeared to view the festivities with a tolerant attitude.

At Easter, 53% bought Easter eggs, some only for the chocolate, while others bought them for the children. 45% said they did nothing about Easter and not one attended church services. Some said they took holidays off work and used the period for a family gets together, much as other Australians do.

On New Year celebrations, a small number said they attended parties with their friends, 53% said they watched the fireworks on television and 45% said they do not become involved in either. Celebration of Mother's Day and Father's Day by giving presents or entertaining parents was enjoyed by 87% of the group, whereas 12% either did not have children or just did not bother to acknowledge it because they think it is just a commercial promotion. Although not a particularly Iranian cultural event it has become customary to give parents presents on the appropriate days in Iran so celebration of these days is a globalized practice rather than a cultural adoption of Australian customs.

Probably the most symbolic and particularly Australian cultural event is Anzac Day, and the ceremony and the customs that surround it are something that migrants were least likely to relate to. Of the interviewees 34% said they watched it on television and a few said that they had attended once or twice. One woman said that she took her children and loved looking at the wreaths. 65% did not watch it on television and were not interested, and a couple of people said they refused to watch it because they were against war.

Sporting Activities

⁴⁴⁸ Interviewee 272401

Another test of the level of acceptance of Australian culture is interest in sport. In modern Iran most sports are mainly enjoyed by men. This is evident by the fact that only 39% of the group either played sport or watched it on television, and they were men. Among the interviewees 60% said they did not have time to be involved or be a spectator. The most popular sport watched was soccer. Swimming was mentioned as being an enjoyable pastime but not as a competitive sport and only a few did it regularly. Table tennis was played by a few. Some, both men and women, played it when they were young, but did not have time for it later. Visiting the beach was a popular concept but most said they only went when they had time. Several of the men liked wrestling, which is a cultural practice in Iran, but again most of them did not have time for it, while some men only watched it on television. All the younger people played various kinds of sport at school with boys preferring soccer and the girls, swimming. Walking for exercise was mentioned as a recreational activity along with bike riding, kayaking and mountain climbing. The shortage of time is probably the main reason why many Australians do not play sport but the obsessive Australian interest in it as either participant or supporter was not yet evident among the Iranian Bahá'ís.

Psychological factors.

Although personality is not included in the CIMS criteria John W. Berry described personality as the locus of control and is a relevant factor for individual migrants when they adopt coping strategies for adaptation. A migrant who successfully adapts to the host culture becomes less like their family and more like individuals in the host society.⁴⁴⁹ A simple difference between the behaviour of Australians and Iranians is the degree of optimism they display in their expectations. Among those interviewed the majority agreed that people who live in Iran tend to be pessimistic and sad. Their experience of life has led them to expect the worst, to anticipate terrible events and sorrow. The majority of the interviewees believed that they have changed since they came to Australia. The change of circumstances in Australia opened the way for them to develop a more positive attitude. Within their host society, for example, most of the migrants, that is 72%, saw themselves as optimistic and determined. These individuals appeared to be more comfortable in their new environment than the 4% who saw themselves as shy and pessimistic. Others, 24%, said they were mostly optimistic but sometimes pessimistic.

⁴⁴⁹ Susan C. Cloninger, 1996, *Personality Description, Dynamics and Development*, W. H. Freeman & Company, New York, p. 139

The perception of self is an indication of how individuals view their ability to fit in or to integrate into their host society. If individuals feel they possess distinctive qualities, particularly socially attractive qualities, this perception helps them to feel comfortable in a host society as it does in any society. In the CIMS criteria for group maximalist needs, one indicator for a smooth transition is the stage when the behaviour of individuals within a group does not manifestly depart from mainstream norms. Individuals who are confident and optimistic approach the process of adaptation with self-assurance, feel comfortable enough with themselves, and tend to disregard the opinions of others.

In Iran the Bahá'ís had to be cautious and quiet and learn patience. In Australia a large percentage of the interviewees saw themselves as confident rather than shy and a lesser number saw themselves as both confident and shy in different circumstances. More than half the interviewees described themselves as talkative rather than quiet so they saw themselves as being able to communicate their ideas and less cautious than they were in Iran. A smaller percentage perceived themselves as quiet and 26% saw themselves as being able to communicate some of the time while being quiet on other occasions. The majority saw themselves as patient, but 14% said they are impatient; when they want something to happen they get anxious and 26% said they are both sometimes patient and sometimes impatient. 67% felt they were determined to pursue their ideals and needs in Australia and only 14% said they were easy going or laid back about outcomes. 19% felt that they were occasionally easy going and sometimes determined depending on how intensely they felt about something. Certain personality attributes had particular outcomes important for settlement. Among the interviewees, those who described themselves as determined achieved successful careers. People who described themselves as talkative quickly made friends. Those who described themselves as quiet or shy had difficulty making friends.

Generational Issues

Most of the group was fairly young when they left Iran. Their parents were mainly middle class, well-educated, Westernized urban people with an ideology that was inclusive and made them open to new influences. They had a faith, which encouraged them to regard strangers as potential friends and to believe that the world is one country. Therefore it was not difficult for them to become citizens in a new country. Most of the migrants came with family members who shared this faith and provided them with a social role in a closely-knit group.

The transition to the culture of the host society was a fairly smooth process for the younger people in the group. The majority did not have to make a great transition because of the well-developed degree of Westernization they had achieved before leaving Iran. Their acceptance of modernity allowed the majority to be willing to embrace cultural practices that did not conflict with their values or their way of life. For example the majority of the migrants, even youth, appeared to be happy to attend cultural events like Christmas parties but not willing to become part of the pub culture or the sporting crowds. Most of them were not attracted to the commemoration of Anzac Day because they did not find it significant enough to become involved. They found a safe haven with the opportunities open to them and were attracted to the way of life in the multicultural society that is Australia without sacrificing their involvement in their religious community, or losing their ethnic identity. Their religious identity continued to play a vital part in their social life.

The problems that prevented some of the elderly migrants from feeling comfortable were issues such as homesickness and the loss of family. Some demonstrated a lingering desire to return to Iran to see distant relatives, coupled with a sadness caused by the knowledge that family members still in Iran were being persecuted for their faith. Language difficulties prevented some from feeling as though they belonged in the host society. Attachment to cultural markers hindered some older people from being comfortable with the idea that their children had integrated. What came through in some of the comments about inter-generational tensions was the fear parents had that their children were losing their cultural identity. The feeling of loneliness experienced by those people living by themselves is probably more acute for Iranians than for Europeans because in Iran virtually no one lives alone and family presence is one of the basic norms. Only a minority in the group widows, semi-skilled workers and a couple of youth, experienced problems that made it difficult for them to feel comfortable in their host society.

In general the CIMS criteria for minimalist individual settlement were met fairly rapidly by the Iranian Bahá'ís. Employment and accommodation were minimally satisfied within six months and only young people and the elderly needed reliance on Government support for any length of time; the young ones needed education and the elderly needed financial support. The socialization process that enabled the migrants to make friends was initially aided by the existence of an established Bahá'í community and in the long term by the ideology of the individual Bahá'ís who tended to be inclusive in their approach to the members of the wider community. They were able to make friends with their neighbours and in the workplace. For the maximalist point of view only a small number felt alienated from

Australian society and that factor was related to age; older people had more problems making friends than young people. The majority was satisfied with their relationships in the wider community. Their behaviour did not attract hostile attention from the society, rather they were able to behave in ways that enabled them to fit in. More than half the interviewees achieved the long-term outcome of being employed at the same level they were in Iran and a significant number had a better lifestyle than they enjoyed in Iran. All of the interviewees had taken Australian citizenship and only a few experienced a degree of discrimination because of their ethnic identity.

CHAPTER NINE

GROUP SETTLEMENT

In the previous chapter settlement of individuals was looked at through the framework proposed for small newly arrived migrant groups designed by the Centre for Immigration and Multi-cultural Studies (CIMS) at the Australian National University.⁴⁵⁰ In this chapter CIMS categories are also used to examine group settlement, also defined in two categories: minimalist and maximalist. The minimalist category looks at the way in which the settlers as a group are perceived by the wider society; for example whether their behaviour fits within mainstream norms. The maximalist category looks at groups through the concept of ideal needs, i.e. whether the group has replaced or improved on the life style they experienced in their country of origin. It also includes the way the media perceives the group and whether it is proportionately represented in the wider community in positions of wealth, power and influence. A core criterion is whether its members have been able to maintain their language and their culture without attracting hostile attention from the majority. Using the minimalist and maximalist criteria this chapter looks at issues from the perspective of the migrants to determine whether the group felt that they had become an integrated part of the host society.

The minimalist CIMS criteria for an ethnic group achieving collective integration are:

1. An ethnic group is integrated when its members are not alienated from Australia society.
2. An ethnic group is integrated when its members' behaviour does not manifestly depart from mainstream norms.
3. An ethnic group is integrated when it does not attract hostile attention from the majority.⁴⁵¹

CIMS criteria for maximalist integration of a migrant group are:

⁴⁵⁰ Jupp, McRobbie and York, *Settlement Needs of Small Newly Arrived Ethnic Groups*, p. 11

⁴⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p.11

1. An ethnic community is integrated when its broad social character is not significantly different from the norm.
2. An ethnic community is integrated when it can maintain its language and culture without hostility from the majority.
3. An ethnic community is integrated when its members are proportionately represented in positions of wealth, power and influence.
4. An ethnic community is integrated when community and media opinion makers cease to query its legitimacy.⁴⁵²

The broad social character of a group of migrants can be seen in two ways, the way the group perceives itself and the way mainstream society views it. This study will examine how the group sees itself and whether it feels that its public identity is acceptable to the majority and therefore not significantly different from the wider society.

Point two in the criteria is vital to the experience of the Iranian Bahá'ís because if the group has been able to maintain its language and culture without experiencing hostility from the wider society then it will feel accepted. This issue is looked at in detail in this chapter because the group has a dual identity, both ethnic and religious, and issues of culture and language are more complex than for a group being examined only through their ethnic identity. The identity of the Iranian Bahá'ís is irrevocably connected to their religious beliefs and was the main reason for their migration. How their faith enabled them to fit into Australian society is a central issue in this study.

The proportional representation of Iranian Bahá'ís in positions of power, wealth and influence in Australia is looked at from the perspective of individual achievement in the previous chapter. In this chapter the issue is examined from a group perspective. Did the migrants feel that their group has achieved a significant place in the wider society that gives them power, wealth and influence?

The media in Australia tends to target certain groups of migrants for specific reasons, usually negative ones e.g. connecting Vietnamese or Lebanese people to a growth of crime in urban areas. The migrant groups who settle into the wider society peacefully are unlikely to gain the attention of the media. Whether the Iranian Bahá'ís perceive that they are considered to have a legitimate identity by the media was determined by the kind of publicity they received. If for example their media image was poor or biased they would know it. Overall the media image of the Iranian Bahá'ís was sympathetic because of the well organized campaign to create an awareness of the plight of the Bahá'ís in Iran carried out by both local and international Bahá'í organizations and the positive response by the Australian Government.

⁴⁵² Jupp, McRobbie and York, *Settlement Needs*, p. 12

If the behaviour of an ethnic group is similar to mainstream norms, according to the second CIMS minimalist category, then the group has an acceptable social identity. Social identity for the Iranian Bahá'ís was a sensitive issue in Iran and consequently they learned to rapidly adapt to changing social conditions. The clash between Iranian culture and Islam, prevalent during the years of the Pahlavi dynasty and which resulted in the establishment of the new Islamic regime, was a confusing time for minorities particularly the Bahá'ís. As Khalili commented:

Bahá'ís of Iranian descent are on one hand infected with the longing and nostalgia that comes with distance from one's homeland, and on the other hand have to persistently question the longing for a country whose state apparatus has so emphatically and harshly persecuted them for apostasy.⁴⁵³

This question of identity arose in new host societies when Iranians had to decide whether they labelled themselves Iranians or Persians. To be Iranian after the Revolution was to be identified with the terrorism and fanaticism occurring in revolutionary Iran and visible world-wide on every television screen. To choose to be Persian is to identify with the pre-Islamic empire symbolized in the West by carpets, poetry, art and architecture. According to Khalili:

By naming ourselves "Persian" we swallow our history and geography whole along with the bloody politics of the nation, the revolution and all. With its historicity and symbolism, the self-labelling and self-imaging process is instrumental in how the Iranian in the US relates to other Iranians, other ethnic immigrant communities and to the Americans.⁴⁵⁴

Khalili was writing about the identity of Iranians in the United States but the Iranian Bahá'ís experienced the same problem in Australia. If they identified themselves as Iranians they were to some extent identifying with an Islamic regime. Doing so could have attracted hostile attention. The Iranian Bahá'ís in Australia chose to call themselves Persians and to refer to their language and their symbols of identity as Persian rather than Iranian. The minimalist criteria refer to behaviour that might attract hostile attention from the majority and identifying with Iran might have had that result. Several interviewees mentioned that when they met Australians and introduced themselves as Persian Bahá'ís they were treated with respect.

There are two perspectives on the criteria: whether the Iranian Bahá'ís behave in a different manner to the Australian majority, or whether they were sufficiently Westernized to understand what acceptable behaviour would be. The difference between the Iranian Bahá'ís' behaviour and that of the majority can be examined through two categories, public and private. These are two

⁴⁵³ Khalili, 'Mixing Memory and Desire: Iranians in the United States', p.5

⁴⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p.7

distinctly different social spheres to Iranians. The non-public sphere is intensely private as Behnaz Neswadarani commented:

Observers of Iranian culture have often noted that a fundamental Iranian cultural theme is the contrast between two domains described as the internal ‘batten’ and external ‘zither’. This opposition pervades Iranian thinking and governs many other aspects of Iranian social life. The inner domain contains ideologies, values, truth, desire and morals. The external self is the social self or the public face that must be put on during interaction with the outside world. There is no presupposed correspondence between social life and inner life. The public self or public life can and often does act in ways that may not match the inner truths, inner desire and inner values.⁴⁵⁵

The defining of a life style with a specific difference between public identity and private identity is not only applicable to Iranian culture, as other cultures have similar response to Western society e.g. the Japanese in Australia. However this ability is an indication that the Iranian Bahá’ís can comfortably negotiate between two identities. Their private life can be completely Iranian in style and their public life can mirror that of the wider society particularly for those accustomed to living a Westernized life style. In Australia the only differences that might identify the behaviour of the Iranian Bahá’ís in the public sphere, apart from their accent, as being ‘not Australian’ would be the degree of formality they practice as noted in the previous chapter. They are more formal in manner and body language when speaking to ‘outsiders’; they may display a greater degree of courtesy than Australians; and they tend to dress in a more formal manner than many Australians. First generation Iranian Bahá’ís are reluctant to use first names while most Australians are more comfortable with this form of address. They do not wear ethnic clothing but tend to wear conservative clothing and darker colours than the majority of people. This formality is unlikely to attract hostility. It might attract amusement because of the tendency of Australians to ‘tease’ people who are different. In some cases it might cause irritation but rarely outright hostility. Among those interviewed for this study there was no suggestion that any Iranian Bahá’í had been treated with hostility because of their behaviour.

Fortunately for the Iranian Bahá’ís they had an identity fairly easily recognizable to Australian society. In Sydney, where the majority of the Iranian Bahá’ís settled, to be labelled a Bahá’í is to be identified with an acceptable group because of the existence of the Bahá’í Temple, a familiar

⁴⁵⁵ Behanz Neswadarani, 2001, ‘Iranians’, *The Australian People: An Encyclopedia of the Nation, Its People and their Origins*, ed. James Jupp, Centre for Immigration and Multicultural Research, ANU, pp. 141-143

sight to the wider community. Consequently the existence of an established religious community in Australia enabled them to feel part of the wider society. The migrants could name a dual identity as Persian Bahá'ís without having to explain what that meant.



Photo No. 17 Temple Dedication in Sydney 1961⁴⁵⁶

Within the Bahá'í community itself, although the Iranians originated in a very different society to that of Australia, they had some points of contact that gave them the same social identity as Australians in the religious community. Social identity originates with a recognition of shared history, values and beliefs and within the shared faith they had these points of commonality. When a particular group has values and beliefs that are in keeping with mainstream norms then its identity

enables it fit into the wider society and establishes the framework through which behavior is interpreted and approved. In this way the group fulfilled the CIMS minimalist collective criteria by possessing a social identity not significantly different from that of the wider society defined in this case as the Australian Bahá'í community.

Acceptance of the migrant group by the religious community materially assisted in satisfying the first and second criteria in the minimalist category because the Iranian Bahá'ís integrated into Australia through their religious identity. However the broad social character of an ethnic, religious or social group with a shared sense of identity does not necessarily indicate other shared life factors such as economic status or life style. A religious community shares a belief system and although members meet on a regular basis, individuals need not have a great deal in common with other members of the group. But when a religious group emphasizes the idea of community and tries to create a sense of it amongst its members then the members tend to accept the notion that they belong to a community, whether it exists as an ideal or a practical reality. In effect, it becomes a reality for them.⁴⁵⁷

The Australian Bahá'í communities in Sydney or Canberra in the second half of the twentieth century were numerically small groups of loosely connected individuals who in many cases shared only a common belief system, but they identified themselves as a community. Therefore the Iranian Bahá'ís who arrived in Sydney and Canberra before 1979, although as culturally isolated as any other migrant group, were immediately connected to an existing religious community and with its help established a place within mainstream society in a short space of time. Individual migrants had different ways of connecting with the Bahá'í community but every experience had a similar outcome, that of inclusion in an established social group:

When I came to Canberra in 1971 I was the first Persian Bahá'í to live there. I didn't know there were Bahá'ís in Canberra. Then I saw a forthcoming multi-cultural event being advertised on television and there were all these costumes. I said what a beautiful country all these different people. Then I read in a newspaper that they were celebrating a Bahá'í event so I went to it and I met them and we kissed and cried and I was so happy to have found friends.⁴⁵⁸

When my brother and I first came here we had a difficult time with the language and becoming familiar with the culture. I went through a lot of cultural shock. I received a lot of moral support from the Bahá'í community and that made it easier to fit in. If I wasn't a Bahá'í I wouldn't have managed.⁴⁵⁹

⁴⁵⁶ Photo courtesy of National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Australia

⁴⁵⁷ Anthony Cohen, 1985 *The Symbolic Construction of Community*, Ellis Harwood, London. p. 8

⁴⁵⁸ Interviewee 30299

⁴⁵⁹ Interviewee 44610

When my sister and I came to Australia we were alone and we wouldn't have known anybody if it wasn't for the existence of the Bahá'í community. I have seen documentaries about migrants who when they come here they become disorientated and I can really see that the reason we didn't experience that was because of the Bahá'í community. The Bahá'ís are like your family and we support each other and if we didn't have that kind of support I don't know how we would have survived. Emotionally we needed the Bahá'í community.⁴⁶⁰

The women who were interviewed mentioned the emotional and social support they received from the Bahá'í community whereas men tended to mention the principle emphasized by Bahá'í belief, 'the world is one country'. Several men, though, were just as emphatic as the women that they needed the community for social reasons.

Different age groups benefited by the presence of the religious community because of the existence of special facilities for each. For children there were regular children's classes and other activities. One man mentioned the impact of Bahá'í children's classes:

Being a Bahá'í makes you friendly and communicative. You learn through children's classes. It is amazing the upbringing you can have, it is most beneficial. My God the vocabulary of these little children it is wonderful.⁴⁶¹

When there are sufficient numbers of a particular age group their communal interaction helps to create their social identity. Youth prefer to be with other youth and if there is an active youth group within the religious community it provides that necessary 'peer group' for teenagers when parents and the immediate family do not provide the generational support that helps them adapt to a host society:

I was only a teenager when we came to Australia and I didn't want to be here. I was an unwilling migrant forced to come to Australia by my parents and at first it was very difficult for me. But in the first month I went on a teaching trip with young people and it was wonderful being with them so I decided to stay. Being a Bahá'í and having a Bahá'í family you are at home anywhere in the world.⁴⁶²

Migrants who were single parents experienced more difficulties during their settlement process than other parents because they were deprived of a family support system. The children could be neglected when the sole parent had to work to support the family. A man raising two small children without his wife said the Bahá'ís helped him with the children. He only had to ask to find someone willing to look after them. They joined in activities with other children and went to

⁴⁶⁰ Interviewee 622711

⁴⁶¹ Interviewee No. 63271

⁴⁶² Interviewee No 74712

children's classes. He felt his children were safe with Bahá'ís and he could work without worrying about them. He said, 'I would be lost without the Bahá'ís.'⁴⁶³

The CIMS ideal model of a collective identity, that is that a group of migrants are integrated when its broad social character is not significantly different from the norm, suggests that some migrant groups are significantly different. However by the last decades of the twentieth century migrant groups had been exposed previously to information about other parts of the world. With increasing globalization this is not as difficult as it might have been in earlier decades. Modern communication has produced cultural changes that, according to Albrow, are processes incorporating the 'peoples of the world into a single society; a global society'.⁴⁶⁴ Mansour Pourmehdi in a study on emerging trans-nationalism amongst Iranian exiles in Manchester, comments that some theorists doubt the significance of these changes in society and believe that as a global process it is incomplete and its impact is uneven, but it has helped to change patterns of migration and cultural adaptation.⁴⁶⁵ Pourmehdi argued that Iranian migrant communities of the latter part of the twentieth century are no longer as isolated or alienated as they once might have been:

Many immigrants today build social fields that cross geographic, cultural and political borders. The migrants who develop and maintain multiple relationships through economic, social, organizational, religious and political connections and who have family members living across the globe are categorized as transmigrants.⁴⁶⁶

Some of the Iranian Bahá'ís involved in this study, particularly those who migrated to Australia before the Revolution, brought with them not only their financial capital but also their social capital. Several were involved in the computer industry, a fast track to international connections. Most of the migrants had family members living in different parts of the world and although they suffered feelings of loss and loneliness, within relatively short periods were able to adapt successfully in a new environment.

One of the reasons for successful integration is related to the size of the Bahá'í community. When a religious group is small it is more likely to resemble a special interest group. As the

⁴⁶³ Interviewee No. 781412

⁴⁶⁴ M. Albrow and E. Kings (eds.) 1990 *Globalization, Knowledge and Society*, Sage, London, p. 9

⁴⁶⁵ Mansour Pourmehdi, 2001, 'Emerging Transnationalism amongst Iranian Exiles in Manchester', Paper prepared for the First International Conference on Networks and Transformations, July 2nd to July 4th, Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester, p.1
www.globalstudiesassociation.org/conference1papers/Transational%20and20Diasporia5communities.doc.
 Accessed 2004

⁴⁶⁶ Schiller L. Basch and Szanton Blanc, 1992, quoted in Mansour Pourmehdi's paper 'Emerging Transnationalism'. p. 1

number of adherents increase there is less social contact between individuals. For example being a Roman Catholic would not necessarily allow a member of that Church access to the homes of fellow believers in another country, whereas a Coptic Christian might develop relationships faster with other Copts because their religious group is small. The Bahá'ís were also small enough to fall in this category.

The Iranian Bahá'ís who began arriving in large numbers after the Revolution were part of a diaspora that did not share the same experiences as in previous diasporas nor were they subject to the pressures indicated by the traditional notion of diaspora. The traditional diaspora implies discrimination and some degree of exclusion from the culture of the host country. Diasporic groups in previous mass migrations often lived in ethnic communities and tended to isolate themselves from others because of the pressures created by discrimination. One example of this in Australia is the Sikhs in Woolgoolga, New South Wales; Sikh community members were reported as socializing only with each other and one of the reasons for this defensive behavior was pressure placed on them by the outside community. In the 1960s they were excluded from local clubs and social organizations and experienced verbal taunts and an occasional broken window.⁴⁶⁷ Some of the blame for the discrimination Sikhs experienced can be explained by their appearance. Their distinctive dress and darker skin marked them out as different and in Australia in a small town in the 1960s difference tended to attract hostility. Fortunately many changes have occurred in the last few decades with the gradual acceptance of multiculturalism and consequently migrant groups do not experience the same degree of prejudiced behavior that earlier migrants in Australia endured, unless attention is called to them by disastrous events caused by other members of an ethnic group such as acts of terrorism or protests against detention by refugees.

Maintenance of Culture.

The second maximalist CIMS criterion are concerned with an ethnic group being integrated when it is able to maintain its language and culture without hostility from the majority. Culture and language maintenance as a measure of integration assumes that multiculturalism is sufficiently advanced for members of a migrant group to feel free to practice their culture and use their language without experiencing antagonism from the wider society. The inclusion in the criteria that an ethnic community is integrated when it is able to provide its members with a 'range of social, religious and educational facilities' recognizes that a cultural identity cannot be abandoned

⁴⁶⁷ Marie M. de Lepervanche, 1984, *Indians in a White Australia: An account of race, class and Indian immigration to Eastern Australia*, George Allen & Unwin, Sydney, p. 11

without causing acculturation stress. Assimilation practices, attitudes such as ‘forget Italy you’re in Australian now’, hindered migrants’ ability to integrate comfortably in the 1940s and 1950s. In order to assist a migrant group to integrate successfully into their host society positive recognition must be given to their cultural and religious identity. Religious identity is particularly important as a source of their culture. As Weber noted:

Religion is the key of history. We cannot understand the inner form of any society unless we understand its religion. We cannot understand its cultural achievements unless we understand the religious beliefs behind them. In all ages the first creative works of a culture are due to religious inspiration and dedicated to a religious end.⁴⁶⁸

According to the maximalist criteria integration of an ethnic group is established when its members feel free to identify with it while also feeling like citizens in their host society. Becoming a citizen and feeling like a citizen are two different processes. Australia has given strong emphasis to the idea of migrants becoming citizens but the legal ceremony and social benefits that arise from acquiring citizenship do not necessarily make a migrant feel like an Australian. That feeling comes from acceptance by the wider community. If the wider community is comfortable with the presence of a migrant group and includes them within the multicultural society, not as outsiders, but as members, then a migrant group can feel accepted. The rights of citizenship should include the freedom for a migrant group to express themselves culturally, within the law, and the freedom to worship in their own way.

As noted earlier in other contexts, freedom of religion is particularly relevant for Iranian Bahá’ís whose religious life was restricted and repressed in Iran. If a group is allowed the freedom to express their religious dimension then this according to Weber provides the following ingredients that shape individual lives and unifies the group:

1. The feeling of what is sacred and mysterious.
2. Origin stories that center the self in the universe and provide a context of meaning.
3. The belief in the unseen force that shapes the universe.
4. Purpose in life and values.
5. Ritual and ceremony
6. Symbols
7. Moral system.
8. Social control and community organization.
9. Prayer and supplication in different forms.
10. Aesthetic elements such as art, music and architecture
11. Rites of passage.

⁴⁶⁸ Robert J. Weber, 2000, *The Created Self, Reinventing Body Persona and Spirit*, W.W. Norton and Company, New York. p.176

12. Sacred Texts ⁴⁶⁹

These twelve factors are accommodated within most religious groups including the Bahá'ís. The religious community is a close one, despite the lack of a clergy as obvious leaders. Bahá'ís do not rely on clergy to interpret the meanings of their sacred scriptures because of a belief that spiritual truth can only be arrived at through individual investigation. Nevertheless, Bahá'ís believe that their faith centers on the acceptance of the authority of the main figures responsible for its origin and establishment. Following on from this recognition of authority is a notion of obedience to the institutions that have been developed within the Bahá'í Faith to administer the community. It encompasses the acceptance of everything within the sacred scriptures written by Baha'u'llah, the founder of the Bahá'í faith, his son and center of his covenant, Abdu'l-Baha, and in the interpretations of those writings as translated by Shoghi Effendi, the grandson of Abdu'l-Baha. These major figures in the history of the Bahá'í faith were all Persians and many of the people in this study can trace through descent family connections to these historical figures. This is a close relationship, perhaps more intense than that experienced by people of faiths whose origins are much older and obscured by myth and legend. The Iranian Bahá'ís originated in a society where their religious identity was their social identity and their acceptance in the Bahá'í community is of prime importance to them.

The need, recognized by the CIMS criteria, to retain cultural and religious practices is an essential part of integration both within the religious community and the wider community. For example, rite of passage ceremonies enable members of a religious group to reaffirm their identity within the community. In addition the occasion can be used by them to invite others from the wider community to share their culture in a manner that parallels the practices of the majority cultures and therefore making it acceptable social practice.

The earliest rite of passage, that is birth and the acknowledgement of the new member of the community, is a ritual that some religious groups celebrate, for example baptism of a new baby. For Bahá'ís the announcement of the birth of a baby can be shared with the wider community but Bahá'ís do not have a baptism ceremony and the birth of a baby is regarded as a family event, so there is no prescribed communal rite of passage.

Weddings were celebrated with the immediate family and were a significant cultural event. They are an occasion when the family is likely to invite well-wishers outside the religious community to celebrate with them, particularly if there are members of the family who do not

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid, p.177

share the same faith as the bride and groom. Bahá'í marriage does not require a lengthy ritual except for the provision that all parents of the bride and groom must approve of the marriage. It is the responsibility of the Local Assembly to review the parental consents, either in person or in writing.

There are a few readings and prayers that can be used during the wedding ceremony but the only prescribed vow is repeated by the bride and groom in front of two witnesses:

‘Verily, we must all abide by the will of God.’

The appointment in the early 1970s of marriage celebrants who were authorised to perform marriages outside mainstream churches and registry offices changed the way Australians conduct their weddings. This change suited the Baha'is who could appoint their own celebrants and have a religious service. If a Bahá'í chooses to marry outside the faith, that is marry someone who is not a Bahá'í, then it is in order to take part in the ceremony of the partner's faith as long as it does not involve making a vow contrary to Bahá'í law. Any other aspects of the Bahá'í wedding such as dress or festivities are a matter of personal choice and have been as culturally lavish or as simple as the family determines. Iranian Bahá'is married in Australia have managed to mingle the religious service with a Westernized style. For example brides are often dressed in traditional ‘white wedding’ outfits. The groom wears either a suit or casual attire depending on the weather but the community does not require a canopy over the heads of the bridal pair as is Iranian cultural practice.

Funerals are a rite of passage that provide an opportunity for the Bahá'í community to connect with the wider community. Rather than experiencing hostility from the majority by creating an exclusive group the Bahá'í community generally include friends, neighbours and colleagues wherever possible, thus demonstrating that they feel integrated according to the CIMS criteria. At the time of this study the majority of the Bahá'is in Sydney and Canberra who arrived in the 1980s are still alive but when a funeral is held, particularly that of a well known Iranian, the event is likely to draw together large numbers of the wider community who were known to the deceased. For example, the funeral of a Bahá'í doctor who died in 2004 in Sydney was attended by large numbers of colleagues and acquaintances from the wider community.

Bahá'í funerals have a greater degree of prescribed ritual than any other ceremony. Cremation is forbidden and the deceased must be buried in a coffin of crystal, stone or durable wood and wrapped in five sheets of either silk or cotton. There is also a burial ring inscribed with a particular

verse to be placed on the finger of the deceased. The burial must be carried out at a location not more than an hour's journey from the place of death and if possible the grave should face the direction of the Qiblih.⁴⁷⁰

A funeral service comprises prayers and readings chosen by family members or whoever is organizing the service. Bahá'ís believe in life after death and therefore a 'good death' is important. Despite these conditions there is little in a Bahá'í funeral service that an outsider would find noticeably strange or outlandish.

During a Bahá'í religious event such as a funeral, religious texts can be chanted and among the Iranian Bahá'ís there were individuals, usually the older generation or gifted singers, who preferred to have prayers chanted. If a funeral was held in a Bahá'í community where Iranians were the biggest group the occasion would therefore include a significant amount of chanting. If there were only a few Iranians, or none at all, chanting would be unusual.

Some Iranians, especially the younger ones, preferred that the practice be changed because they feel chanting is an indication of clinging to the past and the practice can irritate others not familiar with Middle Eastern music. Australian Bahá'ís interviewed mentioned that they were sometimes embarrassed by Iranians who like to chant long prayers at events where there are outsiders present. At funerals the Iranian cultural tendency to mourn excessively is toned down by the Bahá'í belief in 'all things in moderation'.

The inclusion of criteria concerned with maintenance of language and culture by the CIMS indicates that migrant groups should be able to freely practice their religion to feel more comfortable and settled. The freedom to be themselves was an asset for the Iranian Bahá'ís and they were fortunate that on arrival in Australia they had a central place where the maintenance of religious identity was carried out in the public arena without any suggestion of hostility from the wider community. A regular Sunday service has been held in the House of Worship in Sydney from the time it was erected in 1961, and these services were open to the general public and are generally well attended. Interviewees said they attended these services at least occasionally. After the late 1970s migrants could always meet up with other Iranians at the House of Worship or Temple, the most commonly used term for the building. The Temple also filled aesthetic needs because it is of architectural interest. It is a tourist attraction and a source of pride for the newcomers. The aesthetic element was further catered for through the presence of a choir, Persian carpets, and floral arrangements.

⁴⁷⁰ Qiblih means 'The point of Adoration' or the direction a believer should turn when reciting an obligatory prayer. The concept of the Qiblih has existed in previous religions; Jerusalem in the Jewish and Christian faiths and Mecca for Islam. The Qiblih for Baha'is is in Bahji in Israel, the place of burial of Baha'u'llah..

The House of Worship provided a venue for social contact for the Iranian migrants and allowed them to be involved in the services. Because there are no clergy in the community, people conducting the services varied from week to week and there was no sermon, only readings from various religious scriptures of all faiths. A committee chose the readers and the context of the service. Iranians were involved in this process as soon as they arrived because there was usually a reading in Farsi. After the service, many people stayed on to eat together and to socialize. One interviewee said she attended every Sunday because she was involved with the choir while another said there were always opportunities for voluntary service:

I was living in Darwin and liked the life there better. I had made friends but in Sydney there are lots of Persian Bahá'ís. When I first arrived I didn't know anybody and I was alone so I volunteered to work in the garden at the Temple and gradually made friends.⁴⁷¹

The House of Worship was built before Iranians began to migrate to Australia. It was erected by the established National Assembly but Iranians were aware that financial contributions from Iranian Bahá'ís assisted the building program. Therefore it is their place and it provides the social acceptance they need:

If I wasn't a Bahá'í I wouldn't have anywhere to go. I wouldn't have friends. I have the Temple and I have Bahá'í friends and other functions to go to.⁴⁷²

The Bahá'í community is organized through meetings held in particular localities every nineteen days. These meetings are called Feasts and have a prescribed structure of a devotional period, discussion on local Bahá'í community affairs, and an informal social occasion when food is shared. One Australian interviewed for this study said that since the arrival of large numbers of Persians the food served at these events is more elaborate and more plentiful than it used to be 'in the old days when it was mostly just tea and biscuits'.⁴⁷³

Not every national Baha'i community has a Temple so meetings can be organised and held in any place whether a Baha'i centre, a rented hall, a home or out of doors. However at least one temple exists on each continent and the buildings serve as a venue that can be used by the general public for prayer and meditation. They can also attend services in the Temple. Because the Baha'i community does not have clerics there are no sermons delivered in the Temple, only the readings from the world's sacred scriptures referred to earlier. Community meetings are not held in the Temple. There is an a capella choir consequently no musical instruments are used.. All the Baha'i

⁴⁷¹ Interviewee 10137 A woman who was twenty nine years of age when she left Iran in 1970

⁴⁷² Interviewee 43310 A woman who was 39 years of age when she left Iran in 1976

⁴⁷³ Interviewee 83181 An Australian Bahá'í interviewed in Sydney.

Temples in the world share some design characteristics. They have nine doors, a central place of worship, and a domed roof.

A Baha'i centre is different to a Temple in that although services are held in the centre it has other purposes, administrative and social. A Bahá'í centre was built in Canberra in the 1990s and officially opened by the Governor General on 10 December 1999. He remarked that 'the Bahá'í teachings exemplify the true spirit of Australia'⁴⁷⁴. This type of official approval of their faith is a factor that enabled Iranian Bahá'ís to feel as though they belonged within the greater society.



Photo 17 The Bahá'í Temple in Sydney – 2003⁴⁷⁵

⁴⁷⁴ *Australian Bahá'í Bulletin*, 2000, February, p.9

⁴⁷⁵ Photos 17 & 18 courtesy of the National Spiritual Assembly of Australia 2003

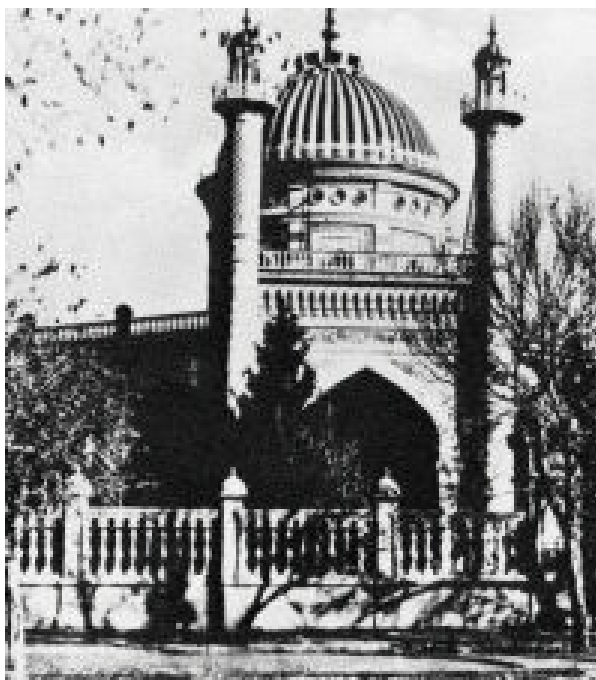


Photo 18 Bahá'í Temple in Ishqabad – U.S.S.R. 1908 – Now demolished

Communication is important to a migrant group, that is how it communicates with its members and the wider community. Communication is symbolic as Weber and Cohen argue: 'the reality of community in people's experience inheres in their attachment or commitment to a common body of symbols'.⁴⁷⁶ It is axiomatic that the most important symbol system in the construction of a community is language. Language identifies someone who belongs not only in an ethnic group but also in a religious group. For example the Bahá'í community has a particular greeting in Arabic that means 'God is the Most Glorious' and identifies a member of the community. This initial encounter establishes a relationship based on this religious identity and recently arrived Iranians who cannot speak English will be greeted by Australian Bahá'ís with this opening phrase that establishes that they belong to the same community.

According to the maximalist integration model an ethnic community is integrated when it can maintain its own language and culture without hostility from the majority. Among the Iranian Bahá'ís this theoretical ideal has not yet been fully achieved in the Baha'i community. Before the late 1970s in Australia the Bahá'í community used English translations of the sacred writings during meetings. The only exceptions to this occurred when an Iranian or other person of a different nationality was present and perhaps a prayer or reading would be read in the language of the visitor to honour their presence. When Iranian Bahá'ís began to arrive in large numbers in Australia they wanted to hear the services conducted in Farsi.

⁴⁷⁶ Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community*, p. 16

As the number of Iranians increased in communal gatherings a conflict arose when the use of Farsi as the language of communication made other Australians feel isolated. If the social portion of a meeting was also mainly carried out in Farsi it had the effect of causing many Australians to absent themselves from meetings dominated by Iranians, particularly in city centers where the largest number of the Iranian Bahá'ís have settled:

With language there was such a dominant Persian influence that meetings were conducted in Persian and the same with Feasts. They were all talking in Persian creating communication problems, language problems. The National Assembly really tried to stamp that out. I was talking to an American in Los Angeles and they still talk in Persian at Feasts. They have not been able to deal with this in the United States because the numbers of Persians are too large. In Australia the National Assembly has tried to be firm about it. In communities where Persians are the majority there are some Persians who say we are the largest number so we should use our language. But the International position is taken that the Feasts should be mostly conducted in the language of the host society. However after the readings are over at the Feast all the conversation is in Persian and this alienates many Australians.⁴⁷⁷

Language as a symbol of identity was a big issue in Australia because of the prevalence of the use of English. It was not a multi-lingual society and one of the first comments migrants used to hear from individuals in the host society was 'speak English'. English speakers in Australia were less accommodating to other languages than for example in Canada, where French and English are both taught in schools, or in Europe where being multilingual is essential for communication with the wider society. Australians who object to Iranians communicating in Farsi during Bahá'í social events tend to avoid the problem by becoming inactive in the religious community. The National Assembly of the Bahá'ís endeavoured to accommodate the need for translation into Farsi by publishing important letters and news items in both English and Farsi but they could not control what people did at social events.

The first generation of Iranians in Australia may never feel completely comfortable with the widespread use of English in the wider community, or within the Bahá'í community. Language is the heart of identity; mental conversation is formed by our first language, and mental arithmetic is usually carried out in the language in which it was learned. Iranians felt more emotional when speaking or hearing Farsi. English to them was cold and lacked the complexity of Farsi and lost subtle meanings in translation.

The Bahá'í scriptures and prayers were written in Farsi or Arabic, and children who grew up in Iran learnt these prayers at Bahá'í classes, though only a few would read Arabic. Farsi was usually

⁴⁷⁷ Interviewee No. 831812

used in personal conversation. However the second generation of Iranians all spoke fluent English because they learned it rapidly at school. In time, when the older generation of Iranians who prefer to use Farsi becomes a minority in the community the conflict about language is likely to diminish.

Studies on social identity indicate that people want their group to appear better than others in order to enhance their social identity.⁴⁷⁸ The Bahá'í community has a competitive process that works within the group and also aims at influencing the wider society. They encourage excellence in academic fields for individuals and this requires a good command of English. Consequently children are encouraged to become fluent in English because achievement in academic studies enhances the reputation of a family and the group in the outside society.

Symbols of a religious identity, other than language, are used as decoration. The enneagram or nine pointed star, a Sufi symbol, which represents the nine forces of the spiritual universe is widely used by Bahá'í communities on buildings, on gravestones, and in books. Most Bahá'ís understand at least one of its meanings. For example the number nine represents the Bahá'í dispensation. Bahá'í houses of worship have nine doors. There is another symbol known as the Greatest Name which is written in decorative Arabic script and can be translated as 'God the Most Glorious'. This symbol is used in Bahá'í houses of worship and wherever it is used, Bahá'ís recognize it as a representation of the Bahá'í community. Bahá'ís sometimes wear jewellery inscribed with a symbol used in Arabic calligraphy that symbolically represents the link between God and humanity through his messengers. Iranian Bahá'ís wear jewellery with Bahá'í symbols as identity markers and will also usually have a framed copy of the decorative calligraphy in their homes so that anyone entering the house will recognize it as a Bahá'í home. This symbol, as used by the Bahá'ís, is similar to the cross worn as jewellery or placed on the walls of their homes by Christians.

The freedom to maintain a cultural identity without experiencing hostility from the majority referred to in the CIMS criteria does not only include religious practices. It also implies other cultural practices such as music and dancing. Unfortunately for the Iranians the Islamic regime opposed the use of music and dancing, particularly the styles that betrayed a Western influence. In the years prior to the Revolution they were an essential part of the culture. Most Iranians love poetry, music and dancing but these cultural practices were connected to a social world that went underground in Iran after the Revolution. In Australia migrants who wanted to listen to traditional music could only hear it on Farsi radio or television programs, or tapes or compact discs obtained from other Iranians. Among the individuals in the study 25% said they listened to Iranian music

⁴⁷⁸ Lucy Johnston and Miles Hewstone, 1990, 'Intergroup contact: Social Identity and social cognition', *Social Identity Theory*, ed. Lisa Troyer, Harvester Wheatsheaf, Hertfordshire, p.207

regularly, 45% listened to it occasionally and 20% said they rarely listened.. Among the group 10% were emphatic when they said they never listened to it.

The individuals who preferred to listen to Iranian music displayed nostalgia for their country of origin and were mainly those who left Iran before the Revolution changed the society. Traditional music reminded them of world that they miss but that no longer exists in Iran. The individuals who suffered from the actions of the new regime and do not have any desire to return to Iran, that is 10% of the group, said Iranian music is too sad and brings back painful memories.

Food preferences linger far longer than any other aspect of ethnic culture and the availability of a variety of styles of eating is the most obvious sign of multiculturalism. In a society that encourages multiculturalism the presence of different cultural foods does not cause hostility; on the contrary, it is a way to include others. The Iranians in the study felt that their food is especially attractive to people from other cultures.

Iranians eat mainly rice with other side dishes such as beef, chicken or lamb, and kebabs are a favourite food. Chello kebab, that is beef kebabs with steamed rice, is probably the best known Iranian dish. Iranian dishes are always flavoured with herbs and spices such as cardamom, coriander and garlic and are accompanied by vegetables or salad greens. Pulses and fruit form part of the main meal or are served as side dishes. Different types of yogurt are prepared as dips with cucumber, garlic and mint. The most popular desserts are ice creams flavored with saffron, rosewater and almonds. Iranians mostly drink light tea flavored with cardamom and sugar cubes.

The majority of the migrants interviewed, that is 74%, said they mainly ate Iranian food at home. 12% of the women said they cook internationally and 7% said they do very little cooking. The same percentage of the men were willing to occasionally do some food preparation. 5% of the women said they loved cooking and liked to cook different kinds of food. The women who were not interested in cooking were all professionally qualified women with demanding careers. If they cooked only for themselves they would usually make something simple like an omelet. One man, married to an Australian, said his family mainly ate healthy Australian food.

Sydney has two Persian restaurants, mostly patronized by Iranians, but members of the wider community are also attracted to these places by the ethnic food and the music. Asian foods, particularly Chinese, were popular with Iranians as were Thai and Indian, while a couple of interviewees favoured Indonesian and Malaysian. Italian was mentioned by four people, about the same number who liked Mexican. Twenty five interviewees said they never ate fast food. The rest ate fast food occasionally while a few said they loved it. Six young Iranians said they preferred to eat Australian or fast food. The most popular fast food among the young was pizza,

which of course is of Italian origin, followed by fish, MacDonald hamburgers and Kentucky Fried Chicken.

Iranian food preparation is time consuming and families who ate traditional Iranian food see their womenfolk in the kitchen preparing food for hours every day. Iranians regard dining as a very important social activity and community events are an occasion when the women cook special foods. The majority said that although they occasionally ate Australian food when they were visiting friends, there was a general impression, as noted in the previous chapter, that Australians do not invite people to their homes for dinner as often as Iranians. In addition when Iranians offer hospitality it is usually lavish, with a variety of dishes whereas Australians were perceived as mostly cooking barbecue style when entertaining.

When using food as a factor to measure cultural adaptation the conclusions are fairly predictable because food choices are connected to certain age groups. The majority of older people preferred to eat Iranian food. They were only marginally adventurous, choosing Chinese cuisine as an alternative. Individuals in their 20s and 30s were more flexible in their approach to food and although most of them preferred Iranian food they did not have the time to prepare it on a regular basis. The majority of younger people liked to eat out and would eat fast food regularly if they could. However, Iranian Bahá'ís who preferred to stay with Iranian food experienced no discrimination in the wider community because of their preference.

Cultural events in Iran are respected because they are regarded as an expression of an ancient culture. Farhang, the word for culture, also means learned, honourable or dignified. Special occasions, such as Holy Days, are usually celebrated with other family members, gifts are exchanged, and special foods are eaten.

The most celebrated Iranian festival is that of Naw-Ruz or New Year, celebrated on 21 March during the vernal equinox. The festivities traditionally last for thirteen days. This celebration, according to Iranians, goes back to the 'dawn of history' and in the Northern Hemisphere marks the beginning of spring, symbolizing the creation of life and renewal. Apart from gift giving, family celebrations and visiting, the traditional honouring of Naw-Ruz is done with the setting of a ritual table known as a Haft-sin table. It contains seven symbolic items such as goldfish to represent life, candles to represent the presence of light and dark, a mirror to reflect good and evil, coins to represent prosperity, freshly grown greens in a special dish to represent good luck, and painted eggs to represent fertility. The seven items are also said to represent the seven disciples of the prophet Zoroaster:

We go to traditional events because I like to keep our culture. I do Haftsin table and I also colour eggs. I make my kids presents for Naw Ruz and I teach them how to do these things. We wrap up presents and leave them on the table for guests when they come.⁴⁷⁹

The thirteen days of Naw Ruz are similar to the Australian Christmas holiday period and are celebrated in some way by most Iranians. Even if they cannot take their holidays during that period, 36% of the interviewees commemorate Naw Ruz with a traditional Haft-sin table. The last day of Naw-Ruz, known as Seezabedah, is sometimes commemorated with a picnic in a garden or park.

A yearly festival known as Mehregan is celebrated at the winter solstice and fruits such as pomegranates and melons are eaten. Another traditional event, Char Sambeth Suri, is held out of doors on the last Wednesday of each year and is usually commemorated with a fire jumping ceremony. The commemoration of Char Sambeth Suri is an ancient tradition that probably dates from pagan rituals or the worship of fire and the dispelling of evil spirits. Iranians of different faiths attend when it is held in Sydney. However the majority of the attendants are usually from the Moslem community and according to some accounts the event has often ended in conflict between some Moslem men. The possibility of violence has discouraged most of the Bahá'ís from attending in recent years:

We don't attend traditional cultural occasions anymore – too many Moslems go. They hold a picnic under the bridge and jump over a fire to get rid of evil spirits. These events often end in fighting and violence.⁴⁸⁰

We celebrate Naw Ruz and set a Haftsin table but are not keen on other traditional events such as Char Sambeth Suri. Iranian Moslems in Australia abuse this event because they often fight at the celebrations. We just light candles to remember Iran.⁴⁸¹

The general community or other Australians are not liable to be concerned with the level of violence at Iranian events. No interviewee indicated that police were called whereas New Year celebrations in Sydney for the wider community usually require a police presence. So the Iranian cultural events, though seen as violent by Bahá'ís, are not likely to create hostility in most of the population unless the event begins to attract larger numbers or if the violence escalates in the future.

⁴⁷⁹ Interviewee 69512

⁴⁸⁰ Interviewee 11107

⁴⁸¹ Interviewee 51710

Tensions between Moslems and Bahá'ís that existed in Iran are not obvious amongst settled migrants but exist to some extent among new arrivals and consequently the Department of Immigration found it necessary to process Moslems and Bahá'ís in different areas.⁴⁸² One woman said that she does not like Iranian Moslems because they are jealous of Bahá'ís because 'we do better than them'.⁴⁸³ Fifty per cent of the young student Iranian Bahá'ís who have grown up in Australia mentioned that some of their friends are Moslems so the tension does not appear to be an issue for the second generation.

Participation in cultural events indicates an emotional attachment to an ethnic identity but many stated that they are involved mainly for the sake of family solidarity or other social reasons. Participation in most cultural events appeared to gradually cease for the majority of migrants in the study except for Naw Ruz, the most important cultural event in Iran. Many Iranian Bahá'ís feel an emotional attachment to Naw Ruz even if they prefer to ignore other Iranian events. One Iranian woman who had several university degrees and was married to an American indicated that she continued to set a Haftsin table because it retained its symbolic significance for her:

I set an elaborate Haftsin table every year. It is really a superstitious belief. But I believe if I don't set Haftsin I am going to have a bad year. My mother was very strong on that. If you don't have goldfish and green shoots the year will go wrong.⁴⁸⁴

In many cases, the traditional practice was abbreviated in some way. Gift giving at Naw Ruz was more prevalent than the setting of a special table and 64% of the interviewees said they gave Naw Ruz gifts to family members and friends. They hosted family parties and visited each other:

We usually have a Naw Ruz party with the family and mostly set Haftsin table because it is good for the kids for cultural reasons. They like it because they receive lots of money as gifts.⁴⁸⁵

As it is not a holiday period in Australia other events that surround Naw Ruz have been dropped by most of the Iranians and the traditional picnic, Seezabedah, celebrated on the last day of the holiday was only mentioned by seven individuals among the interviewees. In Iran people leave the house to picnic at the end of Naw Ruz because it is believed being out of doors on that day brings blessings for the family. However in Australia the interviewees indicated that they have only

⁴⁸² Hassall, 'Outpost of a World Religion', pp.314-338

⁴⁸³ Interviewee 10137

⁴⁸⁴ Interviewee 72612

⁴⁸⁵ Interviewee 22179

attended these picnics occasionally. One man said he once hosted a Seezabedah picnic and invited several Iranians and some Australians, but it was hard work and expensive, and he did not do it again.⁴⁸⁶ Some said that if it occurs on a weekend they make it an occasion to ask Australian friends to share a traditional event with them. One man said his family celebrate Meheragan, on the longest night of the year or the winter solstice. They bought pomegranates, a popular fruit in Iran, and regarded the commemoration of the day as an educational event for the children. They were the only family interviewed who still celebrated this event.⁴⁸⁷ Others made small efforts to honour their origins without participating fully in the cultural events.

It is customary for Bahá'ís to commemorate Naw Ruz with a religious service and a social gathering. The religious nature of the service held at Naw Ruz represents renewal and spiritual enlightenment and is very important to the Iranian Bahá'ís. 95% said they always attend the religious Naw Ruz gatherings. This demonstrates that although the cultural dimension of the event was gradually losing its significance for some Iranians, the religious component had retained its importance in the Bahá'í community.

Another custom practiced by traditional Iranians is Tarof, the style of elaborate courtesy alluded to earlier. This courtesy is particularly displayed when Iranians meet. They exchange formal greetings, and inquiries are made about the health and well being of other family members. Another demonstration of Tarof is expressed by hosts and guests. For guests, Tarof practice indicates that they should arrive at a dinner later than the time stipulated because they must not appear anxious to eat. Then the host must entreat them to eat, perhaps up to five times in spite of continuous refusals. In Australia if someone refuses food the host might try again to persuade the person to eat but in most cases a person's statement, such as 'I am not hungry', is accepted. The practice of Tarof also includes reciprocal invitations to dinner. People are expected to both respond to invitations and return hospitality.

Among the Iranians interviewed 58% practiced Tarof with Persians, particularly older Persians; a few commented that it was their culture and comes naturally to them, whereas 36% said they had gradually given it up. One young woman seemed relieved that she had abandoned the practice: 'I don't do it as much as I used to. I like Australian culture and so no more Tarof for me.'⁴⁸⁸ Among those interviewed 4% were emphatic that they never practiced it and disliked it. Another made the comment that, 'I try not to and make a point of it. I think it is silly'.⁴⁸⁹ This woman has lived outside Iran for many years and her attachment to her culture weakened during the years she had

⁴⁸⁶ Interviewee 582411

⁴⁸⁷ Interviewee 22179

⁴⁸⁸ Interviewee 69512

⁴⁸⁹ Interviewee 11107

lived outside her homeland. The older generation indicated that they had to use it and were accustomed to it. Young people were either against it or used it with older Persians out of courtesy. One man, who always disliked Tarof even in Iran, was aware of his mother's fears for him because of this:

I do plenty of Tarof. Believe me I try with Persians but it doesn't come from the heart. My mother used to say if you don't practice Tarof you won't have any friends.⁴⁹⁰

The fear expressed by the older generation, that if cultural patterns are not respected by their children they will not be socially acceptable, contained an element of guilt. They felt that they have been inadequate parents if their children rejected the lessons that they were supposed to teach them:

When I was in Iran to visit my mother because she was sick, I told her I didn't feel like socializing and I said no Tarof. My Mum said sadly 'I am going to my grave and my children don't do traditional things.'⁴⁹¹

Another interviewee explained how the practice varied according to regional cultural differences:

I do not practice Tarof, not at all. Even when I was in Iran I didn't like it. My family came from the West and they don't have that sort of thing. In the West they are mostly Sunni Moslems. They are different; they swear by the Koran but don't do Tarof. There are many Kurds there and they are liberal people. They don't wear Chador or follow Shi'ite traditions.⁴⁹²

Those who said they only practiced Tarof with Persians are acknowledging that it is a cultural behavioural pattern and unnecessary in their relationships with Australians. The younger interviewees indicated that they realize Australians think it is odd and so never practice Tarof. One woman felt 'it is silly' and 'it looks ridiculous in Australia'.⁴⁹³ However basic courtesy is usually acknowledged as being an essential part of any enduring relationship inside and outside one's original culture so the practice of courtesy in a more moderate way remains an integral part of Iranian Bahá'í interaction with others. Australian Bahá'ís who commented on the practice of Tarof appeared to either be irritated or amused while others just ignored it. Overall traditional culture and behaviour of the Iranian Bahá'ís does not make them particularly noticeable in the wider Australian society. It definitely does not attract hostile attention or comment. Their ideology

⁴⁹⁰ Interviewee 24209

⁴⁹¹ Interviewee 44610

⁴⁹² Interviewee 43310

⁴⁹³ Interviewee 11107

that emphasises world citizenship has given the community the ability to fit comfortably into their host society.

Ethnic Neighbourhoods.

In the CIMS maximalist model the issue of clustered ethnic communities is not addressed although it is indirectly indicated in the criteria, but the issue is relevant to any history of ethnic migrant settlement. The two Iranian Bahá'í communities looked at in this study, in common with other ethnic and migrant groups, are more concentrated than they were in the 1970s. Sydney is home for the largest group of Iranian Bahá'ís in Australia and this is not surprising as Sydney is the largest city in Australia, but it is only in the last thirty years that it has become the immigrant capital..⁴⁹⁴ Sydney's ethnic minorities in the 1990s were more concentrated in certain suburbs than they had been in the 1970s and 1980s. Iranians who have been in Australia for long periods have noticed that the Iranians who arrived in the late 1980s and 1990s are clustering in the same suburbs, either to be with relatives or because the cost of housing is lower. See Appendix 4

The Iranian Bahá'ís who arrived in Australia before the Revolution came from urban middle class families and lived in integrated neighborhoods without any problems. A few remained in the same suburb where they first settled. In 1973 the Bahá'í community in Sydney had 61 Local Assemblies in different municipalities composed mainly of Australians with a sprinkling of Iranians. Although members of ethnic communities tend to move into areas where their relatives or friends live there were no clustered Iranian communities until the numbers of migrants increased in the 1980s.

Bahá'ís are encouraged to disperse into new areas. This dispersion is known as home front pioneering but by the late 1980s the Iranians were clustering in areas where they could be close to friends and family. In Sydney by the mid nineties several municipalities had clusterings of Iranian Bahá'ís. The largest communities were in Parramatta with 256 adult Iranians, Baulkham Hills with 220, and five municipalities - Blacktown, Holroyd, Hornsby, Ku-ring-gai and Liverpool – had more than one hundred resident Iranians each. Canberra also had more than 100 Iranians in a Bahá'í community of about 150 people.⁴⁹⁵ In the 1990s the latest arrivals tended to live in Parramatta, Auburn and other Western suburbs for economic as well as social reasons and there was some degree of tension between the concept of home front pioneering and the need to be near friends and relatives.

⁴⁹⁴ Burnley, 'Diversity and Difference: Immigration and the Multicultural City', p.244

⁴⁹⁵ Statistics obtained from the Baha'i National Secretariat, Sydney in 2003..

Initially the migrants tended to move into working class suburbs in Sydney such as Fairfield or Liverpool where the rents were cheaper. As time went by many moved into Northern suburbs such as Ryde and then to more expensive suburbs such as Baulkham Hills and Hornsby, demonstrating a social mobility financed by their improving economic situation.

The tendency of ethnic groups to cluster together can inhibit their acceptance by the wider society. Because they live in close proximity they experience less social pressure to learn the language of the host society and if the neighbourhood is formed exclusively of one particular ethnic group they only socialize with each other and therefore can experience some degree of estrangement from the wider community. However the clustering of Iranian Bahá'í communities in Sydney is a minor problem while the numbers remain small in comparison to the other ethnic residents in those suburbs.

The issue of 'ethnic enclaves' in Australia was one of the factors that caused people to question immigration policies. There is a widespread belief that when ethnic groups congregate together because of economic disadvantage their poverty leads to criminal behaviour. However it became obvious during the last decades of the twentieth century that clustering is temporary. As Castles, Foster, Iredale and Withers noted:

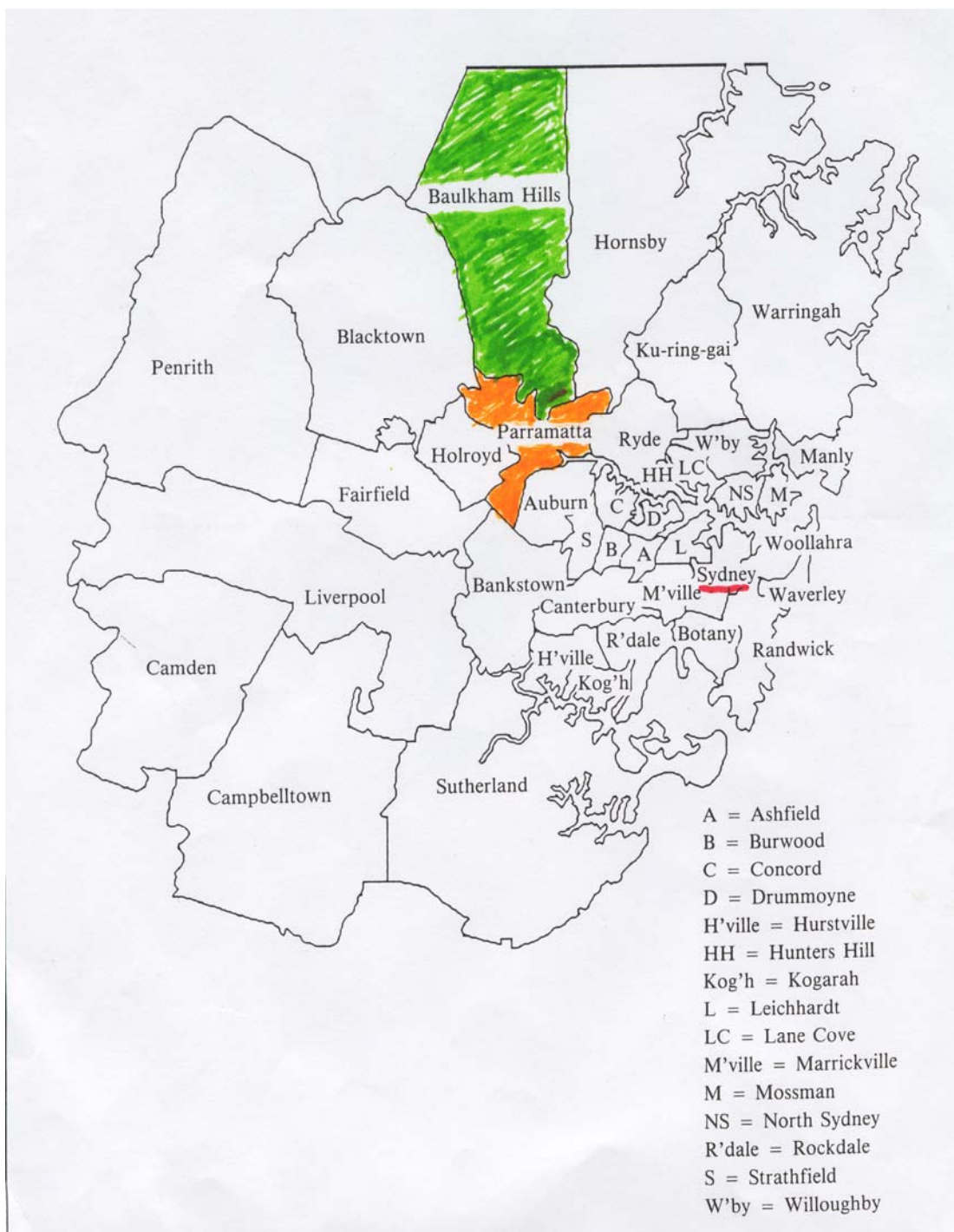
Over time it became clear that clustering was a transitory phenomenon, linked to class position, location of initial work places and unfamiliarity with the new society. As the economic situation and the English language ability of migrants improved, their housing tended to become more dispersed. Social and residential mobility of the second and subsequent generations as well as intermarriage further erode concentration.⁴⁹⁶

Fortunately the public perception has also changed over time and ethnic communities such as the 'little Italies' and the 'Chinatowns' of the big cities are now often seen as culturally enriching and an integral part of Australia's multicultural society'⁴⁹⁷ though this may be more applicable to business districts than to suburban enclaves.

⁴⁹⁶ Castles, Foster, Iredale and Withers, *Immigration and Australia*, p. 95

⁴⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 95

The issue of clustering did not appear specifically in the CIMS criteria but was implied was the issue of ethnic clustering in urban areas. The migrants who arrived before the Iranian Revolution of 1979 were small in numbers and dispersed through different suburbs. (see Appendix 5) Although clustering caused some tension among Bahá'ís who acknowledge an ideology of inclusion and dispersion it is not regarded as a problem by the wider society because the Iranians are not so large in numbers or so different that they attract attention as a group.



Map 3. Sydney Local Government areas – suburbs showing the two areas that have the largest concentration of Bahá'ís⁴⁹⁸

⁴⁹⁸ Burnley, 'Diversity and Difference: Immigration and the Multicultural City'.

In summary, through the use of the 'ideal models' of settlement suggested by the Centre for Immigration and Multicultural Studies, the integration of the Iranian Bahá'ís as a group was examined in this chapter. While recognizing the problems that occur in attempting to measure the effective settlement of a group because of the variety of experiences and reactions that occur within it the framework provided a way to reach some conclusions. The options for the group were limited because they could not return to their country of origin and therefore were highly motivated to become effective settlers if their needs were sufficiently fulfilled. The establishment of an acceptable social identity in the public arena was carried out effectively because the migrants were both motivated for adaptation and had a recognizable and accepted identity because of the well established Australian Bahá'í community. They could identify themselves as Persian Bahá'ís without attracting hostility. In addition the Iranian Bahá'ís were sufficiently Westernized to be aware of behavioural norms in a developed country. Consequently their behaviour did not significantly differ from mainstream norms except in the degree of their public formality. The media treated them with sympathy because of the sophisticated and well organized campaign to create an awareness of the plight of the Iranian Bahá'ís carried out in Australia and by the House of Justice in Israel and another organization the Baha'i International Community in New York. No interviewee mentioned that they experienced hostility from the Australian public. On the contrary, they were welcomed by the Australian Bahá'í community and the wider community. They were not discriminated against nor was their treatment inadequate because the Australian authorities had learned from past experience that it was in their interests to fulfill the needs of small newly arrived groups. The core issue for Iranian Bahá'ís is the freedom to maintain their religion, their culture and their language without attracting persecution. This freedom was established through two processes. The first was the formation of a policy of multiculturalism in Australia that allowed the Iranian Bahá'ís to be themselves without attracting hostility. The second was the ability of the Iranians to maintain an ethnic cultural identity in the private sphere and a social identity similar to mainstream norms in the public sphere. They were accustomed to doing this in Iran because their persecuted and illegal status gave them the ability to adapt. The section of the group that appeared to have most improved their life style in Australia were the women and this issue is examined more closely in the next chapter.

CHAPTER TEN

GENDER AND INTER-GENERATIONAL ISSUES

Gender issues are central to the immigration experiences of the Iranian migrants to Australia because of the traditional suppression of women's rights in their society of origin and the contrasting freedoms they found in Australia. Women in Iran experienced some improvement in their rights during the years of the Pahlavi dynasty but saw them stripped away during the Khomeini era. The Revolution and the Islamic state systematically repressed women's rights with a program that removed any advances achieved by the 1970s. After being forced to return to traditional roles during the years under the new regime migrants had to once again adapt to a different pattern in gender relationships in their host society. One example of this would be the division of labour; when women work in occupations traditionally carried out by men, do they enjoy the same privileges as traditional males have at home? What role does the man play if his wife wants to work? Does he help with the domestic chores if she is at work all day? Some of these issues are still being sorted out by Australian men and women but there are bigger differences for Iranians. It can be difficult for men raised in a masculine dominated society to allow the women in their family to benefit from the freedoms offered to them in their host society. For the migrants some issues had to be renegotiated in Australia, for example, questions such as who controls the family finances? Or which parent takes the responsibility for child care? In a society that encourages young people to date, should young women be allowed to socialize freely with men who are not possible future partners? This chapter examines these issues and how migrants' experiences in their country of origin affected the way they dealt with Australian gender roles.

Gender issues had an immediate effect on the methodology used in this study because the gender of the interviewer became a factor in the research. Women appeared to be more willing to be interviewed than men and some middle aged men were suspicious of the idea of being interviewed at all. One possible reason for their reluctance was because the interviewer was a female and although this was not mentioned it seemed that their preconceived ideas of gender behavior made them believe it was inappropriate for them to be interviewed by a woman. Several men who agreed to be interviewed with their wives were not at home when the interviewer arrived for a prearranged appointment. However, it should be noted that

there was an age difference in this type of response. Young men were quite comfortable with being interviewed and several were very co-operative and even agreed to travel to the home of the interviewer for a lengthier interview. Most of the women were willing to be interviewed because they appeared to want to explain how they have benefited from being in a country that allowed them a greater degree of equality than their home country. There was another reason why the majority of interviewees were women and it was due to the context in which people willing to be interviewed were found. The initial contact was made at community events and there seemed to be more women involved in these activities. The consequences were that 59.2% of the individuals in the study were women.

That women were easier to approach for interviews raises the question of gender responsibility. In social circumstances where women took on responsibilities that were previously more likely to be given to men, for example chairing a meeting or being the speaker, the women also continued to keep their traditional responsibilities as well. Women with professional responsibilities outside the domestic realm also carried out the traditional responsibilities such as food preparation and child minding. During social occasions some men helped a little with these responsibilities but many of them especially the older men stood around talking to each other and watching the women do most of the work.

This gender distribution of responsibility demonstrates that the culture of the country of origin is a strong imprinting and the effects continue for at least a generation. Prior to their immigration into Australia the women who lived in Iran for many years, in Westernized households, were constrained by the norms of the society around them. Although a basic tenet of the ideology of their religion stresses the equality of men and women, the Iranian Bahá'ís were influenced by the culture in which they lived. The principle of equality was almost impossible to implement in the public world in Iran, particularly after the Revolution. Iranians lived in a patriarchal society where men were the dominant force in every public domain. In a gender study on Iranian women in the United States one woman described the way she saw that world:

For a woman in Iran, restriction is the only framework within which she can think, feel and act. Restricted at home by her parents or husband, and outside by almost everyone and in every aspect of culture in every corner of the society. Violating these restrictions often costs her dearly and may jeopardize her chances of even being recognized as a decent human. Iran is a land of kings, fathers, and boys and the Iranian culture is the epitome of misogyny.⁴⁹⁹

Similar conditions created by power structures in Iran also affected the men who occupied a subordinate position in Iranian society. Men in low socio-economic occupations or in rural villages were embedded in traditional customs and social values and under these circumstances tended to be conventional or afraid to behave in a way that was outside the accepted norms of masculine behavior. They were culturally programmed to behave in a subservient way towards those in power in public. However in their domestic realm they believed that women were subordinate to them and they usually behaved in a dominant manner towards their female relatives.

Men in positions of power in Iran held traditional views about the place of women in their society and believed that the women's role was to be wives and mothers and their own personal satisfaction should be sacrificed for the sake of their family. Muhammad Reza Shah, who was deposed by the Revolution of 1979, was considered by the outside world to be a man with liberal views who was attempting to modernize his nation. He fought against the attempts by the Moslem clerical establishment to prevent women having equal rights such as the opportunity to achieve an education. In spite of his supposedly enlightened views he still held traditional opinions about women. In an interview with a western journalist, Oriana Fallaci, the Shah expressed opinions about women that were probably held by the majority of men in Iran in the early seventies:

Nobody can influence me. Still less a woman. Women are important in a man's life only if they are beautiful and charming and keep their femininity. You are equal in the sight of the law, but not excuse me saying so in ability. You have never produced a Michelangelo or a Bach, you have never even produced a great chef. You have produced nothing great, nothing.⁵⁰⁰

In spite of the prejudice in Muhammad Reza Shah's comments, according to Sanasarian the attitude taken towards women during the Khomeini era was so disastrous that it made the Shah's behavior appear 'profeminist'.⁵⁰¹

Historically the traditional notions of female behavior in Iran placed women in a private world of domestic responsibility and made them financially dependent on their male

⁴⁹⁹ Mahdi, 'Perceptions of Gender Roles Among Female Iranian Immigrants in the United States', p.1

⁵⁰⁰ Sanasarian, *The Women's Rights Movement in Iran*, p. 60

⁵⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 151

relatives. One Iranian woman in Mahdi's survey had this to say about women's situation in Iran:

Iranian society expects women to sacrifice themselves for men and forego their rights. A woman cannot claim an independent existence after marriage, and serves only to satisfy men's physical and sexual needs. When hungry and in need, everyone in the family turns to her. Iranian men, no matter how educated they are, still think like their fathers, unless they are born with a grain of social justice. Iranian women cannot escape from the monstrous presence of their husbands and the ghost of their family. These men are spoiled by their mothers who expect their in-laws to care for their sons in the same manner. These men pretend they are considerate, understanding, and egalitarian. They are wolves in lamb's clothing.⁵⁰²

There was a feminist movement in Iran and after the early 1900s there were groups of activists who attempted to challenge the inferior status of women, but they were often severely punished for their efforts to improve conditions for women. One of the earliest female activists was a writer and poet and an early Babi. She was known as Qurratul-Ayn or Tahirih (1815-51). She once tore off her veil at a meeting to demonstrate her support for female emancipation but because of her involvement in the Babi movement she was arrested, imprisoned and then strangled and her body thrown into a well.⁵⁰³

In spite of the feminist movement and attempts made by men and women to allow women in the public domain, some still struggled for the right to work or to obtain an education and constantly found themselves in opposition to preconceived notions of appropriate female behavior:

My father was Moslem before he became a Bahá'í and he had traditional views about women and education. He said to me 'six years is enough education for a girl' and I had to leave school when I was twelve. When I told him I wanted to go to work he laughed at me. He didn't take my idea seriously. He thought it was just a childish notion which would pass as I became older and would settle down to having a husband and children. But I didn't give in so I went to a glass factory and said I want to work. Everybody who worked there was a Bahá'í but the owner laughed at me just like my father. He thought why should I want to work when I had a father to support me? My father had told them, 'Don't let her work just let her hang around'. I said to them 'What's wrong with you guys? If I am not studying I am supposed to work, I want to work.' But they didn't accept this so I went to another factory making medical supplies and matches. I didn't like it there either because the lady working there in charge of the staff treated me in a condescending manner or just gave me easy jobs like rolling bandages. Finally I decided to study at night and finished High School. Then I went to College and did a course to become a

⁵⁰² Mahdi, 'Gender Roles Among Female Iranian Immigrants', p. 16

⁵⁰³ Sanasarian, *The Women's Rights Movement in Iran*, p.9

physician assistant. We don't have those qualifications in Australia but in Iran they do everything a doctor does such as giving injections and stitching wounds. Many years later on when I became Chairman of a Technical College I said to my Father, 'Dad do you believe now that girls can study and work like men?' He had tears in his eyes and said to me, I couldn't believe that you could reach that stage when you are only a woman.⁵⁰⁴

As mentioned earlier Reza Shah was in favor of education for women but he in common with other traditional Iranian men believed that they should only be taught by women. Because there was a shortage of women teachers in Iran this limited the opportunity for education to a small percentage of the female population but schools did appear. The growth of girl's schools in the twentieth century in spite of traditional attitudes was quite rapid. In 1910 there were 41 schools with 2,167 girl students. By 1929 there were 190 schools with 11,487 students and by 1933 there were 870 schools with 50,000 female students.⁵⁰⁵ The Bahá'í community actively promoted the concept of equality of women and their right to an education as one of the main tenets of religious belief. As noted earlier, a school for girls they established in Teheran in the early twentieth century was closed by Reza Shah in the 1930's during his attempt to secularize education.

The Bahá'ís in Iran, as part of their ideology, believed that if a family could afford to educate only one of their children the girls should have first access because they are the mothers of the next generation. Consequently almost all the Bahá'í women in the twentieth century achieved some degree of education. They served on local and national administrative bodies and many were encouraged to acquire university degrees. Therefore the discrimination against women in education and the work place that became part of government policy after the Revolution was particularly distressing for Bahá'í women because they had experienced freedom and then lost it. The younger women, those still at high school or even younger, had their education terminated after the Revolution.

⁵⁰⁴ Interviewee 26259

⁵⁰⁵ Ruth Frances Woodsmall, 1936, *Moslem Women Enter a New World*, Allen and Unwin, London, p. 62

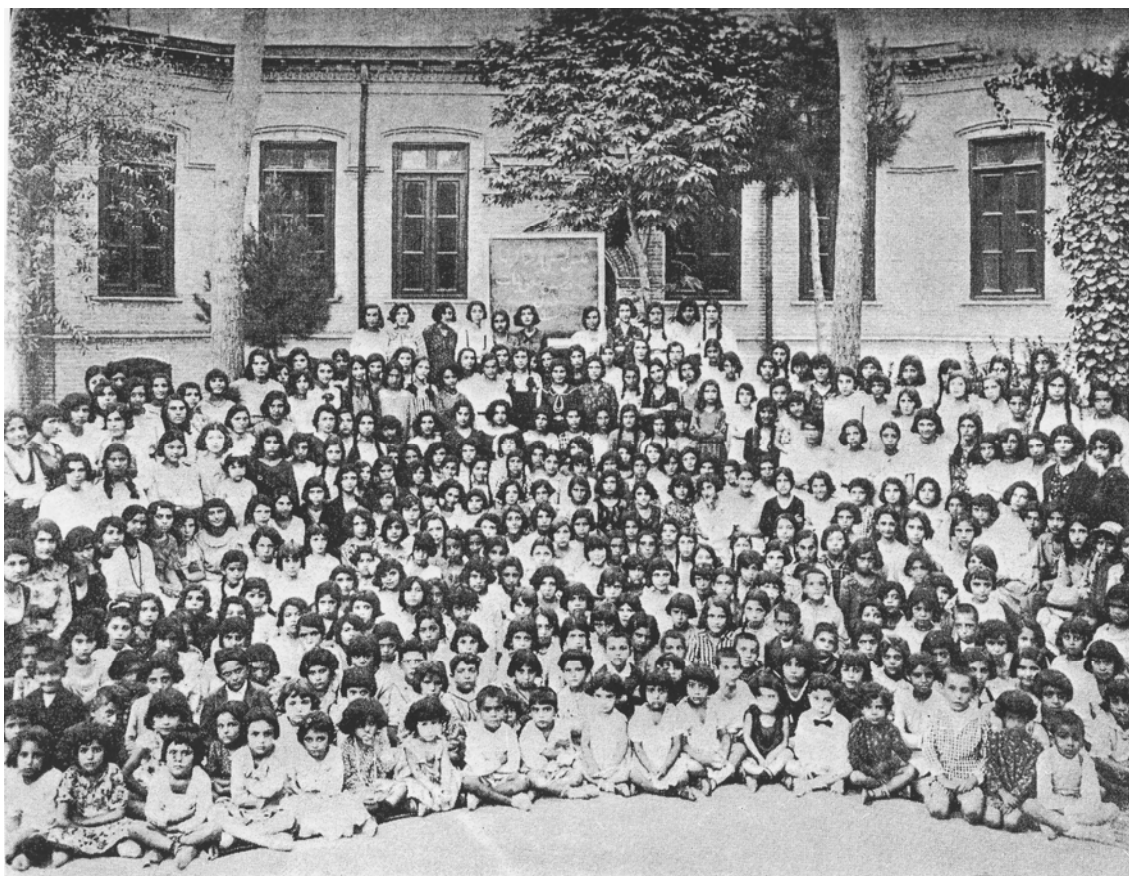


Photo No 19 Students at the Bahá'í Tarbiyat Girls' School Teheran, Iran, Circa – 1930 ⁵⁰⁶

Symbol of Oppression - Womens' Clothing

The domination of women in Iran in the twentieth century became part of a power struggle between the Pahlavi Dynasty and the Moslem clerical authorities with a particular emphasis on women's clothing. Moslem clerics forced women to wear the veil and the chador in public. When the Pahlavi Dynasty seized power Reza Shah made the wearing of chador and veils illegal in 1935.⁵⁰⁷ As Madhi noted:

The practice of veiling has provoked controversy throughout this century both inside and outside Iran. During the twentieth century, Iranian women have been forced by their governments to unveil and veil themselves; neither the veil's

⁵⁰⁶ *The Baha'i World: 1932-1934*, Baha'i Publishing Committee, New York, p.341

⁵⁰⁷ Farmaian, *Daughter of Persia*, p.137

removal nor its use was a voluntary act. The decision was arbitrary and imposed by the full force of law in both cases.⁵⁰⁸

The law against the veil became a symbol of various programs and demonstrated who was in charge. It was particularly unpopular in the country. Throughout the twentieth century in rural villages in Iran people had continued to live a traditional way of life in spite of the social changes that had occurred in Teheran and other cities. The wearing of the chador and other restrictions on women's clothing was one of the more obvious signs of the lack of modernization in these villages:.

After I got married we went to live in the country and in that village women had to wear chador, especially if they were going to market or to the Mosque. We lived in that village for nineteen years and I had to wear a chador all that time. You know for a girl who grew up in Teheran it was very difficult to live in a village and always wear a chador outside the house.⁵⁰⁹

During the reign of Mohammad Reza Shah the date of the outlawing of the veil was celebrated every year symbolizing from an official viewpoint the date of women's liberation.⁵¹⁰ However during the uprising against the Shah in 1979 female students who were accustomed to wearing jeans and T-shirts wrapped themselves in the chador as a symbol of the revolution and the banishing of Western ideas.⁵¹¹ Soon after the new regime took power the wearing of the veil again became official policy for women and clothing police could arrest women for even the smallest deviation from the dress code.

The clothing that people wear is an expression of social values and a uniform dress code denies individual rights and represents the presence of a central authority and a hierarchy of power. As a visiting journalist in Iran, Catherine Taylor, commented:

Since the Islamic Revolution in 1979, the very idea of fashion has been anathema to the principles of hejab, or modest dress. Women have been forced by law to hide any hint of female beauty beneath a chador – the black capes that are often associated with the women of Iran. If they don't wear chador they must wear long, shapeless coats in dark colours, topped with plain, unflattering scarves.⁵¹²

⁵⁰⁸ Mahdi, 'Gender Roles Among Female Iranian Immigrations', p. 9

⁵⁰⁹ Interviewee 26259

⁵¹⁰ Sanasarian, *The Women's Rights Movement in Iran*, p. 63

⁵¹¹ Cheryl Benard, 1980, 'Islam and Some Reflections on the Experience of Iran', *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. IV, no 2, p. 25
www.rand.org/news/experts/bios/expert_benard_dr_cheryl.html accessed 2005

⁵¹² Catherine Taylor, 'Flying the rebel colours', *The Weekend Australian Magazine*, 3-4 August, p. 10

Individual choice of clothing is more than just a surface addiction to fashion and colour. Colours are also indicative of a state of mind. The wearing of black represents mourning and in traditionally religious places like Qum, the sombre dress code is strictly enforced.⁵¹³ The restriction on colour was extended to other personal adornment such as makeup:

When I was only six years old I remember we went to visit my aunty and my mother was wearing lipstick. A policeman saw her and we were arrested. When they found out we were Baha'is they took us to the police station and interrogated us. They kept us in a cell for eighteen hours but they didn't charge us and they eventually let us go. They really just enjoyed bullying us. I was terrified and my mother was very shocked. After that experience she decided we would have to leave Iran.⁵¹⁴

Choice of Marriage Partner

Many women in Iran were forced to marry for reasons other than personal choice. In rural areas, girls were aware that they had to marry the person their parents chose for them. This mind set, although supposedly accepted by women, did not make the situation any easier for those who were controlled in this way even if the parents chose someone whom they thought would give their daughters a better life. The threat of forced marriage hung over the heads of all young women and as mentioned earlier, Bahá'í girls were occasionally kidnapped and forced to marry Moslems.

In the families where both parents were Bahá'ís or if the family had been Bahá'ís for several generations and thus had a better understanding of the Bahá'í laws on marriage, they did not force their children to marry against their wishes. Bahá'í law stipulates that it is matter of personal choice but parents must approve of the person their children choose to marry. However in families that were partly Moslem, that is either one parent or immediate relatives such as uncles were strict Moslems, young women could be married to whoever was chosen for them by their relatives without any say in the matter:

I was brought up in Persia and although we were Bahá'ís we had many Moslem relatives and friends. I used to go to school and on the way to school the kids used to follow me and shout at me because my family was Bahá'í. But in spite of this prejudice there were sixteen families who wanted me to marry their sons. One of my uncles, to keep them away, told everyone she is engaged to her cousin. This uncle was rich and a Moslem and he had a

⁵¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 10

⁵¹⁴ Interviewee 48710

son the same age as me. One day I came home from school and they were there to arrange the marriage because I had achieved my maturity. I refused to marry the cousin my uncle had chosen for me. I didn't like him and he was a Moslem. Then my mother heard them talking about how they will kill us if I didn't marry my cousin. At that time I decided this is not the place for me and I didn't tell anyone but to escape the immediate problem I got married to a Bahá'í. I didn't love him but I was sixteen, of marriageable age and wanted to be safe from the Moslems.⁵¹⁵

Another woman's mother had her marriage organized without reference to her:

My grandmother, who was a Moslem, ran a shop because my grandfather had passed away. She was beaten up because people said the Bahá'í man who came to their shop was going to marry her daughter. When he, the man who became my father, asked my grandmother why she had been beaten she told him the reason. He was very surprised because he had only seen my mother's sisters who were very young. He said how can I marry them they are only four or five years old? My grandmother said, 'I have another daughter who is seventeen. She is away minding the sheep'. So my dad said give me permission and let me marry her to spite them. He went and found my mother in the fields and told her she was going to marry him. My mother fainted when she heard this and my father had to carry her home. Then the marriage was arranged but luckily for my mother he was a good man and successful in business so she didn't regret the marriage.⁵¹⁶

In Iran after the Revolution the status of women became intertwined with the idea of an Islamic state. The traditional views of the clerics in control of the government emphasized the role of women as defined primarily through their place in the family. The control of women by the 1990s was more strictly defined:

Smiling in the street is prohibited for Iranian women. Women are banned from pursuing higher education in 91 of the 169 fields of study and they must be taught in segregated classrooms. A woman may work with her husband's permission, although occupations are forbidden to women. Punishments (for immodest activity) range from a verbal reprimand to 74 lashes with a whip, to imprisonment for one month to a year. Stoning to death is a legal form of punishment for sexual misconduct.⁵¹⁷

Freedom in Australia.

For the women migrants the freedom from the restrictions they experienced in Iran gave them the motivation, on arrival in their host country, to work harder at their personal goals than many who are born in Australia and who take their privileges for granted.

⁵¹⁵ Interviewee 30299

⁵¹⁶ Interviewee 34110

One Iranian woman arrived in Australia when she was only sixteen, accompanied by her brother who was a few years older. They came without their parents and their education was paid for by the government. The girl went first to Cheltenham girl's school in Normanhurst, then to TAFE and finally to university where she studied medicine. She worked part time at any jobs she could find while studying to supplement her income.⁵¹⁸ She is currently working as a locum cardiologist in a hospital in Sydney. Apart from the individual factors that allowed her to achieve success such as intelligence, dedication and ambition, she attributes the greater part of her success to the freedom, financial assistance and opportunities available to her in Australia.

Another young woman, denied an education and the right to a legal marriage in Iran, became a refugee in 1988. After arriving in Australia she completed several courses at TAFE and became the registrar of a children's court in Sydney.⁵¹⁹ Another young woman explained how she felt about being female in Australia:

I like Australia very much, definitely. I suppose it is because there is more freedom for us. This is a good thing especially for women. In Iran we wouldn't be able to get education or get a job.⁵²⁰

Other women interviewed for this study achieved successful careers after obtaining higher education in Australia. One became a reader in requirements engineering at a Sydney university,⁵²¹ one a chemical engineer involved in a government project,⁵²² another a physicist working in a private corporation,⁵²³ one a lawyer with her own practice⁵²⁴ and there were several accountants. These women have balanced their careers with motherhood as well as playing an active role in their religious community. A woman who works as a consultant for a private corporation explained that since she came to Australia she was able to complete a master's degree in electro-magnetics and enjoyed an income of over a hundred thousand a year. She said that her personality has changed; she has become confident and talkative where she was once quiet and shy.⁵²⁵

⁵¹⁷ Joseph Tragert, 2003, *Understanding Iran*, Penguin, New York, p. 151

⁵¹⁸ Interviewee 29269

⁵¹⁹ Interviewee 997

⁵²⁰ Interviewee 48710

⁵²¹ Interviewee 32110

⁵²² Interviewee 622711

⁵²³ Interviewee 74712

⁵²⁴ Interviewee 72612

⁵²⁵ Interviewee 74712

One of the freedoms available to women in Australia, which most people take for granted, is personal choice in the clothing they wear. They can choose to wear veils or long black dresses or saris if it suits them and this has had a liberating effect on women from Iran. It is not something that can be measured but the psychological effect is very positive. It is an issue not only for women; one young man made the observation that women's clothing is also important to the men. He said,

'I like Australia. Girls don't wear scarves. In Iran the girls are all covered up'.⁵²⁶

Clothing is a visible expression of a social reality and the majority of the older Iranians in Australia, even after living here for more than ten years, are still affected by the traditional ideas they acquired in Iran. Women feel obliged to wear clothing that meets with the approval of either their husbands or the older women in the community. Even though they do not wear scarves or a chador, when they wear modern clothing it tends towards more formal, conservative styles and darker colours. The men are also affected by tradition and older Iranian men wear suits and ties in public. They believe that any occasion outside the home requires a certain formality in dress. Consequently some of the senior Iranians, both men and women, are shocked by the clothing, such as shorts, t-shirts or bright colours that some Australians are prepared to wear even on a religious occasion.

Young Iranian women who choose to wear the latest fashions, such as short skirts, colourful nail polish or streaked hair experience cross-generational tension and are aware of the negative comments made about their appearance by some older women. One young woman, who liked to wear the latest fashions, was the secretary of a local assembly. She said some people think that committee members should be 'perfect' and dress in appropriate clothing for someone in a responsible position. They asked her, 'Why do you wear your nails so long?' or 'Why do you wear so much make up?' Her son heard people gossiping about his mother's clothing and fashion sense and he was distressed that although she worked hard for the community they were criticizing her. However she refused to bow to pressure.⁵²⁷

Adopting the clothing customs of a host society can occur so smoothly that the changes go unnoticed. One young woman after living in Australia for many years returned to Iran for a visit when her mother was ill. She only packed the casual clothing she had become accustomed to wear. Her relatives in Iran were upset with her because she had no 'suitable' clothing and they made her go to a tailor to have some good suits made. Middle class

⁵²⁶ Interviewee 67312

⁵²⁷ Interviewee 761112

Iranian women dress very well under their chadors and are very interested in the latest fashions worn in the West. Because she came from a Western country they wanted to learn about the latest fashions from her. She said she did not feel uncomfortable wearing a chador because all her sisters wore them, but it seemed ridiculous to spend money on expensive clothes and then cover them with a chador:

I had forgotten about the culture and how they dress up. They were all better dressed than I was. In Australia you don't have to dress up, you don't have to worry; people don't judge you by your clothes. When I was in Iran I realized that I like Australia better than my own country for these reasons.⁵²⁸

Fashion is fickle but it is representative of social change and therefore migrants who prefer to wear traditional clothing on a regular basis for either religious or social reasons can create a distance between them and the host society. Under some circumstances it can hinder their social acceptance and acculturation. Formal clothing worn by older Iranians for example at a picnic can by Australian standards make them look out of place and set them apart. Another example is wearing black formal clothing to informal events which Australians find odd.

Marriage is basically a social contract and in their country of origin many Iranians felt obliged to marry within their own religious community and were willing to marry someone their parents chose for them. Once young single people realized that in their host society they could marry someone of their own choice they felt free to fall in love with someone outside their ethnic group. Their choice can create problems between themselves and their parents. Many first generation migrants although professing western attitudes towards love and marriage preferred to continue traditional practices. They might give lip service to the idea that their children can choose their partner but tried to influence them to marry within their ethnic and religious group:

I always wanted my son to marry a Persian Bahá'í girl. I used to pray to Baha'u'llah that my son should marry a Persian girl. I told him if he did I would give him a big wedding but he fell in love with an Australian girl and I was against them getting married. I blame myself that their relationship broke up because of my attitude. I am sorry now that I interfered because they are still friends but they aren't going to get married and he is still single.⁵²⁹

⁵²⁸ Interviewee 44610

⁵²⁹ Interviewee 10137

Among the eighty three people interviewed forty were married to Iranians before they left Iran. Sixteen interviewees married after leaving Iran and of them three married Iranians, seven married Australians and six married people of other nationalities. The rest included nine single women who had never married, four widows, eight single men and one widower. Five were still students in their teen years, three young men and two young women. The majority of young Iranians who have grown up in Australia married Australians or people from countries other than Iran. Those who married since they left Iran did not seem to have problems in meeting, dating and marrying outside their ethnic group. One man, who was born in Australia, said:

It is better to marry someone who is not Iranian. You widen your horizons and gain a greater perspective on the world.⁵³⁰

Among those who married in Australia, all except one chose partners who were also Bahá'ís. This indicates a definite preference to marry within their religious community and appears to indicate that even for the second generation an ethnic identity is not as strong as their religious identity. However it could also be indicative of ease of access. That is, social activities within the religious community provided more opportunities to meet young people.

Women who have a healthy degree of self esteem do not see themselves as capable of becoming a traditional obedient Iranian wife. One young woman when asked if she would prefer to marry an Iranian answered emphatically 'no':

I would prefer to marry a Bahá'í but I am too independent for a Persian husband. I don't want to be someone's possession. I don't want to worship the man I marry. I believe in equality. Some Persian Bahá'ís, some men, say they believe in equality but they don't know what it is.⁵³¹

Another woman decided when she was growing up in Iran that she did not want to marry an Iranian man and consequently found what she wanted after her family migrated to Australia:

I deliberately married an Australian. I did not want to marry an Iranian. When we were in Iran I said to myself I do not want to marry an Iranian. When we left Iran I thought that's good, now I won't have to marry an Iranian man.⁵³²

⁵³⁰ Interviewee 13157

⁵³¹ Interviewee 51710

⁵³² Interviewee 602611

I would prefer not to marry an Iranian. They are too macho. It was okay for my Mum when she was in Iran but when she came here she didn't want to live like that. It's a cultural thing, they are just different to Australians, even the young ones. I want children, three girls and a boy, but I wouldn't want them to grow up with that sort of thing. The middle one has to be a boy but I wouldn't want him to be like an Iranian man.⁵³³

Two young female students said however they wanted to marry an Iranian like their father.⁵³⁴

A few women in their twenties or thirties who were single but would like to be married felt that being in Australia had prevented them finding a partner:

Being a Bahá'í has made life difficult for us in many ways. The morals and values we have as Bahá'ís are very different to Australians. We believe in sexual relationships that exist only within the sanctity of marriage. In addition a lot of social life in Australia is centered around the pub and we feel out of place under those circumstances. It looks silly to keep drinking orange juice. I have found that the laws of our faith affect our relationships and make it harder to meet socially with members of the opposite sex.⁵³⁵

There is a shortage of eligible Iranian men in the Bahá'í community in Australia. There are plenty of girls but not many men. Some people dated in Iran but it was generally frowned upon and so I don't feel comfortable with the idea of dating and have never dated an Australian. My parents still live in Iran and cannot help me to find a marriage partner so I don't meet many new people that is why I am still single.⁵³⁶ People here have different standards and I cannot marry just anyone.

I still live at home with my parents and I'm happy with them. I have had boyfriends and our parents allowed us to date but we are very involved in Bahá'í activities. I do not have much time for dating. I will choose my own partner and would prefer to marry a Bahá'í, not necessarily Iranian, but I haven't found anyone yet. My parents used to talk about marriage to me but they don't anymore. I think they have given up on me.⁵³⁷

An Iranian man, single and in his late thirties, had the opinion that because he doesn't drink alcohol he is unable to associate with Australians. He said he never comes in contact with single women outside the Bahá'í community. He believed Australian women would

⁵³³ Interviewee 48710

⁵³⁴ Interviewee 366

⁵³⁵ Interviewee 66212.

⁵³⁶ Interviewee 73612

⁵³⁷ Interviewee 602611

not accept him as a husband because his English is not very good and because he worked in a lower income occupation.

The divorce level among Iranian migrants has apparently risen since they moved to Australia and it is mainly the women who have initiated divorce proceedings. In Iran men were not socially condemned if they divorced their wives but the women were in a more difficult position. Any women who exercised their right for a divorce were socially condemned and there were many who desired it but were afraid to even suggest it. In Australia Iranian women have found they have the right to divorce their husbands and retain custody of their children. They can receive financial assistance from the authorities that helps them to leave a violent or distressing situation. One woman, who left her husband and obtained custody of her two children, moved to another city to avoid her husband's relatives. She said the authorities were very good and helped her financially to keep her children when she separated from her husband. Even though all his family was in Australia they could not interfere as they would have done in Iran. When asked about the problems in her marriage she would not elaborate but said her husband was a 'typical Iranian'. After leaving her husband she acquired accountancy qualifications and worked in an office, living with her children in a rented house. She said that although she is not as well off as before the family was much happier and at peace.⁵³⁸

The younger Iranian men appreciated the social freedom available both to women and themselves in Australia and appear to find liberated women very attractive. One young man, still at high school, said when he goes to University he would like to live independently because he wanted to make his own friends and date girls without his parents' permission. His parents object to some of his friends but stated he can marry who he likes. He did not think there would be any problems but thought his parents would definitely have an opinion about his choice. They preferred him to marry a Bahá'í, but he did not believe they would be as strict as Moslems. His friend, a Moslem, wanted to marry a non-Moslem girl but his parents would not allow it. The interviewee said he would prefer to marry an Australian or other non-Iranian but he believed that nationality is not as important as character. He had no trouble meeting women and expected to be able to find a wife easily. However he could see problems arising if his parents did not approve of his choice.⁵³⁹

Surveys on gender differences among Iranian migrants in the United States generally found that women had more problems acculturating in a new society than the men. One acculturation

⁵³⁸ Interviewee 50710

⁵³⁹ Interviewee 37210

study on the mental health of Iranian college students showed that Iranian men were more acculturated than Iranian women and overall the women were more depressed and more anxious about their new life than the men.⁵⁴⁰ In contrast the Iranian Bahá'í women in this study had fewer problems with acculturation than the men. An Iranian man, a university lecturer, believed that when Iranian women are given the opportunity of social freedom and opportunities for education they were able to adapt more easily than the men:

One of the issues that leads to marriage problems for Iranian men and women is caused when a couple arrives in a society that values women and gives them an identity. The Iranian women become mothers at a very young age and they come here and they don't have to stay at home. They can study as mature age students, they can go to night classes and many have gone to university. When their children grow up they feel out of touch with their husbands who took jobs, such as painters, to support the family. The women are no longer on the same wave length as their husbands and feel ashamed of them and they can't talk to each other anymore and emotional problems arise.⁵⁴¹

Division of Labour,

Culturally imprinted gendered division of labour can be resistant to change. Several married women said they preferred to stay at home and raise their children while they were still young. One woman, a dental nurse before she was married, had studied to be a secretary for a big company and enjoyed working but was pressured to abandon any ideas of a career after she was married. Her husband made it plain he did not want her to work; he wanted her to stay home and look after their sons. Consequently she stayed home for many years after her children were born and felt a sense of frustration, although she loved her children. During the interview she made an interesting comment that 'Some Iranian women are very obedient so I stayed home with the children.'⁵⁴² However once both her sons were at High School she went back to work in her brother-in-law's business.⁵⁴³

For Iranians the domestic world is a female domain. Food preparation is regarded as a female skill taught to women by their mothers or other female relatives. Cooking skills are an approved way to excite admiration from others and whenever there is a community event it is the women who prepare the food and serve it. Only a few have managed to share this

⁵⁴⁰ Ghaffarian, 'The Acculturation of Iranians in the United States', p. 565

⁵⁴¹ Interviewee 22179

⁵⁴² Interviewee 47710

⁵⁴³ Interviewee 47710

responsibility with the men in their family and usually it is those with non-Iranian husbands although there are exceptions. A small number of men interviewed in this survey do help with food preparation. The women who have managed to involve their men with cooking or other domestic work appear to be those who have higher educational qualifications.

The women who indicated that they take their domestic roles lightly and prefer not to cook Iranian food and who eat in Persian restaurants if they feel like ethnic cuisine were the women who achieved independence from traditional expectations. They have successful careers outside the home and say they have no time to spend on preparing elaborate meals. One woman, married to an Australian, explained:

I don't cook much. I don't have the time. My husband helps me with the cooking. We share the responsibility. Maybe I cook three times a week. I eat anything, especially something that someone else has cooked for me. Cooking is not my favourite occupation.⁵⁴⁴

Gender issues were a factor in acquisition of language skills. The women in this study appeared to have acquired competence in English faster than the men, perhaps due to the amount of contact they had with outsiders. As mentioned earlier, as women were more likely to work in an environment that required them to verbally interact with people such as schools or hospitals or aged care facilities, they acquired language skills faster than their men folk, who worked either with other Iranians or in practical occupations such as the building trade where they had minimal verbal exchanges with their clients:

In Australia women acculturate better than men. Men do not associate with Australians in a social context. Even those who have a business such as a shop, their conversation with Australians is only about 'how much' and 'how are you today' but it is a narrow experience. Whereas the women have become teachers, they have college degrees, their experience with Australians is broader and as a result their English is better than their husbands. Their communication skills develop faster.⁵⁴⁵

Children

Expectations of behaviour of boys and girls varies. Boys have more freedom than girls but they do not have the same respect or fear of their fathers or authority figures as they had in Iran. Iranian men are very strict with their sons and it is accepted that boys must obey

⁵⁴⁴ Interviewee 74712

their fathers but this traditional practice has been seen as unacceptable in Australia and one interviewee felt that her son was becoming disrespectful because of the lack of discipline:

Iranians are a bit rough with their sons, but here they tell them if your parents hit you have to tell the police. In the family you must have discipline but here someone, maybe it is the fault of the school or the Government I don't know but someone is teaching them they can do what they want. In the school they should be teaching them how to live their life. In Iran children must obey their parents. Here they think if they have friends who say do you want to drink or do you want to do drugs they feel they can do it.⁵⁴⁶

One woman mentioned problems with her son mixing with a group of boys who appeared to her to be disrespectful to older people:

I worry about my sons in Australia. They want to be like Australians. Here in Australia the kids are rude. We don't allow that at home.⁵⁴⁷

The problem of lack of respect for parental control did not seem to be present in families with daughters. The tradition of protecting girls and keeping them at home until they are in their late teens appears to be fairly prevalent and working more effectively than the customary ways of raising sons.

One factor which caused problems with young men is created by the social climate that exists amongst youth in particular suburbs. The individuals who mentioned experiencing problems with their sons lived in socio-economic areas where the residents have lower incomes and work in semi-skilled or unskilled occupations. Fathers who lived in these areas worked long hours and spent a fair amount of time travelling to and from work. They did not spend much time with their families. The child raising was left mainly to the women who felt they could not control their sons as they got older. They still understood their daughters and had more influence on them as they involved them in household duties and other traditional female occupations such as shopping.

Migrants have preconceived ideas about suitable occupations for their children. Some occupations were regarded with well established prejudice. One example was the issue of joining the army. The army in Iran has a reputation for brutality that does not exist in Australia. As mentioned in a previous chapter Bahá'ís who joined the Army were almost

⁵⁴⁵ Interviewee 22179

⁵⁴⁶ Interviewee 761112

⁵⁴⁷ Interviewee 35210

certain to be killed. The fear of men joining the army remained with one mother after settling in Australia. When her son left school he said he wanted to join the army:

I told him Bahá'ís shouldn't join the army but maybe I was thinking about the army in Iran. Now he doesn't know what he wants to do with his life and I feel maybe it is my fault. I should have let him join the army if that is what he wanted.⁵⁴⁸

The Iranian Bahá'ís, similar to other migrants whose country of origin has a masculine hegemony, experienced some problems adapting to a society that allows women to break free from traditions of male dominance and female subservience. The women saw their relocation in Australia as an opportunity to be liberated from the various restrictions they endured in Iran caused by cultural traditions and the establishment of a theocratic government. Many women, after their arrival in Australia, took advantage of the educational opportunities open to them and acquired tertiary qualifications. At the same time some men had to remain in occupations that did not necessarily take advantage of their original skills or qualifications in order to provide their families with an income.

The women who were unhappy with their marriage partners were more likely to seek a divorce than they would have been in Iran. Consequently the Iranian Bahá'ís experienced a rise in the divorce rate after achieving settlement in Australia.

Differences in cultures and expectations also caused problems in some cases between parents and their children. The expectations that the older generation had about appropriate behavior such as the wearing of suitable clothing and showing respect to their elders, gave rise to inter-generational tension as the young people adopted the customs of their host society which older people disapproved of. Among the younger generation the ones who wanted to escape the cultural pattern of their country of origin adopted the dating practices of their peers and the majority preferred to marry outside their ethnic group. But some Iranian men retained the approval of their daughters. Several young women indicated that when they married they would like their husbands to be 'just like their Dad'.

⁵⁴⁸ Interviewee 761112

For the Iranian Baha'i women any prospect of equality for them in Iran had disappeared after the Revolution so their approach to their life in Australia was based on gratitude for the return of their rights. During interviews they stressed their sense of appreciation for the right to be equal to the men in their family, to have a voice in society and to seek higher education.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to examine the immigration experiences and the settlement processes of a particular group of migrants to Australia who had an ethnic identity as well as a religious identity, that is the Iranian Bahá'ís. The intention was to use oral history to record the settlement experiences of the group while the first settlers were still alive. Studies have been done on some groups of migrants from the Middle East to Australia, for example Lebanese, but so far very little has been done on the newest arrivals such as migrants from Iran. This study was intended to fill part of that research gap.

This examination of the immigration experiences of the Iranian Bahá'ís had two major objectives: one to record their stories, and two, to look at this group of people to learn how and why they became effective settlers in Australia. The intention was to look at the groups' immigration experiences from their perspective rather than how Australian society or officialdom saw them. Another aspect of the study was to discover how migrants could integrate successfully within a culture which contrasted strongly to their own. Issues such as rate of adaptation and differences between age groups and genders were examined as well as how the arrival of the Iranian Bahá'ís impacted on the established Australian Bahá'í community. The study also looked at the interaction between the Iranian Bahá'ís and the wider Australian community.

The study found that these migrants, considered to be a heretical group by Islamic fundamentalists, were highly motivated to become successful settlers in their host society. The intense persecution they experienced after the 1979 Revolution in Iran caused thousands of Bahá'ís to become involuntary migrants with the strongest reasons to make their settlement process successful. The traumatic persecution they experienced conversely could have caused the Iranian Bahá'ís to be depressed and dependent refugees like other groups of settlers who originated in the Middle East, but that did not happen.

According to Adibi, the wider community of Iranians in Australia in 1986 was a disadvantaged minority at the lower end of the occupational classification and in the lower income bracket.⁵⁴⁹ Migrants in Australia from poorer regions of Southern Europe and Turkey

⁵⁴⁹ Hossein Adibi, 1994 'Iranians in Australia'. A paper presented to a seminar at the Mehregan Persian Cultural Festival held in Sydney 28 Oct. – 6 Nov. 1994. eds. Garry Trompf, Marteza Honary and Homer Abramian. Papers held in the N.S.W. State Reference Library.

suffered from problems such as high rates of illiteracy and unemployment for decades after they became settlers in Australia. In contrast Iranian Bahá'ís proved to be a group of highly successful settlers in Australia with slightly over fifty per cent, in their own estimation, achieving living conditions equal or better than that they enjoyed in Iran before the Revolution.

The study found that there were several factors that contributed to the successful settlement of the Iranian Bahá'ís and some of these factors were changes in Australia that led to the end of the White Australia approach to immigration in the 1970s and the emphasis placed on multiculturalism in the late 1970s and 1980s. Multiculturalism is ideally suited to a Bahá'í community because the central theme of their ideology is 'unity in diversity'. Several of the interviewees in the study named multiculturalism as one of the factors that attracted them to Australia. Until changes were made to immigration policies Iranians had been classified as Asiatics. Consequently until 1973 they could only choose to migrate to Australia if they had a sponsor willing to guarantee their support. In 1973 new Immigration laws included the Numerical Multifactor Assessment Scheme based on a point selection program.⁵⁵⁰ This new system allowed people of any ethnic background to enter the country providing they had enough points, especially family reunion and skills. The emphasis on skills instead of race or culture enabled middle class Iranian Bahá'ís to apply for migration to Australia thus giving them a way out of their dilemma in Iran. In the 1980s the special program of assisted passage for refugees provided an avenue of escape for those Bahá'ís who had taken the uncertain route of hiring people smugglers and found themselves either in Pakistan or Turkey searching for a destination that would accept them. These two waves of change, the upheaval in Iran and the change in attitude of immigration officials in Australia towards the Iranian Bahá'ís, were a historical juxtaposition that created a safe haven for the Bahá'ís fleeing Iran.

The study acknowledged that migration is influenced by three forces, defined as push, pull and hold, that work in conjunction with each other. Ager used the metaphor of 'birds of passage' to describe the migration process with three stages represented as pre-flight, flight and nesting.⁵⁵¹ Most immigration studies focus on settlement issues but for the Bahá'ís the major push factor was the persecution they experienced. For the Baha'is the push factors were found to be important in their ability to become effective settlers in a country that offered a refuge.

⁵⁵⁰ Burnley, 'Diversity and Difference' p.245

⁵⁵¹ Ager, 'Refugee', p. 3

During the reign of the nominally secular Pahlavi Dynasty, 1925 to 1979, a measure of protection from persecution had allowed many Iranian Bahá'ís to become well educated, financially better off than most Iranians, and in influential positions. They were in the forefront of the modernization process and the movement towards the equality of women and were seen as people with connections to America and Israel. Unfortunately this rebounded on them later as fundamentalist Moslem clerics overthrew the government and labelled the Bahá'ís as heretics, spies and Zionist collaborators. The fact that they had become prosperous and influential also made them more liable to be regarded with hostility by the largest part of the Iranian population who remained poor and disadvantaged. The Revolution in Iran unleashed social forces determined to punish the Bahá'í community. This destructive process caused many to leave their homes and their families as soon as they could facilitate their escape.

The Iranian Bahá'ís arrived in Australia in two waves, the small numbers who migrated before the 1979 Revolution and those who came after it. The first wave of migrants, who arrived after 1960 and before 1979, were not forced out of Iran but were mainly living in other countries. They were pulled to Australia by various attractive features of the society such as its many freedoms. A few living in Indonesia sent their children to Australia for education and of those children most remained here and were established by the time the second wave began to arrive. The study found that this first wave were important in beginning a chain migration process, drawing people to Australia as the persecution in Iran intensified. The process was well underway by 1981.

After the Revolution, due to the changes in immigration policies, a far larger group than might have been expected through the chain process arrived. Those who had capital and qualifications were pulled to Australia under the skilled migration program. The family reunion scheme enabled families to migrate and the refugee assistance program supported those without financial resources.

The Iranian Bahá'ís who became refugees in the 1980s had only one avenue of escape, which was to use the services of people smugglers. They told stories of journeys of terror, hurried flights at night, riding and walking over snow covered mountains, of hunger and thirst and dodging the bullets of border guards. Like the persecution, these experiences motivated them to settle successfully in their host culture.

Although the largest percentage of the migrants and refugees went to America, several thousand chose to come to Australia. The humanitarian program Australia established was being promoted overseas by embassy staff, migration officers and in the media. This

promotional campaign educated those who may not have been aware of Australia. The refugees found that once they arrived at a destination outside Iran such as Turkey or Pakistan they were favourably received, given immediate financial assistance, and their travel expenses met by the Australian Government.

Services for new migrants in Australia, especially refugees, had gradually improved as they were tuned towards migrants' needs. The services were more beneficial and generous than those experienced by migrants of previous decades. Consequently the study found Iranian Bahá'ís were satisfied by their reception and even felt overwhelmed by the helpful attitude of officials and the kindness of ordinary Australians.

Religious freedom, freedom of speech and equal educational opportunities available to all regardless of race, gender or religion, were particularly attractive to Iranians because these freedoms had been lost to them in Iran. Australia was also an acceptable destination for skilled migrants who could speak English. Other issues were seen as attractive to those who had lived in other countries such as the United States. The materialism and pace of life in the United States caused some of the migrants to look to Australia for a more relaxed and safer environment.

The migrants who were interviewed for this study were all members of either the Sydney or Canberra Bahá'í communities. The Sydney community is the largest Bahá'í community in Australia and also is the only one to have a Bahá'í House of Worship. The study found that the presence of an established well organized community was a vital factor in the settlement process of the new arrivals. The House of Worship in Sydney provided a centre of attraction and a focus for Iranian community formation. The Canberra community also has a large centre, and is the second biggest community of Bahá'ís in New South Wales. Most of the participants were contracted through a snowball process. The first interviewees were active members of their communities and therefore more easily located. This group was expanded to include interviewees from different age groups, different urban locations and a wide range of incomes. The interviewees included migrants who had been in Australia for more than thirty years and some who were recent arrivals.

A group of migrants such as the Iranian Bahá'ís, strongly motivated to become effective settlers might be expected to settle successfully if their needs were met. The 1991 Centre for Immigration and Multicultural Studies report ⁵⁵² on the settlement needs of 'small, newly-

⁵⁵² Jupp, McRobbie and York, *Settlement Needs of Small Newly Arrived Ethnic Groups*.

arrived ethnic groups'⁵⁵³ was used to measure whether the individual needs and group needs were met during their settlement processes. The framework was chosen as it was developed for a multicultural society and was broad enough to cover a range of migration issues.

The CIMS minimalist criteria for individual settlement was mainly concerned with short term issues such as adequate accommodation and employment. This survey found that the majority of the Iranian Bahá'ís were living outside the initial hostel type of accommodation within six weeks and the majority of working age were employed within six months. This estimate does not include students or mothers of young children who were supported by their families. Some of the migrants received cash assistance until they found employment and people over seventy eventually received government pensions and subsidized housing. Young people without parents were supplied with subsidized accommodation and their education expenses were paid by the government. They needed casual employment to top up this income and some interviewees said they worked in fast food outlets or as cleaners. Several young people interviewed said that this association with other workers assisted the development of their language and social skills.

A few worked on farms and men with limited English skills worked in factories and in manual occupations such the building trade and as painters. Women of working age, with a limited command of English, were able to find work in old people's homes and child care centers. Several interviewees commented that the Bahá'í belief that 'work is worship' enabled them to work in less favourable conditions than they had known in Iran without feeling isolated or depressed. On the minimalist issues in the CIMS criteria for satisfactory settlement such as accommodation and employment, the migrants felt that their needs were met in a relatively short time.

The secondary needs of migrants, listed in the CIMS criteria, related to social issues such as acceptance by workmates, neighbours and the wider society. The study found that for the migrants these social issues were not too stressful for the majority because they were assisted by the presence of the established Bahá'í community. They either associated mainly with Bahá'ís, worked for them, or enlisted their help in finding employment. This contact with Australian Bahá'ís provided an avenue for understanding how to relate to the wider community. In addition it appeared that the majority of the interviewees, partly due to their inclusive approach to others such as trying to 'friendly', met with a favourable response from most Australians. Those who were in a position to do so mentioned that they invited neighbours or workmates to their homes for a meal. This practice of offering of hospitality is

⁵⁵³ York, *Ethno-Historical Studies*. p. 23

an Iranian custom and worked well in creating goodwill in the wider community. Those who were not in a position to provide hospitality found it harder to be accepted. For example single men in low skilled occupations found that opportunities to meet other Australians were limited because their associates were other migrants. Young girls also mentioned that it was hard to meet suitable young men because of the differences in culture. For example the pub culture of Australia prevented young Bahá'ís, who did not drink alcohol, from being comfortable at social events. The group who had most problems with acceptance were older, single migrants, particularly women, living alone. They had little contact with the wider community and said that when they tried to make friends the response was not reciprocated and some became disillusioned with Australian society. Several said that without other Bahá'ís they would not have any friends.

On the issue of interaction with the wider Australian community the majority of interviewees found that most Australians were friendly and some spoke of remarkable acts of kindness. This behaviour by Australians towards the Iranians contrasted to the reception given to other Middle Eastern migrants.

Another factor not mentioned in the CIMS criteria but which was significantly important to the settlement process was the presence of family members. Family is vital to Iranians and the interviewees who were part of a united and successful family group displayed the most positive appreciation of life in Australia. Families provided the migrants with support in many different ways: a social life, financial support when necessary, the sense of belonging and pride in the achievement of family members. Self esteem for Iranians is culturally bound up in family identity, family success and in the emotional support provided by family members.

The CIMS criteria for maximilist needs of individual migrants concerned with long term settlement focused on issues such as whether migrants were employed in a similar situation to one they been accustomed to before they left Iran, and whether they experienced discrimination. Life style was also included in the measurement of long term issues. Was it similar to or better than that enjoyed in the country of origin? Issues of citizenship, language facility and demonstration of intent to remain in Australia were also part of the framework.⁵⁵⁴

This study found that many Iranian Bahá'ís of working age had re-created employment conditions enjoyed by them in Iran over the long term. Some had greatly improved their situation and only a few were disadvantaged by migration. The improvement in life style could usually be traced to the acquisition of higher qualifications in Australia or ownership of skills that were in demand such as computer expertise, accountancy and knowledge of the

building trade. Migrants who were students in tertiary institutions on arrival tended to achieve distinction in their studies and to obtain influential positions. People of middle age with professional qualifications not recognized in Australia had more difficulty in finding employment comparable to that enjoyed by them in Iran. Some studied and acquired the qualifications they needed, or went into new fields, and those who had sufficient capital to open their own businesses were generally quite successful.

A few businessmen achieved outstanding financial success. Engineers and accountants appeared to have no difficulties in finding suitable employment and promotion. In the medical and dentistry fields, qualified people had to take other kinds of employment until they either acquired Australian qualifications or settled for less. Six of the men in the study took unskilled work to support their families and consequently experienced problems improving their status. Three were able to locate employment that put them in touch with other Australians. For example one became a bus driver and another worked in a government department. The others became painters and worked mainly with other Iranians and consequently had limited language skills. Employment measurement did not include children born in Australia or retirees.

An unexpected finding with the issue of life style was the degree of success attained by the women in the group. Those interviewed included a reader in requirements engineering, lecturer in mathematics, corporate scientist, chemical engineer, accountants, a lawyer with her own city practice, economist, court registrar, a musician doing research in musical therapy, a top level translator and a community counsellor. The autonomy that the women achieved in Australia contrasted strongly with constraints placed on them in Iran. Freedoms such as the right to an education, right to choose marriage partners, the right to work outside the domestic realm allowed the women to further their education and to be employed in a wide variety of occupations. In addition the Bahá'í belief that women are equal in status to men gave them the motivation to pursue desired goals.

Life style can also be measured by residential mobility. The majority of migrants initially lived in low income areas such as inner city Sydney suburbs which were not expensive in the 1980s. Over time fifty one per cent of the interviewees moved into better suburbs and finally purchased houses or apartments in high cost areas such as the North Shore, Central Sydney and the newer suburbs of Canberra. These trends have created a degree of clustering both in expensive areas and in low cost areas. The outstanding examples are in the biggest Iranian Bahá'í communities, both in Sydney. The largest group lived in Baulkham Hills, a fairly new

⁵⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 12

North Western suburb characterized by high-end real estate development. The study found a slightly smaller cluster in Parramatta, generally made up of people who needed housing at the lower end of the market. This area includes most of the newer arrivals who may move into better areas as their situation improves.

The CIMS criteria for long term settlement included the issue of whether migrants take citizenship and intend to remain in Australia. On this topic the results were the same across the board. Every interviewee had taken Australian citizenship and only one indicated a desire to return to Iran. He was an eighty year old man who wanted to search for his son who had gone missing. Bahá'ís are still persecuted in Iran and therefore any longing to return to their country of origin has been suppressed by the knowledge that once again they would suffer the same fate, and the sacrifices they made as refugees and the difficulties they endured to be in Australia would be wasted.

Analysis of group adaptation was carried out in a similar fashion to that done with individuals, using different criteria. The minimal criteria outlined by CIMS for an ethnic group achieving collective settlement included issues such as whether members felt alienated from Australians and experienced discrimination because of their group identity. It also included a query as to whether the group's behaviour is markedly different from Australian mainstream norms. The last question included the nature of media attention to the group.

This group did not experience overt discrimination or racist behaviour in contrast to findings in a survey on Iranians in Australia by Adibi that found Iranians in Australia experienced discrimination and overt or silent racism.⁵⁵⁵ Because most of the Iranian Bahá'ís were urbanized and Westernized they did not appear to be different to the wider community and to them any discrimination they experienced in Australia would be mild indeed compared with persecution they experienced in Iran. As well, their arrival preceded the worst of the Islamic terrorist attacks on Westerners so they escaped the generalized hostility to Middle Eastern migrants that has developed in recent years. There were some incidents of discrimination which appeared to be related to colour, that is dark skin, and lack of language skills. Several young people mentioned that they had experienced taunts at school. A few older men said that they experienced rudeness from young Australians in the work place but overall the discrimination was not a major problem because those who experienced it were not particularly vulnerable through lack of self esteem.

The smooth transition of the Iranian Bahá'ís into Australian society, as mentioned earlier, was assisted by the presence of the well established Australian Bahá'í community. As soon as

the migrants arrived welcoming committees were organized to assist the newcomers wherever possible. They had an identity recognizable to the majority of Australians, particularly in Sydney where the Bahá'í House of Worship is well known. The regular events held at the House of Worship known colloquially as the 'Temple' provided a center where Iranian Bahá'ís could gather, meet other Bahá'ís and generally become involved in both religious and social activities. Interviewees mentioned that the presence of Australian Bahá'ís allowed them access to the dominant group in society and the interaction with this community taught them about mainstream norms and appropriate behaviour.

The maximalist criteria for group integration laid out by the CIMS was similar to the minimalist, with some extra requirements. The intention was to determine whether the group's behaviour was not significantly different to the norm. It was also concerned with issues of culture and language. For example did the group find that it could maintain a distinct cultural identity without incurring hostility from the majority, and did the media and the wider community query its legitimacy? The final criterion is more exacting and could only be measured by those who had been in Australia for lengthy periods. It concerned the degree of community integration and whether its members were proportionately represented in positions of power, wealth and influence.

The behaviour of the Iranian Bahá'ís was only different to Australian norms in minor ways, such as a more conservative approach to dress codes, an emphasis on stylized courtesy in public and the avoidance of alcohol. The settlement of the Iranian Bahá'í community in Australian society never attracted queries about its legitimacy. In fact the opposite was true. Australians who were hesitant to be friendly to migrants from the Middle East thawed when they discovered they were not Moslems. The aims and principles of the Bahá'ís may not be widely recognized but what does seem fairly well known is that Bahá'ís are peaceful people and have never instigated any kind of conflict as a group. As well a significant proportion of Iranian Bahá'ís have become involved in prominent positions of influence particularly in universities, the medical world and the business community. For example among the interviewees in this study five were lecturers at tertiary institutions, five were qualified medical practitioners, sixteen were professionals such as engineers, accountants and lawyers, while eight were involved in community services.

Maintenance of culture and sufficient opportunities to speak their own language were included in the CIMS criteria thereby acknowledging that these are vital factors in allowing migrants to feel comfortable in their host society. Acculturation is one term used to define

⁵⁵⁵ Adibi, 'Iranians in Australia', p.1

adaptation to a host culture and maintenance of culture of origin. The two strategies that the Iranian Bahá'ís adopted to deal with acculturation, were the bi-cultural mode and the assimilation mode as described by Heidary.⁵⁵⁶ The use of these particular strategies appeared to be influenced by age. The bi-cultural strategy, that is the adoption of cultural patterns in the host society while continuing cultural practices acquired in the country of origin, was found in the older generation, particularly people over fifty. They spoke Farsi at home and were involved in cultural events with other Iranians. The majority of the interviewees over fifty had mastered English to some degree. Only one needed a translator and he was over eighty years of age. Those who mentioned that they did not read English books or magazines and mainly watched ethnic television were men in trades. Women over fifty tended to apologize for their poor English but said they read magazines and watched TV to help them with their language skills.

The assimilation strategy, relinquishing the culture of the country of origin and adopting whole heartedly the cultural patterns of the host society, was a strategy adopted by the younger generation. Parents commented that their children listened to and understood Farsi but responded in English. Iranians under thirty noted that their friends were mainly other second generation migrants rather than mainstream Australians but their communication was conducted in English. Individuals in their thirties and forties were all fluent in English and had ceased being involved with Iranian cultural events. A high percentage read books or academic material in that language. Every interviewee in this group watched television but a large percentage said they only watched the news and preferred documentaries. The facility with conversational English appeared to be generally good although those over fifty tended to have strong Iranian accents while those under thirty had acquired Australian accents.

Significant features of culture other than language are religious practices, food, music, clothing, entertainment, festive events and rites of passage. Attendance at religious events among those interviewed was fairly high overall and the core values of the Bahá'í life influenced their life style to varying degrees. Because the religion promotes the concept of individual investigation of truth and individual responsibility for one's own spiritual growth most of the interviewees read Bahá'í books, said prayers almost every day and attended a large percentage of the religious occasions such as feasts and Holy Days. For the Iranian Bahá'ís the Holy Day most likely to be observed was the Naw Ruz feast, also a Persian cultural pattern because the Naw Ruz holiday in Iran is given similar importance to Christmas in Australia. The interviewees who were members of a Spiritual Assembly either local or

⁵⁵⁶ Heidary, 'Mix and Match'.

national appeared to be very involved with community life and attended events two or three times a week. Some went to the Temple service almost every week while some only attended occasionally.

It should be noted that the interviewees sourced for this study were found through the agency of the Bahá'í community, at religious events and involved in community activities, therefore it can be assumed that they would be more likely to be religious than those Iranians who have ceased to be involved in community affairs or to attend religious events. Because inactive members of the community could not be identified by the interviewer their experiences were not included in this study. An opportunity exists for future research on that section of the group.

Persian cultural events other than Naw Ruz gradually became less relevant in the lives of most of the interviewees and those under forty never attended. This indicates that while the ethnic attachment gradually fades the religious identity endures. This could be because the migrants left Iran and do not intend to return whereas the Bahá'í religion is present in Australia and many are likely to remain part of the group because of the support network, and to observe religious events because their family members do. Although there are significant numbers of the second generation who continue to be active in the religious community it is not possible yet to look at the third generation to determine whether this trend will continue. Children are given responsibilities within the community such as reading from the scriptures on religious occasions or attending instructive youth camps. All the youth interviewed indicated that they were happy to be part of the community because they agree with its beliefs.

Cultural issues such as traditional music gradually lost their appeal for the younger generation. Only the older generation said they listened to Iranian music and some said that Iranian movies are too depressing to watch. As would be anticipated the younger generation all preferred Western pop culture and entertainment. The most enduring cultural icon was Persian food. Except for a few, all the interviewees preferred to eat Persian food at home. Only men married to Australian women ate what could be described as Westernized food. Eating out was a regular occurrence except for families with several young children. Persian and Asian foods were the most popular choice but the younger generation, those under thirty, confessed to regularly eating fast food. Obviously then the attachment to Persian food will gradually lessen for the second and third generations.

All the Iranian Bahá'ís were accustomed to wearing Westernized clothing in Iran and consequently adaptation to Australian clothing styles was rapid. The only lingering vestige of cultural bias in clothing was the preference for formality with the older generation and even

the younger ones dressed well. Dark coloured clothing appeared to be more prevalent than in the general Australian population. Young women who liked to wear the latest fashions experienced criticism from the older generation about their dress style. Formality is a Persian cultural pattern and is expressed in public life not only by dress but by courtesy, reciprocity in hospitality and respect towards the older generation. The casual life favoured by the majority of Australians, particularly expressed in leisure activities, has not been adopted by either the older generation or most of the second generation.

Rites of passage were treated with the same degree of respect that most ethnic groups display towards such events though they are not as elaborate as some ethnic rituals such as Greek or Italian weddings or indigenous Australian funerals. Bahá'ís are expected to assume moderation in all things and this has dampened the cultural attraction that Persians have for ostentation. Weddings of the second generation were very similar to the wedding culture of Australians. Brides for example wore the white wedding dress and a few wore a veil, rings were exchanged by the bride and groom, and some weddings had bridal attendants. Bahá'ís do not have a service for a birth and baptism is not part of the religion. Funerals did not appear to have a cultural pattern because only a small number of Iranians have passed away in Australia. Bahá'ís believe that 'death is a messenger of joy' so mourning is not expected to be intense.

Some successful Iranian Bahá'ís indulged their taste for extravagance on their homes. Persian carpets, Italian furniture and chandeliers were more prevalent than they would be in Australian homes. A large Bahá'í Centre in Silverwater in Sydney, donated and designed by a wealthy Persian, has a rather ornate and expensive interior though the exterior is utilitarian.

The effect of the arrival of several thousand Iranian Bahá'ís on the existing Bahá'í communities in Sydney and Canberra was rather dramatic. In these urban areas many communities are now dominated by Iranians. Where there were only a handful of Iranians combined with people of other nationalities the unity of the group was not a problem. When the majority were Iranian and communication was mainly in Farsi, people who speak only English either adapted or dropped out. Most religious services were mainly conducted in English and though the National Assembly has attempted to include Farsi translations and encourage special Iranian events it was not possible to similarly control social interaction. However this was mainly an age issue as younger members of the communities all speak fluent English and only senior Iranians and new arrivals are more comfortable with Farsi. As the large influx of Iranians has gradually eased it will only take another twenty years before the majority of the community will speak fluent English.

This study fills a gap in research on ethnic groups with a strong religious identity who were part of the changes in developing a multicultural Australian society. All the aspects of the immigration experiences of these groups such as the reasons why the groups migrated and the effect they had on the host society are part of the history of this country and need to be recorded. The Iranian Bahá'ís were some of the first migrants and refugees who came to Australia because of upheavals in the Middle East caused by the Iranian Revolution of 1979. Therefore it is important that the experiences of these refugees and the other migrants from that region are preserved. Fortunately for the Iranian Bahá'ís, Australia took a compassionate approach to their predicament and facilitated their arrival and their early settlement and provided a more benevolent experience for them than that endured by migrants from Southern Europe and the Middle East in previous decades.

The flood of Iranians who fled their homeland has been compared to a diaspora because it included the common threads that Cohen noted distinguish a diaspora from other types of migration.⁵⁵⁷ The Iranians experienced a traumatic dispersal, they have a collective memory of the upheavals in their country of origin and many have created a idealized myth about the land they left behind them. The first generation has a strong ethnic consciousness but unlike refugees of earlier diasporas they have not experienced a troubled relationship in their host society. The Iranian Bahá'ís also had a religious identity that has provided them with a social network and a positive relationship with the wider Australian society.

The three frameworks the study used included Agar's metaphor of migration that conceptualized migrants as 'birds of passage'.⁵⁵⁸ The second framework, designed by Berry was based on research carried out by Berry over a number of years in the discipline of social psychology. Berry was particularly concerned with issues such as acculturation stress. Berry's framework suggested that in order to examine the acculturation process relevant aspects of the society of origin as well as the host society should be included.⁵⁵⁹ The framework also suggested including both the settlement experiences of the group and the individuals in the group. The third framework, designed by the Australian National University Centre for Immigration and Multicultural Studies,⁵⁶⁰ focused on the needs of small newly arrived migrant groups in Australia and satisfied Berry's requirement for personal and group studies.

The oral history methodology used for the study proved to be successful because although the interviews were based on a prepared questionnaire the personal approach brought out

⁵⁵⁷ Cohen, *Global Diasporas*. .

⁵⁵⁸ Agar, *Refugees*.

⁵⁵⁹ Berry, 'Acculturation as Varieties of Adaptation'.

⁵⁶⁰ Jupp, McRobbie & York, *Settlement Needs*.

details and information not included in the original questions. By establishing a face to face conversation the interviews were frank and free flowing. This personal approach revealed information that may not have come to light through a mailed questionnaire.

There are ample opportunities for future research with this group of migrants to determine the changes that take place as the older generation dies out and the third generation appears. As noted earlier, there is also an opportunity to study those Iranian Baha'is who have lost touch with the Baha'i community. Such a study, could test the finding of this thesis that the pre-existing Baha'i community greatly assisted the migrants' settlement.

In conclusion the aims and the objectives of the research were to explain why the Iranian Bahá'ís immigration experiences were overall a success story. This study demonstrated that these migrants were highly motivated to become successful settlers because of their experiences of persecution with its terror and upheaval. The lives they lived in Iran as a persecuted minority strengthened their resolve to rebuild fulfilling lives in another country. Those who chose Australia as their destination were fortunate that the changes in immigration policy facilitated their travel and provided assistance where it was needed. The special treatment given to Bahá'í refugees made their transition smoother than the experiences of other groups of refugees and gave them a positive impression of Australian society.

Overall the integration of Iranian Bahá'ís into Australian society could be described as remarkably smooth. The prior existence of an Australian Bahá'í community provided the migrants with a social network and an acceptable identity in their host society that enabled them to feel as though they belonged, if not in the wider community, at least within the Bahá'í community. The family reunion scheme allowed people already living in Australia to bring other relatives out of Iran and recreate the intense emotional family bonds so much part of their identity. The women who were restricted and repressed in Iran found freedoms in Australia that enabled them to fulfill their potential and be valued in the wider society. The tolerant acceptance of refugees in the 1980s provided the assistance that allowed the migrants to become self sufficient within relatively short periods of time. All the migrants were able to take advantage of a brief window of opportunity in terms of Australian attitudes to Middle Eastern migrants before the attacks by Middle Eastern terrorists in New York and Bali and before the government sanctioned intolerance for recent waves of Middle Eastern refugees. Had the Iranian Revolution begun in 2000, perhaps the Iranian Bahá'ís might have found settlement in Australia a harder road to travel.

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- 266: a woman aged 44 who left Iran in 1987 when she was 28.
- 366: a young woman aged 19 years who left Iran in 1987 when she was 3.
- 467: a young man aged 22 years who left Iran in 1987 when he was 6.
- 567: a woman aged 58 years who left Iran in 1978 when she was 25.
- 667: a woman aged 55 years, who left Iran in 1978 when she was 30.
- 746: a woman aged 58 years who left Iran in 1981 when she was 36.
- 897: a women aged 47 years, who left Iran in 1981 when she was 22.
- 997: a women aged 37 years, who left Iran in 1987 when she was 21.
- 10137: a woman aged 62 years who left Iran in 1970 when she was 29. .
- 11107: a women aged 59 years who left Iran in 1973 when she was 30.
- 12137: a women aged 25 years who left Iran in 1990 when she was 11.
- 13157: a man aged 28 years who was born in Australia.
- 14157: a man aged 23 years who left Iran in 1981 when he was 2.
- 15167: a man aged 55 years who was born in India and arrived in Australia in 1958
- 16167: a young woman aged 16 years who was born in Austra'ia.
- 17167: a woman aged 49 years, who left Iran in 1970 when she was 16.
- 18177: a man aged 44 years, who left Iran in 1980 when he was 23.
- 19129: a woman aged 61 years who left Iran in 1982 when she was 40.
- 20129: a man aged 71 years who left Iran in 1982 when he was 51.
- 21179: a woman aged 65 who left Iran in 1977 when she was 39.
- 22179: a man aged 46 who left Iran in 1975 when he was 18.
- 23199: a man aged 48 years who left Iran in 1973 when he was 18.
- 24209: a man aged 44 years who left Iran in 1988 when he was 29.
- 25239: a woman aged 54 years who left Iran in 1961 when she was 12.
- 26259: a women aged 74 years who left Iran in 1974 when she was 45.
- 27249: a woman aged 72 years who left Iran in 1976 when she was 45.
- 28249: a man aged 44 years who left Iran 1976 when he was 27.
- 29269: a man aged 33 years who left Iran in 1991 when he was 22.
- 30299: a woman aged 63 years who left Iran in 1970 when she was 30.
- 31299: a man aged 39 years who left Iran in 1979 when he was 15.

32110: a woman aged 46 years who left Iran in 1975 when she was 18.

33110: a man aged 56 years who left Iran in 1975 when he was 28.

34110: a woman aged 40 years who left Iran in 1978 when she was 25.

35210: a woman aged 44 years who left Iran in 1984 when she was 27.

36210: a woman aged 22 years who left Iran in 1997 when she was 16.

37210: a man aged 18 years who left Iran in 1997 when he was 14.

38210: a woman aged 56 years who left Iran in 1997 when she was 52.

39210: a man aged 59 years who left Iran in 1997 when he was 55.

40210: a woman aged 51 who left Iran in 1981 when she was 29.

41310: a woman aged 22 years who left Iran in 1992 when she was 11.

42310: a woman aged 41 years who left Iran in 1992 when she was 30.

43310: a woman aged 66 years who left Iran in 1976 when she was 39.

44610: a woman aged 41 years who left Iran in 1985 when she was 23.

45610: a woman aged 70 years who left Iran in 1986 when she was 52.

46710: a man aged 53 who left Iran in 1986 when he was 36.

47710: a woman aged 49 years who left Iran in 1986 when she was 32.

48710: a woman aged 24 years who left Iran in 1987 when she was 9.

49710: a woman aged 40 who left Iran in 1987 when she was 24.

50710: a man aged 18 years who left Iran in 1987 when he was 1.

51710: a woman aged 24 years who left Iran in 1980 when she was 1.

52211: a man aged 63 years who left Iran in 1980 when he was 40.

53211: a woman aged 59 years who left Iran in 1980 when she was 36.

54221: a man aged 33 years who left Iran in 1983 when he was 19.

55241: a woman aged 38 years who left Iran in 1985 when she was 20.

56241: a man aged 87 years who left Iran in 1995 when he was 79.

57241: a young man aged 16 years who was born in Australia.

58241: a man aged 48 who left Iran in 1965 when he was 11.

59251: a woman aged 49 years who left Iran in 1973 when she was 19.

60261: a woman aged 47 years who left Iran in 1971 when she was 15.

61261: a man aged 50 years who left Iran in 1980 when he was 27.

62271: a woman aged 45 who left Iran in 1984 when she was 26.

63271: a man aged 52 who left Iran in 1974 when he was 23.

64112: a man aged 49 years who left Iran in 1972 when he was 18.

65112: a woman aged 45 years who left Iran in 1978 when she was 20.

66212: a woman aged 30 who left Iran in 1979 when she was 3.

67312: a man aged 39 years who left Iran in 1984 when he was 20.

68412: a man aged 53 years who left Iran in 1978 when he was 28.

69512: a female aged 35 years who left Iran in 1994 when she was 26.

70512: a young man aged 17 years born in Australia.

71512: a young man aged 16 years born in Australia.

72612: a woman aged 38 years who left Iran in 1978 when she was 13.

73612: a woman aged 43 years who left Iran in 1985 when she was 25.

74712: a woman aged 40+ (wouldn't say exactly) who left Iran in 1975.

751012: a man aged 69 years who left Iran in 1971 when he was 37.

761112: a female aged 42 years who left Iran in 1985 when she was 24.

771312: a man aged 31 years who was born in Bandung, Indonesia.

781412: a man aged 40 years who left Iran in 1983 when he was 20.

791612: a woman aged 47 years who left Iran in 1979 when she was 23.

801812: a man aged 53 years who left Iran in 1975 when he was 25.

811812: a woman aged 51 years who left Iran in 1980 when she was 30.

821812: a woman aged 18 years who was born in Peru.

831812: an Australian Baha'i.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1.

Birthplace of groups which mainly arrived in Australia after 1975 and numbered less than 15,000 in 1986

Birthplace	Total Number	% in N.S.W.
Christmas Island	1,234	4.9
Cocos Island	491	5.7
Fiji	14,756	58.5
Nauru	536	23.1
Solomon Islands	935	50.3
Tonga	4,474	71.8
Vanuatu	867	51.8
Western Samoa	2,983	56.8
Portugal	4,912	59.5
Romania	8,117	37.6
Japan	11,191	49.4
Kampuchea	13,240	44.6
Korea	9,284	75.4
Laos	7,424	62.2
Thailand	6,994	40.3
Timor	6,559	29.7
Bangladesh	1,211	38.3
Iran	7,498	60.3
Pakistan	3,605	47.2
Argentina	9,195	53.4
Brazil	2,006	53.3
Colombia	1,687	56.7
Ecuador	1,006	83.9
Peru	2,323	69.3
Uruguay	9,586	78.7
El Salvador	2,103	49.1
Mexico	678	49.1

Source: Census figures in 1986. For the first time Iran was included as a separate group.

Appendix 2.

Information on Interviewees at the point of their MigrationGraded by year they left Iran

No.	Male	F.	Age	Education Level	Place of Birth	Point of Dep.	Date of Dep. From Iran.
15167	Yes		10	Student	India	Indonesia	1955
25239		Yes	12	Student	Iraq	Teheran	1962
582411	Yes		11	Student	Gorgan	Gorgan	1967
10127		Yes	29	Secretary	Teheran	Teheran	1970
30299		Yes	30	H.S. Certificate	Hamadan	Hamadan	1970
602611		Yes	15	H.S. Student	Rasht	Teheran	1971
751012	Yes		37	Insurance Broker	Teheran	Teheran	1971
64112	Yes		19	H.S. Certificate	Teheran	Teheran	1972
11107		Yes	29	Science Degree	India	Teheran	1973
23199	Yes		18	Uni. Student	Teheran	Teheran	1973
17167		Yes	16	H.S. Student	Teheran	Teheran	1974
26259		Yes	44	College Diploma	Teheran	Teheran	1974
632711	Yes		23	Degree Agric. Economics	Nerez	Shiraz	1974
22179	Yes		18	Uni. Student	Teheran	Teheran	1975
32110		Yes	18	H.S. Certificate	Teheran	Teheran	1975
801812	Yes		28	Degree Computer Science.	Yazd	Teheran	1975
811812		Yes	23	Accountant	Yazd	Teheran	1975
27249		Yes	42	Diploma Science	Teheran	Teheran	1976
28249	Yes		17	Uni. Student	Chaloos	Chaloos	1976
43310		Yes	39	Degree English Literature	Hamadan	Teheran	1976
21179		Yes	26	H.S.C. Hairdresser	Teheran	Teheran	1977
567		Yes	33	Degree Msts. Language	Teheran	Teheran	1978
34110		Yes	15	H.S. Student	Karaq	Karaj	1978
68412	Yes		28	D.Agric.Machinery	Dezeg	Dezeg	1978

No.	Male	F.	Age	Education Level	Born	Lived	Date of Dep.
31299	Yes		15	H.S. Student	Gonbad	Teheran	1979
592511		Yes	19	H.S. Certificate	Shiraz	Shiraz	1979
612611	Yes		26	Aircraft Tech.	Shahmirzad	Teheran	1979
66212		Yes	6	Student	Teheran	Teheran	1979
791612		Yes	17	H.S. Certificate	Teheran	Teheran	1979
667		Yes	33	Accountant	Teheran	Teheran	1980
14157	Yes		2	Student	Teheran	Teheran	1980
40210		Yes	29	Chem.Engineer	Teheran	Teheran	1980
51710		Yes	1	Infant	Sangesar	Teheran	1980
746		Yes	36	D.English. Lit.	Teheran	Teheran	1981
897		Yes	25	D.Engineering	Teheran	Teheran	1981
18177	Yes		18	Uni. Student	Teheran	Teheran	1982
19129		Yes	40	Dip. History	Shiraz	Shiraz	1983
20129	Yes		50	D.Engineering	Shiraz	Shiraz	1983
542211	Yes		19	H.S. Certificate	Isfahan	Isfahan	1983
65112		Yes	20	H.S. Certificate	Teheran	Teheran	1983
781312	Yes		20	Plumber	Teheran	Teheran	1983
35210		Yes	25	Accountant	Tabriz	Tabriz	1984
622711		Yes	26	Chemical Enginer	Abadan	Teheran	1984
67312	Yes		20	H.S. Certificate	Sharee	Sari	1984
44610		Yes	23	H.S. Certificate	Sanandat	Khorasan	1985
522111	Yes		40	M.Bus.Manag.	Teheran	Teheran	1985
532111		Yes	30	Deg.Counselling	Teheran	Teheran	1985
5524		Yes	20	H.S.Cert.	Sysan	Sysan	1985
73612		Yes	22	H.S. Cert.	Bolasor	Teheran	1985
761112		Yes	24	H.S. Cert.	Teheran	Teheran	1985
45610		Yes	53	H.S. Cert.	Teheran	Teheran	1986
46710	Yes		36	Diploma Science	Teheran	Teheran	1986
47710		Yes	32	Dental Nurse	Teheran	Teheran	1986
997		Yes	21	H.S. Cert.	Mandoab	Mandoab	1987
166	Yes		37	Laboratory Technician.	Teheran	Teheran	1988
266		Yes	29	Uni. Student	Teheran	Teheran	1988
366		Yes	4	Student	Teheran	Teheran	1988
467	Yes		7	Student	Teheran	Teheran	1988

No.	Male	F	Age	Education Level	Place of Birth	Place of Dep.	Date of Dep.
24209	Yes		20	H.S. Cert.	Tabriz	Tabriz	1988
48710		Yes	9	Student	Kashan	Kashan	1986
449110		Yes	26	H.S. Cert.	Kashan	Kashan	1988
50110	Yes		4	Student	Kashan	Kashan	1988
12137		Yes	12	Student	Tabriz	Tabriz	1989
29269	Yes		22	H.S. Cert.	Sari	Sari	1991
41310		Yes	11	Student	Bandarabbas	Bandarabbas	1992
42310		Yes	30	Comm.Tech.	Bandarabbas	Bandarabbas	1992
69512		Yes	26	Student	Teheran	Teheran	1994
70512	Yes		8	Student	Teheran	Teheran	1994
5624	Yes		80	Farmer	Gorgan	Gorgan	1995
36210		Yes	17	H.S. Cert.	Karaj	Karaj	1997
37210	Yes		13	H.S. Cert	Karaj	Karaj	1997
38210		Yes	51	H.S. Cert.	Yazd	Yazd	1997
39210	Yes		55	D. Optometry	Karaj	Karaj	1997

Of the remaining interviewees not included in this table six were born in Australia, one was born in Peru and one was born in Bandung, Indonesia.

Appendix 3. Migration Pull Factors, Means of Travel and Travel Facilitation

Note: AV. V. For Skills means availability of visas for skilled migrants. Refugee V. means availability of Visa for refugee.

NO.	GENDER	ESC. ROUTE	1 st STOP	WHY AUSTRALIA	AUST. AID	SELF FIN.
15167	Male	Air	Indonesia	Education	No	Yes
771312	Male	Air	Indonesia	Education	No	Yes
572411	Male	Air	Australia	Family in Aust.	No	Yes
17167	Child F.	Air	Australia.	Family in Aust.	No	Yes
19129	Female	Air	England	Family in Aust.	No	Yes
20129	Male	Air	England	Family in Aust.	No	Yes
21179	Female	Air	U.S.A.	Family in Aust.	No	Yes
25239	Female	Air	Brazil	Family in Aust.	No	Yes
26259	Female	Air	Australia	Family in Aust.	No	Yes
272401	Female	Air	England	Family in Aust.	No	Yes
28249	Male	Air	U.S.A.	Family in Aust.	No.	Yes
31299	Male	Air	England	Family & Econ.	No	Yes
32110	Female	Air	England	Family in Aust.	No	Yes
602611	Female	Air	Denmark	Family in Aust.	No	Yes
632711	Male	Air	U.S.A.	Family in Aust.	No	Yes
72612	Female	Air	U.S.A.	Family in Aust.	No	Yes
74712	Female	Air	England	Family in Aust.	No	Yes
821812	Child F.	Air	Peru	Family in Aust.	No	Yes
592511	Female	Air	India	Friends in Aust.	No	Yes
791612	Female	Air	Philippines	Friends in Aust.	No	Yes
11107	Female	Air	India	Friends in Aust.	No	Yes
10137	Female	Air	England	Family in Aust.	No	Yes
51710	Child F.	Air	Australia	Family in Aust.	No	Yes
34110	Child F	Air	England	Family in Aust	No	Yes
751012	Male	Air	Australia	Friends in Aust	No	Yes
567	Female	Air	England	A.V V. For Skills	No	Yes
746	Female	Air	Belgium	A.V.V. for Skills	No	Yes
897	Female	Air	Australia	A.V. V. for Skills	No	Yes
18177	Male	Air	France	A.V.V for Skills	No	Yes
22179	Male	Air	U.S.A.	A.V. V. for Skills	No	Yes
23199	Male	Air	England	A.V. V. for Skills	No	Yes
30299	Female	Air	Australia	A.V.V. for Skills	No	Yes
40210	Female	Air	England	A.V.V. for Skills	No	Yes
43310	Female	Air	England	A.V.V. for Skills	No	Yes
52111	Male	Air	Africa	A.V.V. for Skills	No	Yes
532111	Female	Air	Africa	A.V.V. for Skills	No	Yes
612611	Male	Air	U.S.A.	A.V. V. for Skills	No	Yes
64112	Male	Air	Philippines	A.V. V. for Skills	No	Yes
65112	Female	Air	Japann	A.V. V. for Skills	No	Yes
801812	Male	Air	Peru	A.V. V. for Skills	No	Yes
811812	Female	Air	Peru	A.V. V. for Skills	No	Yes
667	Female	Air	England	A.V. V. for Skills	No	Yes
781412	Male	Smugglers	New Zealand	Refugee V.	No	Yes
48710	Child F.	Smugglers	Pakistan	Fam. Refugee V.	Yes	No
49110	Female	Smugglers	Pakistan	Fam. Refugee V.	Yes	No

No.	Gender	Esc. Route	1 st Stop	Why Australia.	Aus. Aid	Self Fin.
50150	Child M.	Smugglers	Pakistan	Fam. Refugee, V.	Yes	No
761112	Female	Smugglers	Pakistan	Refugee V.	Yes	No
166	Male	Smugglers	Pakistan	Refugee V.	Yes	No
366	Child F.	Smugglers	Pakistan	Refugee V.	Yes	No
997	Female	Smugglers	Turkey	Refugee V.	Yes	No
12137	Female	Smugglers	Turkey	Refugee V.	Yes	No
14157	Child M.	Smugglers	Pakistan	Refugee V.	Yes	No
24209	Male	Smugglers	Turkey	Refugee V.	Yes	No
29269	Male	Smugglers	Turkey	Refugee V.	Yes	No
35210	Female	Smugglers	Pakistan	Refugee V.	Yes	No
36210	Female	Air	Turkey	Refugee V.	Yes	No
37210	Female	Air	Turkey	Refugee V.	Yes	No
38210	Male	Air	Turkey	Refugee V.	Yes	No
39210	Female	Air	Turkey	Refugee V.	Yes	No
41310	Female	Smugglers	Pakistan	Refugee V.	Yes	No
42310	Female	Smugglers	Pakistan	Refugee V.	Yes	No
44610	Female	Smugglers	Pakistan	Refugee V.	Yes	No
46710	Male	Smugglers	Pakistan	Refugee V.	Yes	No
47710	Female	Smugglers	Pakistan	Refugee V.	Yes	No
54221	Male	Smugglers	Pakistan	Refugee V.	Yes	No
552411	Female	Smugglers	Pakistan	Refugee V.	Yes	No
562411	Male	Air	India	Refugee V.	Yes	No
622711	Female	Smugglers	Pakistan	Refugee V.	Yes	No
66212	Child F.	Smugglers	Pakistan	Refugee V.	Yes	No
67312	Male`	Smugglers	Pakistan	Refugee V.	Yes	No
68412	Male	Air	India	Refugee V.	Yes	No
69512	Female	Smugglers	Pakistan	Refugee V.	Yes	No
73612	Female	Smugglers	Pakistan	Refugee V.	Yes	No
266	Female	Smugglers	Pakistan	Refugee V.	Yes	No
467	Child M.	Smugglers	Pakistan	Refugee V.	Yes	No
13157	Male	NA	NA	Born in Aust.	NA	NA
16167	Female	NA	NA	B.in Australia	NA	NA
582411	Male	NA	NA	B.in Australia	NA	NA
70512	Male	NA	NA	B.in Australia	NA	NA
71512	Male	NA	NA	B.in Australia	NA	NA
562411	Male	NA	NA	B.in Australia	NA	NA

Appendix 4. Settlement Factors – Age – Employment and Housing

Graded by age and showing, housing and contrasts in occupation between Iran and Australia at time of interview.

NO	GENDER	AGE	CURRENT OCCUPATION	OCCUPATION IN IRAN	HOUSING
16167	Female	16	Student	Born in Australia	Family res.
572411	Male	16	Student	Born in Australia	Family res.
70512	Male	17	Student	Born in Australia	Family res.
37210	Male	18	Student	Child	Family res.
5010	Male	18	Student	Child	Family res.
821812	Female	18	Public service	Child	Family res.
366	Female	19	Medical student	Child	Family res.
467	Male	22	Medical student	Child	Family res.
36210	Female	22	Accounting stud.	Child	Family res.
4130	Female	22	Computer Service	Child	Family res.
19157	Male	23	Valuation Officer	Child	Family res.
48710	Female	24	Nurse – Pharmacy	Child	Rents W. Suburb.
51710	Female	24	Economist – Legal	Child	Family Res.
12137	Female	25	Computer Prog.	Child	Owner N.S
13157	Male	28	Chiropractor	Born in Australia	Owner apt. N
66212	Female	30	Psychologist	Student	Family Res.
542211	Male	31	Engineer Comtaq	Student	Owner Canberra.
771312	Male	31	Medical Doctor	NA	Rents Ap. W. Sub
29269	Male	33	Elec. Engineer	Student	Rents W. S.
69512	Female	35	Domestic Duties	Student	Rents house W.S.
997	Female	37	Reg. Child.Court	Student	Owner N.S.
55411	Female	38	Domestic Duties	Domestic Duties	Owner C.
72612	Female	36	Lawyer O.P	Student	Owner N.S.
31299	Male	39	Cardiologist	Student	Owner C.
67312	Male	39	Painter	Unemployed	Shared Acc. W.S
34110	Female	40	Bookeeper	Student	Owner house N.S
49110	Female	40	Accountant	Domestic Duties	Rents house W.S
781413	Male	40	Motor Mechanic	Plumber	Rents Apt. W.S.
74712	Female	43	Physicist	Student	Owner N.S.

No.	Gender	Age	Curr. Occupation	Occ. In Iran	Housing
42310	Female	41	Machinist	Technician	Rents Apt. N.S.
44610	Female	41	Health Admin.	Student	Rents house W.S.
761112	Female	42	Domestic Duties	Domestic Duties	Rents house W.S.
73612	Female	43	Bookkeeper	Student	Rents Apt. W.S.
266	Female	44	Nurses Aid	Accountant	Owner N.S.
18177	Male	44	Professor I.Fin.	Student	Owner N.S.
24209	Male	44	Computer Tech.	Unemployed	Owner N.S.
28249	Male	44	Electronics.Eng.	Engineer	Owner Apt. N.S.
35210	Female	44	Bookkeeper	Domestic Duties	Rents house W.S.
622711	Female	45	Engineer Chem.	Student	Owner house C.
65112	Female	45	Carer Aged	Student	Owner N.S.
22179	Male	46	Prof.Struct. Eng..	Student	Owner N.S.
32110	Female	46	Rdr.Req. Eng.	Student	Owner N.S.
897	Female	47	Engineer Admin.	Engineer	Owner N.S.
602611	Female	47	Accountant	Student	Owner C.
791612	Female	47	Dentist	Student	Owner N.S.
23199	Male	48	U.Lect. Neurology	D.Engineering	Owner W.S
582411	Male	48	Security Guard	Child	Owner C.
17167	Female	49	Musician, Comp.	Dancer & Musician	Owner N.S.
47710	Female	49	Bookkeeper	Dental Nurse	Rents W.S.
592511	Female	49	Domestic Duties	Student	Rents C.
64112	Male	49	Real Estate Dev.	Army	Owner N.S.
40210	Female	51	Translator Gov.	Chem. Engineer	Owner N.S.
811812	Female	51	Child Care Ass.	Domestic Duties	Owner N.S.
166	Male	52	Painting Con.	Lab. Technician	Owner N.S.
632711	Male	52	.Immigration Off.	Agric. Economist	Owner C.
46710	Male	53	Admin. Telstra	Purchasing Off.	Rents W.S.

Abbreviations

HOUSING - res. Residence, w. Western, N. Northern, Apt. Apartment, H. house, sub. Suburb, W.S. Western Sydney, , C, Canberra, N.S. North Shore, Acc. Accommodation, O. Owner.

OCCUPATION - Eng. Engineer, Chem. Chemistry, Prof. Professor, Struct. Structural, R. Reader, Req. requirements, Dev. Development, Gov. government, Ass. Assistant, Exec. Executive, Agric. Agricultural, Prog. Programmer, I.T. Information Technology, Lec. Lecturer, Mst. Master, Nat. National, Off. Office, Lit. Literature, P.S. Public Service, Pub. Public, Ad. Administrator, R. Retired, Sub. Subsidized, Comp. Composer stu. Student, Reg. registrar, O.P. own practice, Admin. Administration, I.Fin International Finance, Tech. technician.

Appendix 5. Number of all Iranians living in Sydney from 1976 to 1986.⁵⁶¹

1976	1981	1986	Municipality
134	134	485	Fairfield
141	319	581	Ryde
140	267	369	Warringah
160	224	271	Willoughby
34	1400	223	Blacktown
123	158	177	Lane Cove
52	76	168	Parramatta
87	62	153	Randwick
94	95	147	Botany
34	45	129	Penrith
29	60	120	Kuringai
57	61	104	Hornsby
11	48	104	Campbelltown
1096	2949	3031	Totals

s

Appendix 5 shows growth of number of Iranians living in Sydney up to 1986. Total Iranians in New South Wales by 1986 was 4,525 with the majority living in Sydney. Accurate figures are hard to obtain due to the diversity of the Iranian community. For example, some are Kurds or various Turkish groups. Other ethnic groups are Christians including Orthodox, Catholic, Anglican and Oriental. Muslims can be Shias, Sunnis or other small groups. Zoroastrians were not classified as a separate category. Rough estimates indicate that about a quarter of the recorded numbers were Baha'is.

According to Jupp, by 1988, about 2,500 Baha'i refugees had arrived in Australia under the refugee program and they made up about one-third of the total Baha'i community and significant proportion of the total Iranian migrants.⁵⁶² By the time this study was carried out there were 48 municipal areas in Sydney where Iranian Baha'is lived. The largest group lived in Parramatta, approximately 300 people, and in nine municipal areas there were only

⁵⁶¹ Racho, Donef, 'Iranian Community profile' Department of Social Security, Migrant Services Unit 1990, Held at State Library of N.S.W.

⁵⁶² James Jupp, Ed. 2001 *The Australian People: An Encyclopedia of the Nation, Its People and Their Origins*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, p. 441

small numbers, four or seven for example. Although the numbers are not absolutely accurate what can be determined is the fact that rapid growth occurred in the Iranian Baha'i community after the 1979 Revolution in Iran.

APPENDIX 6 - QUESTIONNAIRE

Project: The Immigration Experiences of Iranian Baha'is in
 Sydney and Canberra from 1960 to 1990
 Researcher: Margaret Bluett
 Contact details: Telephone: 07 40558930

Any information contained in this survey will be kept strictly confidential no names will be used to identify any individual without their consent. All material from this study such as consent forms, notes, tapes will be kept in a secure location and at the University for five years after the publication of the research.

Demographic Information

Gender: Male Female..... Age Country of Birth

Birthplace and early years

Where were you living when you left Iran

When did you last leave Iran

Period of Residence in Australia - Years Months

Have you lived in any other country besides Iran and Australia Yes No

If yes, in which countries

How long? Years Months

Do you retain Iranian citizenship ? Have you acquired Australian citizenship ?

Marital status - Single Married Divorced Widowed

Estimated Family or Household income per year

\$0-\$20,000 \$21-\$40,000 \$41-\$60,000 \$61-80,000

\$80-\$100,000 More than \$100,000

Education level in Iran

Further Education in Australia (if any)

.....

If you are married, what is the cultural background of your wife or husband?

How many people in your family live in Australia?

How many generations in your family were Baha'is ?

Before you or your family members became Baha'is what was your/their religious background ? Circle one or more the following and list their relationship to you

Moslem (Shi'ite , Sunni) Jewish Christian
 Zoroastrian Other

Personality

How would you describe your own personality? Circle one or more of the following:

Confident - Shy, Talkative - Quiet, Emotional - Calm, Patient - Impatient

Optimistic - Pessimistic, Determined - Easy going

Any other comments about yourself

.....

Why did you leave Iran?

How did you organize your departure from Iran and travel to Australia?

Would you return to Iran if the situation changed? Yes or No if the answer is yes

Why do you prefer to live in Australia?

.....

Did you find the authorities in Australia sympathetic to your situation as a refugee or migrant?

What assistance did you or your family receive?

Were other Australians helpful or unhelpful in your first 5 years in Australia?

.....

Do you have relatives still living in Iran?

Do you think your life style is better in Australia than it would be in Iran?

How is your life better?

Cultural Perspectives

Is your main language Farsi ? How well do you read Farsi ? Very well Not

Very Well How well do you write in Farsi ? Very well Not very well

Can you read write or speak Arabic ?

How well do you speak English ? Cannot Not well Okay Very well

Can you read English? No Yes with difficulty Very well

Can you write English? No. Yes, with difficulty Very well

If you have difficulties with English are you taking lessons or studying English ?

Do you read English books, magazines and newspapers?

Name something you read recently

Regularly Occasionally Never

Do you watch T.V.? If the answer is yes, which programs do you prefer?

No Yes Preferred T.V. Programs

Do you go to the movies? Regularly Occasionally Never

Name a favourite movie

Do you listen to English radio programs? : Regularly Occasionally Never

Favourite program

Do you listen to Iranian music? Regularly Occasionally Never

Do you eat mainly Iranian food?

How often do you eat food, such as restaurant food, that is not Iranian ?

Do you ever eat fast food such as fish and chips or McDonalds hamburgers?

Do you or have you ever eaten in an Australian household ?

Do you think you practice tarof in your relationships with others ?

Yes Sometimes Never

Do you exchange gifts with friends and or family during the Iranian New Year Norouz?

Yes Sometimes Never

Name other ways you might celebrate a traditional Norouz, such as setting up a special Haft-seen table.

Do you attend Baha'i Naw Ruz gatherings ?

Do you celebrate any particularly Iranian events such as bonfires for

“Char Shambeth Soori” or picnics for “Seezdeh Bedar” Circle answer

Yes Sometimes Never

Do you think Iranians are more hospitable than Australians?

Do you participate in any form in:

Christmas ?New Year ?

Mother's Day ? Father's Day ?

Have you ever attended an Anzac Day Parade

Do you buy Easter eggs or hot cross buns at Easter ?

Do you play any sport?Can you swim?

Do you spend time at the beach?

Comments or Additional Information such special interests hobbies.

.....

Do you associate with Australians? What percentage of your time spent with them.

Australian relatives Friends Neighbors

Business Associates Customers

Do you speak English at work and Farsi at home?

How do you try to make friends with Australians or people from other nationalities?

.....

Have you ever invited any Australians to your home?

Questions for the second generation

Male Female Age

Were you born in Iran or Australia?

Born in another country - list name and how long you lived there

.....

How many children in your family? BrothersSisters

Did you or do you have Australian friends at school?

... ..

Do you associate with them outside school

.....

What is the nationality of your best friend

Do you think children should live at home with their parents until they marry?

.....

When someone starts College or University or obtains employment, should they
move into independent accommodation?

.....

When children get older should they support their parents?

.....

Should children follow their parents' advice when choosing a University degree?

.....

Should children be guided by their parents in choosing their friends?

.....

Should children follow their parents' advice when choosing a marriage partner?

.....

Is it especially important to respect older family members such as grandparents?

.....

Do you speak English at school and Farsi at home?

.....

Would you prefer to marry an Australian, or a person from another country, or an Iranian?

.....