

YOUNG EAST TIMORESE IN AUSTRALIA:
**Becoming Part of a New Culture and the Impact of
Refugee Experiences on Identity and Belonging**

Hedda Haugen Askland

Candidata Magisterii (Cand.Mag.)

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School of Social Sciences
University of Newcastle, NSW

I hereby certify that the work embodied in this thesis is the result of original research and has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other University or Institution.

Signed:

Date:

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ABSTRACT

In 1975 Indonesian forces invaded Dili, the capital of East Timor. The invasion and ensuing occupation forced thousands of East Timorese to leave their homes and seek refuge in Australia and other countries. This study considers the situation of a particular group of East Timorese refugees: those who fled to Australia during the 1990s and who were children or young adolescents at the time of their flight.

Founded upon an understanding of social identity as being constantly transformed through a dialectic relation between the individual and his or her sociocultural surroundings, this dissertation considers the consequences of refugee experiences on individual identity and belonging, as well as the processes of conceptualising self and negotiating identity within changing social and cultural structures. The relationship between conflict and flight, resettlement, acculturation, identity and attachment is explored, and particular attention is given to issues of socialisation and categorisation, age and agency, hybridity, and ambiguity.

Through a qualitative anthropological methodology informed by theories of cultural identity, adolescence and cross-cultural socialisation, the thesis seeks to shed light on the various dynamics that have influenced the young East Timorese people's identity and sense of belonging, and considers the impact of acculturation and socialisation into a new culture at a critical period of the young people's lives.



ABBREVIATIONS

ABRI	Angkatan Bersenjata Republik Indonesia (Armed Forces of the Republic of Indonesia)
ASAS	Asylum Seekers Assistance Scheme
Apodeti	Associação Popular Democrática Timorese (Timorese Popular Democratic Association, earlier, the Association for the Integration of Timor into Indonesia)
ASDT	Associação Social Democrata Timorese (Timorese Social Democratic Party, forerunner Fretilin)
CNRM	Concelho Nacional da Resistencia Maubere (National Council of Maubere Resistance, forerunner CNRT)
CNRT	Conselho Nacional da Resistencia Timorese (National Council of Timorese Resistance)
DIMIA	Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs
Falintil	Forças Armadas de Libertação Nacional de Timor-Leste (Armed Forces for the National Liberation of East Timor)
Fretilin	Frente Revolucionaria de Timor-Leste Independente (Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor)
HECS	Higher Education Contribution Scheme
HSC	Higher School Certificate
INTERFET	International Force East Timor
METAC	Melbourne East Timorese Activities Centre
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PPV	Permanent Protection Visa
PTSD	Post-traumatic stress disorder
RILC	Refugee & Immigration Legal Centre Inc
RRT	Refugee Review Tribunal
SHP	Special Humanitarian Program
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
TNI	Tentara Nasional Indonesia (Indonesian National Army, until 1999 know as ABRI)
TPV	Temporary Protection Visa
UDT	União Democrática Timorese (Timorese Democratic Union)
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNMISSET	United Nations Mission of Support in East Timor
UNTAET	United Nations Transnational Administration in East Timor

INTRODUCTION

Most people are principally aware of one culture, one setting, one home; exiles are aware of at least two, and this plurality of vision gives rise to an awareness of simultaneous dimensions, an awareness that—to borrow a phrase from music—is *contrapuntal* (Said 2000: 186).

In December 1975, Indonesian forces invaded the Portuguese colony of East Timor. The ensuing occupation was violent and brutal, and in fear of their lives, thousands of East Timorese fled, seeking refuge in Australia and other countries. The focus for this dissertation is the group of East Timorese asylum seekers who arrived in Australia during the 1990s. In contrast to the refugees who arrived in the previous decades, most of whom acquired protection and permanent residency, these asylum seekers were disqualified from seeking refugee status. After *de jure* (at law) recognition of Indonesia's sovereignty in East Timor, and after signing the Timor Gap Treaty with Indonesia in 1989, the Australian Government took an increasingly hard line stance towards East Timorese refugees so as not to cause offence to Indonesia. Hence, the asylum seekers' applications for protection were put on hold, leaving them in a state of uncertainty and liminality.

While waiting for their application to be processed, the East Timorese asylum seekers were granted bridging visas which allowed them to remain lawfully in the country. However, following the realisation of independence in East Timor on the 20th May 2002, they were told to leave Australia. Some returned, but many disputed

the government's decision, expressing feelings of belonging and aspirations to stay in Australia.

Through empirical research with young East Timorese asylum seekers, this study attempts to highlight some of the aspects which may have influenced the strongly articulated wish to stay in Australia. It focuses on the situation of a neglected, but significant, group of East Timorese in Australia: those who fled East Timor in childhood or early adolescence, and who are now young adults. Consideration is given to the consequences of refugee experiences on individual identity and belonging, as well as the processes of conceptualising self and negotiating identity within changing social and cultural structures. Such a study is important in terms of comprehending the situation of these people whose formative years have been marked by experiences of conflict, flight and relocation.

The dissertation endeavours to arrive at an understanding of the relationship between experiences of flight and relocation, identity, and sense of belonging in the case of young East Timorese people in Australia.¹ It considers how the young East Timorese asylum seekers articulate their experience of conflict, flight and relocation; how these experiences influence their identity and sense of belonging; and, how Australian policy since the early 1990s with regards to asylum seekers has affected their identity and communal attachment. Subsequently, several fundamental questions arise: How did the prolonged period of uncertainty influence the young East Timorese people's perception of self and their everyday life in Australia? How did flight and relocation at a young age affect their identity and notion of home?

¹ When referring to the participants of this study, I often use the term 'young people'. This refers to their age as adolescents or young adults. I avoid using the term 'youths', as this is generally associated with young males.

How did their socialisation into both East Timorese and Australian sociocultural discourses influence their identity and sense of belonging?

The study draws upon an understanding of exile as an ambiguous state of disruption and loss that also brings opportunities for change. In his essay, *Reflections on Exile*, Said (2000: 173) argues somewhat pessimistically that exile is:

the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted...The achievements of exile are permanently undermined by the loss of something left behind forever.

However, because they are cut off from their roots and their past, exiles feel “an urgent need to reconstitute their broken lives” (Said 2000: 177); they need to “reassemble an identity” out of the discontinuities and refractions of exile (Said 2000: 179). In accordance with this, the thesis examines the ways in which the young East Timorese have reconstituted their lives, and developed affiliations and loyalties within a ‘contrapuntal’ awareness of two cultures, settings and homes.

This contrapuntal awareness embodies the notion that identity and belonging should not be perceived as developed in a linear mode of abrupt change where new realities occlude the existence of antecedent realities. As anthropologist Liisa Malkki (1995: 509) suggests, it is “doubtful that most people’s social universe stops abruptly at the border of their own country”. Although physically distant from their homes, the young East Timorese retain a conception and a memory of their past, their roots and social universe. The new environment is characterised by potential practices which, in complex ways, confirm both the new and the old, facilitating a continued

association and memory of their original home in conjunction with their new relations, experiences and practices. Subsequently, identity and belonging may be seen as accumulative, transformed and negotiated through the employment of additive strategies of acculturation.²

The dissertation's focus on the accumulative and transformative qualities of identity is influenced by the work of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1977) and his notion of 'habitus'; that is, "systems of durable, transposable *dispositions*" (Bourdieu 1977: 72) "laid down in each agent by his earliest upbringing" (Bourdieu 1977: 81). Habitus is continuously reproduced and transformed throughout the life of individuals, accordingly facilitating the possibility for adjustment to cultural change and social disruption (Bourdieu 1977: 72, Bourdieu & Wacquant 1993: 30-32).³ Hence, various contexts may influence an individual's identity, and, as Malkki (1997a: 72) argues, "[t]o plot only "places of birth" and degrees of nativeness is to blind oneself to the multiplicity of attachments that people form to places through living in, remembering, and imagining them." Identity should be viewed as:

mobile and processual, partly self-construction, partly categorization by others, partly a condition, a status, a label, a weapon, a shield, a fund of memories, and so on. It is a creolized aggregate composed through bricolage (Malkki 1997a: 71).

Both Bourdieu's concept of habitus and Malkki's definition of identity inform the theoretical framework of this study, and represent guiding principles for the research, my interpretation of data, and the development of arguments. The thesis is based

² The concept of additive strategies of acculturation (Gibson 2001) will be elaborated in Chapter Five.

³ Bourdieu's theory of practice will be further explored in Chapter Four.

upon an understanding of personal and social identity as part of a continuous process of transformation within pre-existing social structures that are shaped by the agency of individuals who act within them (Rapport & Overing 2000: 32). By exploring the dynamics between subjective positioning in the world and external categorisation, the process of acculturation and socialisation into the divergent cultural discourses of East Timor and Australia, and mechanisms for negotiating identity and sense of belonging, I seek an understanding of the situation of the young East Timorese in Australia, their identity and their relationship to contemporary East Timor.

POSITIONING THIS THESIS

The situation of the East Timorese asylum seekers who arrived during the 1990s has previously been examined by Silove et al. (2002) and Rees (2003a, 2003b). Silove et al. conducted a pilot study “assessing a ‘Researcher-Advocacy’ model among East Timorese asylum seekers residing in Australia”, with the aim of “combining elements of advocacy, quantitative and qualitative research, and strategic assistance in a program of engagement with this marginalized group” (Silove et al. 2002: 453). Rees (2003a, 2003b) considers the situation of women asylum seekers from East Timor and the effects of prolonged uncertainty on wellbeing. She argues that “[i]nsecurity of tenure and living with the fear of forced removal from Australia...have significantly affected and dangerously compromised the wellbeing of the asylum seekers” (Rees 2003b: 96). The work of both Silove et al. and Rees has informed my understanding of the situation of the asylum seekers. However, my focus on young people, coupled with the employment of an anthropological perspective, necessitates a distinctive analytical and methodological approach.

Three works constitute the anthropological research on East Timorese in Australia: Theresa Morlanes' (1991) thesis on 'ethno-nationalism' among East Timorese people in Darwin, Patsy Thatcher's (1992) work on the East Timorese diaspora in Melbourne, and Amanda Wise's (2002) research on the East Timorese diaspora in Sydney. Due to the timing of Wise's thesis and our common interest in the dynamics shaping cultural identities, her study has informed my understanding of the diaspora to a greater extent than the two former anthropological works. Wise considers "the various dynamics that have shaped the cultural identities, both personal and collective, of members of the East Timorese diaspora in Australia" and "the challenges to these in the present context of a newly independent East Timor" (2002: vii). Her main arguments are framed by what she perceives as the relational, often contextual, character of 'East Timorese-ness'. She argues that:

neither 'East Timorese-ness', nor 'diasporic' East Timorese-ness' are bounded identities or naturally anchored in place...such notions always encompass connections to elsewhere and have no automatic or seamless connection to the 'place' called East Timor (Wise 2002: 294).

One of the critical distinctions between the works of Thatcher, Morlanes, Wise and myself is that the three former anthropologists focus on the general diaspora within particular Australian cities, as compared to my focus on a particular group within the Timorese community in Australia.

AIMS AND THESIS OVERVIEW

The primary objective of this thesis is to explore the various dynamics that have shaped the identity and sense of belonging of the young East Timorese people living in Australia and, moreover, to provide an insight into the relationship between conflict and flight, adolescence, socialisation, and identity and belonging. To achieve these ends, I have adopted a qualitative, anthropological methodology to listen to the narratives of the young East Timorese asylum seekers, their description of the past, the present and the future, and their categorisation of themselves within particular discourses of collective and personal identity. Chapter Two will outline the methodological framework of the thesis and provide a detailed description of the research project. Chapter Three draws a picture of some of the historical layers which affect the young East Timorese people in Australia and their experience of personal and collective identity. Chapter Four provides an outline of the visa situation of the East Timorese who arrived in the 1990s and examines how the visa situation affected all aspects of their life. It considers the psychosocial consequences of uncertainty and the subsequent employment of coping mechanisms. The chapter reflects upon the relationship between, firstly, individuals and social structure (Bourdieu 1977) and, secondly, subjective positioning in the world and external categorisation (Jenkins 1994), including state-imposed definitions of identity and collective narratives about East Timorese held by members of the Australian community. Chapter Five explores the process of acculturation and the impact of the young East Timorese people's socialisation into both East Timorese and Australian sociocultural structures. Finally, Chapter Six considers the concept of hybridity and hybrid identity, and provides an analysis of the consequences encountered by the

young East Timorese due to the hybrid nature of their identity and the process of reconciling identity and sense of belonging. The chapter also contemplates how the realisation of independence in East Timor may have influenced the participants' identity and sense of belonging.

The thesis provides a brief presentation of the history and the cultural composition of East Timor. However, the purpose of this dissertation is not to develop a comprehensive presentation of Timorese history and sociocultural structures. Nor is its purpose to critique or support particular policies in the respective countries or to distinguish the complexities of Timorese culture in Timor and in the diaspora. Rather, the study will demonstrate how young East Timorese people in Australia develop, transform and negotiate their identity in relation to the particular social environment(s) to which they belong, and how their collective history and individual life-histories influence their present and their future. In this way, the study seeks to illustrate the complex connections between conceptualisation of self, sense of belonging, community, conflict and flight, and change in historical and sociocultural circumstances.

TERMINOLOGY

Before proceeding, it is important to clarify some of the terms that I employ throughout the thesis. Firstly, when referring to the participants of the study, I use both 'East Timorese' and 'Timorese'. This may be perceived as incorrect as Timorese may refer to people from both Indonesian West Timor and former Portuguese East Timor. However, when discussing their background and home country, the

participants do not distinguish between East Timorese and Timorese, East Timor and Timor, thus necessitating the use of these interchangeable terms in this thesis.

Secondly, although the proper name of the participants' home country is Timor-Leste, I use the English translation of the name. The participants themselves very rarely use the term Timor-Leste, at least in conversations in English, and I will therefore follow their example.

Thirdly, the term 'asylum seeker' requires clarification. The use of the term, when referring to the participants, might be perceived as problematic, as many have now received permanent residency and are no longer asylum seekers.⁴ The term in itself is vague, and confusion might arise following its many connotations. I will therefore, in the following, clarify the term and my use of it.

An asylum seeker is, according to the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMIA), someone who applies for protection under the United Nations definition of a refugee (DIMIA 2003a); namely:

a person who applies for recognition as a refugee due to fear of persecution in their own country on the grounds of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or belonging to a particular social group (Mohamed et al. 2002: 16).

An asylum seeker might be a refugee, however he or she will not be recognised as such until the government of the country of exile has assessed their application and acknowledged their status in conformity with the 1951 *United Nations Convention* and 1967 *Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*, which defines a refugee as:

⁴ See Chapter Two.

[a]ny person who...owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country (UNHCR 1996: 16).

In conjunction with the terms asylum seeker and refugee, the rhetoric of the immigration debate often includes the media stereotypes of ‘boat people’, ‘illegal immigrants’ and ‘queue jumpers’ (Leach & Mansouri 2004: 43). ‘Boat people’ refers to people who arrive by boats from the Indonesian archipelago, or, in an earlier period, Vietnam. They usually arrive without valid visas and are therefore recognised as illegal immigrants, or, to use DIMIA’s term, ‘unauthorised immigrants’. In the media they have often been labelled ‘queue jumpers’, as they do not arrive on one of the two Australian off-shore humanitarian programs: the Refugee and the Special Humanitarian Program (SHP). The refugee category targets “people who are subjected to persecution in their home country and who are in need of resettlement” (DIMIA 2005a). The majority of applicants considered within this category are recognised by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The SHP on the other hand is “for people outside their home country who are subject to substantial discrimination amounting to gross violations of human rights in their home country” (DIMIA 2005a). The application for resettlement must, for those arriving on the SHP, be supported by organisations or residents in Australia. In contrast to the unauthorised immigrants, refugees on offshore humanitarian programs will receive permanent protection.

Once in Australia, the unauthorised immigrants apply for protection, taking on status as asylum seekers. Although these people have fled regimes condemned by the Australian Government and other Western countries for their violation of human rights, they encounter different sets of policies once in Australia from those of refugees arriving on off-shore programs. Until 1994, all refugees, including unauthorised arrivals found to be refugees under the UN convention, were granted permanent residency. This changed in 1999, as the policy of Temporary Protection Visa (TPV) was introduced. If the unauthorised arrivals are found to be refugees and meet health and character requirements, they will be offered a TPV, which grants them residency for three years, after which their visa will be reassessed (DIMIA 2003b). The TPV confirms the individuals' status as refugees. However, in contrast to the refugees arriving on valid visas, they do not receive a Permanent Protection Visa (PPV), which offers them permanent residency in Australia. They are further denied the right to family reunion, the right to return if they leave the country, and access to Commonwealth Government settlement services provided to PPV holders (DIMIA 2003b, Leach & Mansouri 2004: 5, Mohamed et al. 2002: 31).

Confusion surrounding the term asylum seeker arises if it is treated as synonymous with boat people, illegal refugees and TPV holders. Firstly, asylum seekers do not necessarily arrive by boat. Secondly, under international law, all human beings have the right to apply for asylum, and the term illegal immigrant should therefore not be associated with asylum seekers. Thirdly, refugees on TPVs are not asylum seekers, as their applications have been assessed, and their status as refugees confirmed by the government. The confusion arises as TPV holders are, like asylum seekers, situated within circumstances of uncertainty and limited social and financial support.

When the young East Timorese people living in Australia launched their application for protection, they became asylum seekers. For up to 12 years they have lived with this uncertain status, waiting for their applications to be processed. When I use the term asylum seeker throughout this thesis, it is based on the young East Timorese people's narratives. Although some of the participants have received permanent residency, and no longer define themselves as asylum seekers, they recognise the impact this categorisation has had on an extended period of their life. Accordingly, when talking about this period, which represents the foundation of this dissertation, they refer to themselves as asylum seekers. Using this term is not to say 'once an asylum seeker, always an asylum seeker'. Conversely, I recognise the temporariness of this term. Due to the importance of the period in which the participants were asylum seekers, I have decided to use the term throughout the discussion as it reinforces the focus of the thesis.

METHODOLOGY

'Method' derives from the Greek words 'meta' (after) and 'hodos' (way), meaning 'to follow a particular way towards a goal'. In anthropology, and the social sciences in general, 'method' has at least three meanings: epistemology, strategic approaches and techniques for collecting and analysing data (Bernard 1994: 168). Method concerns how we perceive, attain and develop knowledge, and the concept of methodology entails a perception of the presumptions and pre-knowledge with which we face the field of research, how we act within this field, and how we attain and develop further knowledge. This chapter will outline the methodological foundation for the research project. In the first section, I place the project within the framework of the qualitative and quantitative traditions and their philosophical background. Through Bogdan and Biklen's (1998: 4-7) five characteristics of qualitative research, I discuss my approach to the field of research, before briefly clarifying some of the criteria of quality for qualitative research. The last part of the chapter provides a detailed description of the research process.

QUALITATIVE OR QUANTITATIVE – PHILOSOPHICAL POSITIONS

Within various academic fields different approaches, systematisations and ideologies guide methodological choices. Two particular traditions are prominent in the social sciences, and scholars, as well as academic disciplines, relate to these to varying degrees. These are the quantitative and qualitative research traditions, with primary

differentiation found within quantitative research's wish to *explain* versus qualitative research's aim of *understanding*.⁵

According to Maykut and Morehouse (1994: 11), our perception of knowledge is strongly influenced by how we perceive the nature of reality. Two epistemological positions, positivism and phenomenology, correspond with the differentiation between quantitative and qualitative research as they influence the interaction with the field of research, objectives guiding the research, and collection and analysis of data. The word *positivism* can be traced back to the early 1830s and the French social philosopher Auguste Comte, who perceived positivism as a synonym for science or positive and observable facts (Stromberg 1986). The modern version of positivism, 'logical positivism', acquired considerable influence in the 1930s and 1940s. This position views logic as paramount, and employs "objective inquiry based on measurable variables and provable propositions" (Maykut & Morehouse 1994: 3). The positivist position insists on explanation, prediction of observable events and proof, and is strongly connected to the quantitative methods for both data collection and analysis (Hammersley & Atkinson 1995: 4-5, Lincoln & Guba 2000: 166, Maykut & Morehouse 1994: 3).

Qualitative methods, on the other hand, are closely associated with the phenomenological position. Phenomenology is concerned with the creation of meaning and with people's apprehension of the world. It sees individuals and their world as co-constituted. The main objective of phenomenology is to describe conceptual structures and processes; that is, how phenomena and meaning appear within individuals' consciousness and how they are experienced by individuals. It

⁵ This objective of understanding is reflected in Max Weber's notion of 'verstehen', indicating the attempts of social scientists to comprehend both the intentions and contexts of human action.

endeavours to reach an emic understanding: to understand individuals on *their* terms (Haugen 1996, Maykut & Morehouse 1994: 3).

The philosophical and epistemological foundations of qualitative and quantitative research necessitate the collection and use of different data and variation in the role of the researcher(s). Quantitative research uses hypothetical deduction through which hypotheses, founded upon existing theory, are verified or falsified. Central concepts are purposive selection, objectivity, generalisation and statistical calculations based on quantitative data. Conversely, qualitative research aspires to emphasise diversity, nuance and depth through a limited number of phenomena and units. It studies selective issues in depth and detail by means of methods such as fieldwork, participant observation, case studies and qualitative interviews (Kalleberg 1982, Patton 2002).

Qualitative research forms the basis for this thesis, and the phenomenological position has influenced my approach towards the field. I will attempt to clarify my position and how this has influenced the research process by exploring five characteristics of qualitative research derived from Bogdan and Biklen (1998: 4-7).

CHARACTERISTICS OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH AND MY APPROACH TOWARDS THE FIELD

This dissertation considers the situation of young East Timorese people living in Australia, and contemplates the consequences of flight and resettlement on individual identity and belonging, as well as the processes of conceptualising self and negotiating identity within changing social and cultural structures. Behind this focus rests an understanding of the world as connected and integrated, where complex

processes of interaction between people and their physical, social and cultural environments create the world and the people within it. I am interested in how the participants create and negotiate meaning and make sense out of their lives, how they create their individual life world when living between two differentiated cultural and social systems, and how they develop their identity and sense of belonging through interaction and socialisation within particular sociocultural structures. Furthermore, I aspire to an understanding of these issues through the perspective of the participants. Following Bogdan and Biklen (1998: 7), this essential concern about meaning is one of the five characteristics of qualitative research.

In order to understand the cognitive processes through which meaning is created, and the development and transformation of identity, we have to adopt a perspective that embraces the context within which the individuals find themselves. In order to understand what is being observed, it is pivotal to develop a perception of the social, political, cultural and physical surroundings. Such an understanding can be developed by using a holistic perspective, which, through the collection of multiple data on various aspects and settings, aims to assemble a comprehensive and complete picture of the dynamics of the phenomena studied (Patton 2002: 58-61). The importance of a holistic perspective is proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985: 187), who argue that:

[n]aturalistic inquiry is always carried out, logically enough, in a natural setting, since context is so heavily implicated in meaning. Such a contextual inquiry *demands* a human instrument, one fully adaptive to the indeterminate situation that will be encountered.

The above quote is related to Bogdan and Biklen's 'naturalistic' aspect of qualitative research. They argue that "[q]ualitative research has actual settings as the direct source of data and the researcher is the key instrument" (Bogdan & Biklen 1998: 4). Naturalistic inquiry refers to the study of real-world situations as they unfold naturally, without manipulation and control (Patton 2002: 40). Qualitative researchers will often enter the particular setting of the phenomena that are being studied and, by means of methods such as fieldwork, participant observation, and interviews, collect primary data. Understanding is founded upon the researcher's proximity to the people and the phenomena that are studied, and his or her experience of the complex relations to which the participants belong.

This does not imply that all qualitative research is ethnographic (although, all ethnographic research is strongly, if not exclusively, qualitative). Ethnography is closely related to fieldwork and participant observation, combining "research design, fieldwork, and various methods of inquiry to produce historically, politically, and personally situated accounts, descriptions, interpretations, and representations of human lives" (Tedlock 2000: 455). Qualitative inquiries may attempt a similar mapping of encounters, events and understandings, however it does not necessarily imply, as Patton (2002: 48) suggests, "going into the field—into the world of programs, organisations, neighbourhoods, street corners—and getting close enough to the people and circumstances there to capture what is happening." Conversely, library studies and use of secondary sources may also apply a qualitative research design.

Both ethnographic and qualitative non-ethnographic research share a distinctive attribute: the role played by the researcher(s). Data collection and analysis are founded upon the researchers' insight, their choices, reflexivity and discretion;

thus making the researcher the key instrument of qualitative research. Bogdan and Biklen's focus on the researcher as a key instrument of qualitative research is supported by Lincoln and Guba (1985: 193), who contend that the researcher encompasses particular qualities enabling him or her to capture and understand the complexity of the situation or phenomena observed. They suggest that:

[the] human instrument builds upon his or her *tacit* knowledge as much as if not more than upon propositional knowledge, and uses methods that are appropriate to humanly implemented inquiry: interviews, observations, document analysis, unobtrusive clues, and the like (Lincoln & Guba 1985: 187-188).

Such inquiries based upon the researcher's personal involvement initiate, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985: 193-194), "responsiveness, adaptability, holistic emphasis, knowledge base expansion, processual immediacy, opportunities for clarification and summarization and opportunity to explore atypical or idiosyncratic responses", and they require reflexivity; that is, the researcher's crucial reflection of self as researcher (Lincoln & Guba 2000: 183). Reflexivity permits an understanding of the choices guiding the research process, and forces us to come to terms with ourselves and with "the multiple identities that represent the fluid self in the research setting" (Lincoln & Guba 2000: 183). Moreover, it enables a comparison of the researcher's experiences attained during the research process with the experiences on which his or her theoretical foundation is based (Eriksen 1993).

Obtaining reflexivity through contrasting 'empirical' and 'theoretical' experiences can be related to the balancing of two analytical perspectives: 'emic' and

‘etic’. This classic distinction is useful when examining the role of the researcher. The concepts derive from linguistics, where ‘phonemic’ refers to descriptions of linguistic patterns based on the totality created by language and culture, while ‘phonetic’ refers to theoretical principles, categories or concepts that are used in the analysis and organisation of language (Haugen 1996: 140). Within qualitative research, the emic perspective stresses the subjective meanings and cultural models shared by a collective. It requires the researcher’s capability to enter the world of the participants and the context as a whole. In contrast, the etic perspective refers to a structural framework; the development and application of theoretical models (Haugen 1996).

Throughout the research process I have attempted to achieve a balance between the emic and etic perspectives, between proximity and distance. I entered the field by participating in community events, face-to-face interviews, and both formal and informal interaction with East Timorese people living in New South Wales and Victoria. Moreover, in May 2004, I visited East Timor for two weeks. The aim of this trip was to strengthen my understanding of East Timorese geography and culture. It was, however, not an official part of the study. While I did not conduct any interviews or other forms of research, being close to the sites of the participant’s stories gave me a new perspective and understanding out of which I could perceive their narratives. My knowledge about the situation of the East Timorese, their history and heritage, was further enhanced through literature review of academic works, media reports, government information, biographies and other literature. By aspiring to the emic perspective I was able to develop my understanding of the political, social and cultural circumstances of the young East Timorese asylum seekers. The development of this perspective was accompanied by a continuous progression of theoretical concepts related to the project, and by moving between the two

perspectives and assessing reflections in relation to both theory and empirical data, hypotheses and arguments evolved. I experienced the importance of this fluctuation as it enabled me to become aware of my bias; that is, the values, beliefs, knowledge, actions and perspectives that accompanied me through the research process (Haugen 1996).

According to Bogdan and Biklen (1998: 6), “[q]ualitative researchers are concerned with process rather than simply with outcomes or products.” This characteristic is related to the choice of methodology, where the researcher will, upon the initiation of the research project, present a few open-ended questions. Following the researcher’s interaction with the field, questions and hypotheses develop and the research process is directed towards a deeper understanding. This process is reflected in qualitative researchers’ tendency to analyse their data inductively. Bogdan and Biklen (1998: 6) suggest that:

[qualitative researchers] do not search out data or evidence to prove or disprove hypotheses they hold before entering the study; rather, the abstractions are built as the particulars that have been gathered are grouped together.

The analytical categories will, in an inductive analysis scheme, ideally not be defined prior to the data collection. As Lincoln and Guba (1985: 204) assert, “the categories are defined by the collected data rather than...having what will be counted as data defined by preexisting categories.”

Throughout the research process I analysed the data following the inductive method. I kept fieldnotes of my experiences, observations, reflections and ideas.

These notes were of great assistance when developing codes and categories. Fieldnotes are, however, not only important for analysis. Contrary to the numeric quality of quantitative data, qualitative research is founded upon words and pictures, and qualitative research attains a descriptive nature (Bogdan & Biklen 1998: 5-6). Bogdan and Biklen (1998: 5) argue that qualitative researchers “try to analyze the data with all of their richness as closely as possible to the form in which they were recorded or transcribed.” The richness of data is a requirement for drawing a holistic picture of the phenomena observed, and fieldnotes appear as a highly efficient tool for the memorisation of observations and details.

Qualitative research aims for what Geertz (1973, 1991) describes as “thick description”; namely comprehensive, interpretive accounts. Geertz engages in the debate concerning the production of anthropological texts (see also: Clifford & Marcus 1986). He is now a classical anthropological source, and exemplifies how anthropologists may position themselves in relation to the dilemma of representation. He argues that his own work, as well as that of other anthropologists, rests upon a poor foundation. His scepticism is grounded in the nature of anthropological data, which he perceives as being the researcher’s personal interpretation of other people’s constructions of their actions and practice (Geertz 1973: 18). He questions the anthropologist’s ability to reach knowledge, as it is difficult to verify or falsify anthropological work. Geertz’s solution to this dilemma is a focus on symbols rather than human interaction and, moreover, “thick” scientific accounts, which present a comprehensive description of the phenomena observed and place it within its context. By the creation of images of events and people through rich and relevant details, the reader will be able to develop their personal understanding for further knowledge and perception (Haugen 1996: 142).

I do not wholly subscribe to Geertz's scepticism towards anthropological work, however I agree with his criterion of comprehensive descriptions portraying a holistic picture of the complex processes observed. Throughout the dissertation I have attempted to include a rich base of relevant information and details. Related to the idea of 'thick description' is the importance of structure and lucidity (Larsson 1993, 1994), principles which have guided the analysis and presentation of this research. Larsson emphasises the importance of a coherent structure and a clear presentation of the research material. The structure of the analysis and presentation should be based on primary data, this being the guiding principle for what is extracted and emphasised in the structure. The thesis is organised around the primary data collected through the interviews, and its structure is guided by the narratives of the participants. This is also an important part of securing the quality of the research project. Before outlining the research process, I will briefly discuss some issues regarding the quality of this study and other qualitative research projects.

Criteria for Quality

As in all research, an important part of qualitative studies is to secure the quality of the data collected. In quantitative research, quality is generally measured in terms of reliability, validity, objectivity and generalisation. The question of quality attains different requirements within qualitative research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose four criteria for the quality of qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability.

Credibility is connected to the issue of reliability and validity. In qualitative research, reliability refers to the consistency of the results, while validity refers to

whether or not the interviews examine what they are meant to examine (Kvale 2002: 47). Arguments and hypotheses should always be contested with alternative explanations, and the researcher must clarify his or her perspective, subsequently giving the reader the opportunity of understanding the researcher's argumentation. By explaining the research process, methods, and theoretical framework, the reader can grasp the researcher's perspective, and evaluate the quality, reliability and validity of the arguments.

Qualitative research has been criticised by the positivist school for its lack of objectivity and neutrality. Due to the subject of most qualitative research and the role of the researcher, this critique is unavoidable. As Miles and Huberman (1994: 8) contend when discussing the view of interpretivism, “[r]esearchers, they [interpretivists] argue, have their own understandings, their own convictions, their own conceptual orientations; they, too, are members of a particular culture at a specific historical moment.” As the researcher is the key instrument of the study, the research will always be founded within a subjective base, and the researcher will, to some extent, be influenced by and influence the participants and the field of study. The researcher's predispositions and personal characteristics will inform his or her interaction with the field, the analysis and the presentation of the results. This dilemma relates to the criteria of dependability, which can be achieved through open reflection and making one's role visible to the reader.

Like all human interaction, interviews are developed through the dialectic communicative patterns between the interviewee and the researcher. The main method employed in this thesis has been semi-structured interviews. The adoption of this approach necessitates an awareness of how my personality might have influenced the interaction. In all the interviews, I experienced that my background as a foreigner

in Australia opened the conversation and established a sense of trust.⁶ Moreover, being the same age as most of the participants facilitated a common base, which further enabled a sense of commonality between the participants and myself. I wondered, prior to the interviews, how my educational background, European heritage, and gender would influence the interaction. This did, however, not seem to impede the flow of the conversations to any extent.

The two final criteria are transferability and conformability. Transferability refers to the quality of results being transferable; that is, the potential of being conveyed or removed from one place to another. Lincoln and Guba (1985: 316) contend that it is the researcher's "responsibility to provide the data base that makes transferability judgements possible on the part of potential appliers." The arguments forwarded in this dissertation are highly specified to the particular subject of interest, and the potential for generalisation is limited. However, through a holistic presentation of the case of the young East Timorese, I attempt to produce transferability, hence enabling comparison between this case and similar cases. Conformability refers to the ability to confirm arguments and hypothesis. Through moving between emic and etic perspectives, and by securing transferability, dependability, and credibility, I attempt to develop a framework within which the reader can process the data and its conformability.

THE RESEARCH PROCESS

When initiating this research, the question of methodology was of great concern to me. As an undergraduate student, I dreamt about my first fieldwork experience,

⁶ I am originally from Norway, but moved to Australia in January 2002.

which is portrayed as a *rite de passage* for young anthropologists. From the time of Malinowski and Boas, lengthy community-oriented fieldwork has constituted the foundation of anthropological scrutiny, and the idea about ‘living amongst the native’ possessed great vigour throughout my training. However, the contemporary world is quite different from that of Boas and Malinowski, and my perception of the anthropological subject has moved away from the focus on ‘the others’; that is, someone living isolated and distant to ‘us’. The idea of socially, culturally and politically delimited units finds only barren soil within the modern globalised world, characterised by complex flows of people, goods and ideas. Accordingly, anthropology, born and developed within the shade of colonialism, cannot remain the same. Our academic tradition has been forced to develop in conjunction with the changing world to which it belongs. The subject of study has broadened, and anthropologists have become an important resource for understanding processes and circumstances within, as well as consequences of, the increased transnational characteristic of today’s world.

The changing nature of anthropology is identified by Marcus (1995, 1998). He argues that, within the postcolonial context of contemporary globalisation, anthropology has changed. The object of study has become more complex and:

[e]thnography moves from its conventional single-site location, contextualized by macro-constructions of a larger social order, such as the capitalist world system, to multiple sites of observation and participation that cross-cut dichotomies such as the “local” and the “global”, the “lifeworld” and the “system” (Marcus 1995: 95).

Like Marcus, Kapferer (2000) acknowledges the more visible global character of contemporary anthropology. According to Kapferer, central anthropological concepts and methodological requirements have been attacked within this new environment, one of these being the concept of 'fieldwork'. This critique may be founded upon an assertion of fieldwork as dependent upon "the widely held commonsense assumptions linking people to place, nation to territory" (Malkki 1997a: 56). Such territorialising is reflected in the particular localities of fieldwork; nonetheless, it is not, and has never been, confined to a limited study of the relations circumscribed by these localities (Hastrup & Olwig 1997: 8). As Hastrup and Olwig (1997: 8) contend, "we may define the field, not primarily in terms of a locality, but as the field of relations which are of significance to the people involved in the study." Hence, fieldwork is in itself potentially multi-sited (Marcus 1995: 100), examining both the nature of non-local relations, and how these shape, and are equally shaped by, particular localities (Hastrup & Olwig 1997: 8).

In accordance with the changing subject of the study, new methodological strategies have been introduced to anthropology. This does not imply a rejection of traditional anthropological fieldwork. As Kapferer (2000: 188) suggests, extensive fieldwork is still an important part of anthropology:

[t]he best anthropology...is thoroughly conscious interpretative analysis but within the terms of ethnological evidence upon which anthropology is thoroughly dependent. New possibilities of the ethnography emerge through such analytic practice. Being an anthropologist usually depends on fieldwork because it is this that provides the kind of detailed evidence through which anthropologists can examine and open up a theoretical

understanding of human experience in its situated as well as diverse (comparative) substantial and qualitative complexity.

Fieldwork may be connected with other methods or replaced by competing strategies depending on the particular research in question. As Atkinson and Hammersley (1994: 251) argue, “in recent years ethnography has witnessed great diversification, with somewhat different approaches being adopted in different areas, guided by different concerns”.

The ‘new field of study’ has framed this research project and the methodological choices I have taken. Due to the nature of the study, it became evident that it would be hard, if not impossible, to conduct long-term community-based fieldwork. The participants of the study all live within different areas of Sydney and Melbourne, and they do not demonstrate a collective association with particular community organisations. Accordingly, I decided to base the research on an alternative methodological approach. Originally I planned to found the research upon four techniques: speaking to key informants, participant-observation, semi-structured interviews and focus groups; all of which will be explored below.

Entering the Field

In a discussion about the epistemological significance of ‘fieldwork’ and ‘culture’, Kapferer (2000: 189) argues that fieldwork is:

a process of almost ontological proportions whereby the fieldworker-becoming-anthropologist is placed in a routine situation where all that was

taken for granted is radically problematised...fieldwork in the anthropological sense I am expressing here is about a radical reorientation in perspective, which notions of fieldwork as data collection, information through expertise, training in sensitivity, gaining knowledge of the Other, either miss or trivialise.

Accordingly, rather than a technical prescription of the scholarship of anthropology, fieldwork represents a mode of anthropological orientation (Kapferer 2000: 189).

Although this research's primary reliance is the semi-structured interviews, it is more than an interview study. The interviews were done within an ethnographical framework, and my anthropological training guided my interaction with the field in accordance with Kapferer's definition of fieldwork. My participation within the field represented an exercise through which taken-for-granted understandings were challenged and new extensions added (Kapferer 2000: 189).

I entered the field through three main approaches: discussions with key contacts, interviews, and participation in community events. During autumn 2003, I made trips to the Western suburbs of Sydney where I met with people who have been intimately involved with the East Timorese community. These meetings not only provided valuable information, but also enhanced my understanding of the potential participants' geographical and social surroundings. My previous knowledge about Western Sydney was based on its representation in the media, which primarily focuses on negative aspects such as crime and fractured race relations. By going into the area, a more positive picture of cultural diversity and 'survival' emerged, an image which contrasted with media depictions. After my third visit to Fairfield, I wrote in my fieldnotes:

I was back in Fairfield, this fascinating suburb of Western Sydney. On the train from Central to Fairfield station, I could not help noticing how I was the only 'European-looking' person in the carriage. Arriving in Fairfield, this feeling of being 'different' followed me. The smells, the sounds, the languages, the colours, the clothes, the shops, the faces of the people...all resembled a sense of 'being from somewhere else'. Or was it me that reflected such an image? In spite of Fairfield's bad reputation there is something that fascinates me and attracts me to this suburb. Its multicultural community, the 'exotic' food and smells, the smiles on people's faces...

With the intention of broadening my understanding of the circumstances of the participants, I attempted to spend as much time as possible in the areas within which the participants live. Beside the initial trips to Western Sydney, I familiarised myself with these areas throughout the interview process. The majority of the interviews were conducted in the participants' homes, thus taking me to the location of their more intimate neighbourhoods. Meeting the interviewees in their homes also gave me access to a personal space, reinforcing and giving life to stories revealed through the interviews. By actively engaging in the context, observing the physical surroundings and the participants' behaviour and responses, and relating these observations to the actual interaction, the interviews progressed.

A similar technique of moderate participant observation was employed through participation in various local community events, such as community meetings, fundraising events, and parties, in both Sydney and Melbourne. My role as a researcher varied: in some of the events I actively participated and assisted the organisers before, during and after the happening; in others my primary role was as

an observer and my participation was limited to conversation and interaction with those present. Participating at these events facilitated a more direct exposure to the social processes within the Timorese diaspora. It enhanced my understanding of the dynamics of the diaspora, and opened windows through which I could observe the young people's interaction with, and roles within, the Timorese community.

The three approaches compelled me to question previous assumptions, reoriented and developed my understanding, and fortified the data collected through the interviews. Throughout the process I recorded the observational data in fieldnotes with the aim of capturing social processes and their contexts "in their integrity, noting their various features and properties" (Hammersley & Atkinson 1995: 175). Observations and reflections from community events, as well as from meetings with key contacts and the interviews, are at the heart of my fieldnotes. They represent a vital part of the material on which the analysis for this thesis is founded.

Interviews

The phenomenological tradition values the interview as a methodological strategy. It provides access to the participants' thoughts and reflections as they, through a dialogue with the researcher, formulate their personal experiences and perception of the world. Kvale (2002: 21) defines the semi-structured interview as an interview that aspires to gather descriptions of the interviewee's life world, with the intention of analysing the phenomena which are being described. It aims at the collection of qualitative knowledge, descriptive accounts of the participants' life worlds, and descriptions of specific situations and events. The researcher is open to new and

unexpected phenomena, however the interview is focused upon particular themes through employment of an open-ended interview schedule (Kvale 2002: 39).

Through the interviews, I aspired to collect data that would help me answer the research questions of how young East Timorese asylum seekers in Australia articulate their experience of conflict, flight and relocation, how these experiences influence their cultural identity and sense of belonging, and how Australian policy since the early 1990s with regard to asylum seekers affected their identity and sense of belonging. The interviews were informed and guided by an interview schedule based on three broad topics: life in Australia, life in East Timor and the future (see Appendix 1). Due to ethical considerations, the interviewees were not asked directly about specific traumatic experiences, although some did discuss these matters. The interviews lasted between 45 minutes to two hours, and took place at the participants' homes or another location convenient to the interviewees, who were assured of confidentiality and anonymity.⁷

Participant Group and Recruitment

The participant group was selected because of their first-hand experience of conflict, flight and socialisation into a new culture, and, additionally, the reproduction or transformation of cultural identity. The participants were young East Timorese adults between 18 and 30 years of age. All arrived in Australia after 1991 and were children or young adolescents at the time of arrival, thus facilitating their acquisition of English. I initially hoped to conduct between 10 and 15 interviews in Sydney, and I asked officeholders of community organisations known to have connections with

⁷ Participants were assured of their right to confidentiality. Accordingly, all specific information that can identify the individuals has been omitted, and pseudonyms are used throughout the dissertation.

members of the East Timorese community in Sydney, such as youth and church groups, to act as a third party and pass on information about the study. Unfortunately, despite the valuable efforts of these people, I was unable to recruit enough participants, and six months after initiating the process, I had only conducted six interviews.

As the recruitment process stagnated, I decided to adapt some additional methods of recruitment. In addition to the approaches that had been utilized so far, I drafted an advertisement for the Sydney Portuguese language newspaper and the local community radio. These were, however, never published. I decided to go to Melbourne, the city with the largest population of East Timorese people in Australia, before distributing the advertisements. The trip to Melbourne was a rewarding experience, and during the week I was there, I was able to conduct seven semi-structured interviews, partake in various community events, and meet with social workers, youth workers, council members, and solicitors who are intimately connected to the East Timorese community in Victoria.⁸

Before I went to Melbourne, I had contacted community groups and individuals who associated with the East Timorese community in Melbourne. With their help, I met a large number of people who shared their experiences and knowledge. It would appear that the community in Melbourne is more interconnected than the community in Sydney. The East Timorese people in Sydney are spread throughout the city. About one quarter live in the Eastern suburbs, about half live in the Fairfield/ Liverpool area, while the remainder live throughout other

⁸ I conducted 7 interviews in Melbourne, however one of them, the interview with Emanuel, has only briefly informed the analysis. Emanuel arrived as an international student after the independence of East Timor, and does, therefore, not meet the criteria for participation. The interview with Emanuel has, however, informed my understanding of how it is to grow up and live in East Timor. Accordingly, when discussing life in East Timor, his perspectives are included in the analysis.

parts of the city, especially around the areas of Penrith, Mt Druitt and Blacktown (Wise 2002: 70).⁹ The majority of the East Timorese in Melbourne live in the area of Richmond, and there are many cultural, social and political organisations around this area. Unlike Sydney, there is a highly active group of young people, constituting the heart of the Melbourne East Timorese Activities Centre (METAC).¹⁰

In both Sydney and Melbourne there is a schism between the Hakka speaking community and the Portuguese or Tetum speaking community.¹¹ Apart from the links between kin and some political activity, there is little interaction between the two communities (Thatcher 1992: 101-102). Both cities have witnessed a decline in political activity after the realisation of independence in East Timor. Many political groups and organisations have disappeared, and important political figures have returned to East Timor. Consequently, there are fewer activities that bridge the gap between the two diasporic communities. There is, however, one exception. In Melbourne the communities have been largely involved in a common advocacy campaign, *Common Sense for East Timorese – Let Them Stay*, which supported and advocated the case for those asylum seekers facing deportation. The Yarra City Council encouraged the campaign, which received the *Golden World United Nations Award 2003* (United Nations Association of Australia (Vic) 2004).

⁹ The East Timorese refugees who arrived in the 1970s were sent to live in two hostels in Coogee (Sydney east) and Cabramatta (Sydney west). Newly arrived refugees in the 1970s were not put in detention centres, but were instead housed in hostels where they could come and go. The East Timorese who arrived throughout the 1980s and 1990s all arrived on valid visas, such as visitor visas or tourist visas. Consequently, they were not placed in compulsory detention for being 'unlawful arrivals', but were instead resettled in the local communities. It has been important for the East Timorese, as for most migrant or refugee communities, to live in an area with other Timorese with whom they can talk their native language, and share histories and experiences (Wise: 70).

¹⁰ METAC is a resource and activity centre run by a group of East Timorese volunteers. It provides a space for East Timorese to meet and bond with one another, as well as with members of the wider community. The organisation runs a range of activities, such as traditional weaving and textile workshops, traditional East Timorese singing and dancing and Tetum classes for all levels. These activities are open for the East Timorese and the general public.

¹¹ See Thatcher (1992) for an in-depth discussion of the twin communities.

The intense nature of community involvement in Melbourne and the presence of an active youth organisation facilitated an easier process of recruitment than what I had previously experienced in Sydney. I did, however, strike a new and unexpected dilemma. During the months of recruitment in Sydney, I became aware of a problem with the term ‘asylum seeker’. The information statement stated that:

*The purpose of the project is to increase the understanding of young East Timorese **asylum seekers**’ life in Australia...We are seeking young East Timorese, aged between 18 and 30 years, who arrived in Australia as **asylum seekers** after 1991 to participate in the research [emphasis added].*

Using the term ‘asylum seeker’ can be seen as misleading, as some of the participants have received permanent residency and no longer classify themselves as asylum seekers. Moreover, many of the young East Timorese who have become permanent residents do not associate themselves with this term any longer; a dilemma I became aware of when one of the people helping with recruitment told me that potential participants were excluding themselves from taking part in the study as they did not place themselves within the category of asylum seeker. My intentions were not to exclude this group; I was deeply interested in their participation in the research project. Using the term ‘asylum seeker’, I referred to those East Timorese who arrived in the 1990s, and who obtained DIMIA’s status as ‘asylum seekers’ while their applications for refugee status were put on hold. Upon recognising this confusion, I applied for a variation to my ethics approval, erasing the term from the information statement: ‘East Timorese young people’ replaced ‘East Timorese asylum seekers’.

In Melbourne, this modification of terms created a different problem. As I reached out to a greater number of young people, many expressed interest in taking part in the study. The majority of them were young East Timorese who had arrived from East Timor or from exile in Portugal prior to the 1990s, or young Timorese who arrived after the independence as international students.¹² Unfortunately, I had to reject many of them, as they did not fulfil the criteria for participation. Talking to some of these young people and to community and social workers in Richmond, I also became aware of a deficiency in my recruitment. During the time I had spent with the community in Sydney, I had developed a naïve image of the young East Timorese in Australia as a group who had largely overcome the difficulties of trauma, resettlement and integration. This belief arose from the relatively homogeneous group of young East Timorese people that I had previously met. They all had their individual stories, however they portrayed a relatively unified narrative of successful resettlement. In Melbourne, my image of homogeneity was debunked by stories of those whom I did not reach through my interaction with the community. This is the group of young people who struggle with settlement issues, trauma, trust, language, school, and daily survival. For some, this has led to legal problems and substance abuse. It was difficult to reach out to this group, as they rarely associate with the groups and organisations that assisted me in the recruitment process. Moreover, due to their difficult circumstances, I was told that many would be reluctant to take part in the study. Consequently, the following dissertation should be read with an awareness of the disproportionate representation of relatively successfully resettled

¹² One of these is Emanuel, referred to previously.

young people in the participant group, indicated by the participants' qualifications (see Appendix 2).¹³

When I completed the interviews in late April 2004, I had conducted 13 semi-structured interviews, 6 in Sydney and 7 in Melbourne. In total, 8 females (4 in each city) and 5 males (2 in Sydney and 3 in Melbourne) participated, 5 of these being Chinese Timorese, while 8 are indigenous Timorese or of a mixed Timorese and Portuguese heritage. All the participants from Melbourne had been granted permanent residency, while the participants in Sydney were still on temporary bridging visas. The majority of the participants originate from Dili (8), while two are from Suai, and three from Bacau; however, all of these three moved to Dili prior to their escape (see map). This overwhelming majority of town-dwellers must be seen as a consequence of the patterns of migration.¹⁴ The little money that circulates in East Timor is principally found in the capital Dili. As a result, those who could afford the high expenses of the flight and the bribes for visas would generally live in the capital. Moreover, many of the city-dwellers have, or would have had, family in Australia who would provide financial support and further assistance once they arrived in exile.

All the participants come from a relatively stable socio-economic background. The participants of Chinese Timorese background are generally of merchant families, while those of Portuguese or Indigenous background have parents who were skilled tradespeople, professionals or civil servants in the Portuguese, and later Indonesian, Government. In addition, two participants came from the small group of non-Chinese Timorese who are merchants. These backgrounds are in

¹³ Two of the participants, Abelio and Fatima, never finished high school. Their resettlement still portrays a generally positive picture, indicated by their optimistic views of the present and the future.

¹⁴ The total population of East Timor in 2001 was estimated at 794 298, out of which 120 474 live in the districts of Dili and 101 517 in the district of Bacau (UNDP 2002: 13).

contrast to the largely agrarian socio-economic setting of the majority of the Timorese population.¹⁵

Focus Groups

I initially planned to conduct focus groups, which would address the broad themes of identity and belonging and further explore and establish the commonality of issues emerging from the individual interviews. My aim was to organise up to three focus groups lasting about 1 to 1 ½ hours, each comprised of 4 to 8 people. However, I experienced profound difficulties in the recruitment for, and organisation of, the focus groups. Four of the six participants from Sydney agreed to partake in a focus group as well as an individual interview. When the recruitment for interviews stagnated, I decided to develop the focus groups' topic guide, and began organising a group interview with the four individuals who had given their consent to participation. After communicating with all the participants regarding when it would be convenient for them to conduct the focus group, I booked a meeting room at the Fairfield Community Centre. The focus group was organised approximately one month prior to its commencement. The week before the meeting I continuously attempted to contact the participants in order to confirm their participation, with some success. However, for reasons beyond my control, the individuals were no longer able to attend. After the mid-semester break I again tried to organise the focus group, but was only able to get in touch with two of the participants. As the semi-structured interviews contained rich information, and with time running out, I

¹⁵ For further details about the participant group, see Appendix 2.

decided to discard the idea of focus groups, basing my analysis on the semi-structured interviews and fieldnotes.

Data Analysis

The analysis of the data collected has been ongoing throughout the research process. In the analysis, I have followed the sociological tradition, which, according to Bernard and Ryan (2000: 595), “treats text as a window into human experience” and is differentiated from the linguistic tradition “which treats text as an object of analysis itself.” The analysis was founded upon the “free-flowing texts” (Ryan & Bernard 2000: 769-770) presented through the open-ended interviews.

The process of analysis was initiated by the transcription of the interviews. The first two interviews were transcribed by a professional. However, as I became aware of the advantages of such a process, I personally transcribed the rest. Transcribing is a process of analysis in itself (Kvale 2002: 101), and through this process, I further familiarised myself with the data, the voices of the participants, and the subtlety within their narratives that would disappear as the material was transferred from oral to written form.

After transcribing the interviews, I identified potential themes and analytical categories while carefully reading the transcripts. From this starting point, I developed a codebook with which I coded, compared and contrasted the transcripts. Common and contrasted themes were analysed, related to perceptions of conflict, flight, socialisation, acculturation, belonging and identity. The findings were correlated with existing statistical data and scholarly analyses of the situation of East Timorese asylum seekers and expatriates, as well as explained with reference to

theoretical insight from the literature regarding existing theories of cross-cultural identity and socialisation of young refugees.

I did not use a standardised software program for analysis. Instead, I developed a system in Microsoft Word. By the use of colours, borders and highlights, as well as the editing mechanisms of the program, I was able to develop an efficient tool for the analysis of this rich but relatively small number of interviews. Throughout the process I kept notes about the coding, potential hypotheses, and new directions, thus continuously processing the data in relation to new theory, literature, and empirical material.

The analysis of the data was located within a phenomenological framework, aspiring to the description of conceptual structures and processes. Through qualitative research, I have endeavoured to understand the situation of the young East Timorese asylum seekers in Australia, and its impact on their identity and sense of belonging. The subsequent chapters will present the outcome of the research process described above.

PEOPLE OF THE CROCODILE
Historical Layers and National Awareness

You know, [I] always tell the people, this is me. You [either] love me or not – this is me! ‘Cause I’m a Timorese. I’m Timor, just the land is nothing without the people. You wanna see the land, see me. I’m the land, I’m the land of the Crocodile, I’m the land of Timor.

Josef 30

“I heard it said that there was once a crocodile who had lived for many hundreds of years in a swamp and whose great dream was to grow and reach a phenomenal size. But not only was he a small crocodile, he also lived in a very confined space. Only his dream was large” (Sylvan 2005). This is how the legend of the crocodile begins. The legend tells the story of how a young boy came across a sick crocodile, hurt by the burning sun. The boy felt sorry for the crocodile and brought him to the edge of the swamp. His gesture saved the crocodile’s life, and to repay the boy, the crocodile promised to fulfil the boy’s dream of travel across the sea. Following the sun, they journeyed together, until the day when the crocodile got tired and died. According to Timorese tradition, the crocodile’s last payment for the boy’s kindness was to change into a land where he and his descendants could live off his fruits. He became the

island of Timor, and the Timorese people are the offspring of that boy (Sylvan 2005, Wise 2002: 304).¹⁶

This creation myth assumes a critical role in the Timorese people's awareness of their background and heritage, as illustrated in the opening quote by Josef. The crocodile is an important symbol, carrying connotations of shared history and mutual ancestry. It unites a nation otherwise characterised by diversity and multiplicity, and together with influential historical, political and cultural elements, it creates the base upon which the Timorese nation is imagined.

When born, all human beings are placed within a particular sociocultural context. This context will influence us throughout our lifetime, not only due to its structural and institutional frameworks (and the opportunities and restrictions these entail), but also because of its historical realities. Through this thesis I discuss the notion of belonging and identity in relation to particular life-stories: those of the young East Timorese people in Australia. These life-stories not only reflect the individuals' personal histories, they also mirror a historical positioning through which identity and belonging emerge. We are, as individuals, framed by particular historical narratives (Borneman 1992: 12) entrenched within the cultural discourses which frame socialisation, practice and perception. Hence, understanding identity and belonging necessitates a consideration of the histories that, in complex ways, influence the present.

This chapter considers some of the historical layers which affect how the young East Timorese in Australia experience their identities. The narratives of the

¹⁶ The myth about "The crocodile that became Timor", and other traditional legends, can be found on the website: <http://www.uc.pt/timor/lendas.htm>, where Fernando Sylvan's anthology of traditional Maubere myths and tales, *Cantolenda Maubere –the Legends of the Mauberes*, is quoted.

participants of the study, and the master narrative of the East Timorese state¹⁷, highlight two major historical periods generating an awareness of their distinct identity as East Timorese: the Portuguese colonial era and the Indonesian invasion and occupation, leading to the realisation of independence in 2002. I will present the major aspects of these constitutive historical periods, predominantly focusing on the Indonesian occupation as this embodies the historical period within which the young East Timorese grew up.

Initially, the chapter provides a brief outline of ecological and cultural diversity, before exploring the historical periods of colonisation and occupation. These historical layers are related to East Timorese nationalism, hence illustrating the importance of recognising historical realities when considering aspects of national identity. This is further correlated with the participants' experiences of the historical circumstances within which they grew up. Lastly, the chapter presents a brief outline of the patterns of migration and the East Timorese diaspora in Australia.

ECOLOGICAL AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY

The island of Timor is located in the southeastern end of the Indonesian archipelago in the Lesser Sunda group. Its closest major landmass to the east is New Guinea, while Darwin, the northern-most city of Australia, lies less than 600 kilometres southwest. The island is divided between Indonesian Timor Barat (West Timor) and Timor Leste (East Timor), which encompasses the eastern half of the island, the Oecussi enclave located on the north coast of West Timor, and the small island of

¹⁷ The term 'master narrative' is taken from Borneman's (1992) monograph *Belonging in the Two Berlins. Kin, State and Nation*. He defines master narratives as "public matrices for the creation of collective belonging" (Borneman 1997: 98).

Atauro, north of the capital Dili (see map) (Dunn 2003: 1, Jolliffe 1978: 12, Wise 2002: 28).

East Timor is a territory of great diversity, both ecologically and culturally, in spite of a total area of only 18 900 square kilometres. The mountainous island is divided into three major zones: the dry northern coast characterised by low rainfall and semi-arid conditions, the southern coastal plains which, due to relatively high rainfall, present a lush tropical appearance, and the central upland. Intricate cultural patterns have been shaped by successive migrations of cultural groups with different lifestyles, social structures and local traditions. However, due to the irregular topography of the island, which restrained communication between these groups, there are diverse social institutions and languages. East Timor retains over thirty distinct ethno-linguistic groups, which generally derive from one of the island's two dominant language families, 'Papuan' (non-Austronesian) and Malayo-Polynesian (Austronesian). The most influential languages today are Tetum, which holds the status of a kind of lingua franca and is generally spoken and understood throughout the island; Mambai, the vernacular of the most mountainous area of East Timor; Kemas, spoken in the northwest; and Makassae, the language spoken in Baucau and surrounding districts (Hull 2004).¹⁸

Research from diverse fields, such as archaeology, anthropology and linguistics, suggests that a mix of people occupied the island from up to 40 000 years ago. In spite of the influence of, and intermixing with, Malays, Makassarese and Papuan people, the East Timorese stand out as both linguistically and culturally

¹⁸ In contrast to Hull, Dunn (2003: 3) suggests that Mambai is spoken in the east-central zone, Kemas in the central mountain areas, and Makassae in the border areas to the west. Unfortunately, neither Hull nor Dunn cite their sources. I quote Hull, as he is a linguist and, as the director of Instituto Nacional de Linguística Universidade Nacional Timor Lorosa'e, appears as a more authoritative source. Dunn's expertise on East Timor has evolved through his political and diplomatic work.

different. An example is the minimal influence of Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism; three religions which have had a major impact across the rest of the archipelago (Dunn 2003: 3, Wise 2002: 28).

COLONIAL DOMINATION

After approximately 500 years of foreign domination, East Timor became an independent state on the 20th May 2002. In the wake of the independence, East Timor's complex history of colonisation, occupation and resistance have reinforced a sense of national unity. Two consecutive periods of colonisation, Portuguese and Indonesian, mark the historical layers of the Timorese nation state, and have become prominent characteristics of the Timorese people's national identity. The following section will outline some of the key characteristics of these two periods.

Portuguese Colonisation and the Division of Timor

The first documentation of Portuguese contact with East Timor goes back to a letter dated 6th January 1514, which refers to the rich sandalwood reserves found on the island. The island was already renowned for its plentiful supply of sandalwood, which had been traded between local Timorese rulers and Chinese and Javanese tradesmen since the seventh century. The Portuguese became immediately involved in the sandalwood trade, with an early settlement being established on the island of Solor, northwest of Timor. In 1642, they 'officially' invaded the territory, subsequently moving from the coast and attaining larger control of the island's internal trade (Dunn 2003, Taylor 1995, 1999, Thatcher 1992, Wise 2002).

As the Portuguese settled in Timor, the Dutch approached the island from the West. After facing rigid resistance from the Portuguese and the early *mestiço* population, they won an overwhelming victory in the battle of Peniful, ensuring their presence in the west and the territorial division of East and West Timor.¹⁹ In 1859 a diplomatic agreement was reached between Portugal and the Netherlands, and the western portion of the island was formally incorporated into Dutch East Indies, while the eastern half, together with the original base of the Portuguese, Oecusse, became recognised as an overseas province of Portugal. Disputation of borders continued until 1914, when the island was finally divided according to the borders that are present today (Arenas 1998, Taylor 1995: 43-45, Thatcher 1992: 28-29, Wise 2002: 29).

Decolonisation

In 1974, political upheaval in Portugal led to the end of the dictatorial Salazar regime and the abrupt implementation of a policy of decolonisation, allowing the creation of political parties in East Timor (Gorjao 2001).²⁰ Three major political movements evolved in May 1974: União Democrática Timorese (UDT), Associação Social Democrata Timorese (ASDT), later to become Frente Revolucionaria de Timor-Leste Independente (Fretilin), and Associação Popular Democrática Timorese (Apodeti). Both UDT and Fretilin were in favour of independence. However, while

¹⁹ A *mestiço* population developed during the early Portuguese settlement on the island of Solor, northwest of Timor. These were the offspring of Portuguese soldiers, sailors and traders who intermarried with local women. The *mestiços* were to be known as *Topasses*, 'black Portuguese', a term derived from the Dravidian word *tupassi*, which means 'interpreter'. The Topasses formed an influential element of the colony, controlling trading networks between Solor, Larantuka, and Timor. They would be the first to bring Portuguese culture and influence to Timor (Dunn 2003, Taylor 1995, Thatcher 1992).

²⁰ The political upheaval in Portugal weakened the colonial administration's restrictions on political activity, prompting the establishment of political associations.

UDT promised a gradual progression towards independence within the Portuguese cultural framework, the left-wing nationalistic movement of Fretilin called for immediate independence. In contrast, Apodeti campaigned for integration with Indonesia. Their program had little appeal to the general public, who believed integration with Indonesia would constitute recolonisation rather than decolonisation. Apodeti received both financial and political support from Indonesia, whose government feared that an independent East Timor would stimulate independence movements and separatist inclinations within its neighbouring provinces (Dunn 1995: 61, 2003: 45-65).

In late 1974, Portugal presented the Timorese political elite with three options as part of a program for decolonisation: full independence, continued association with Portugal (under a more democratic arrangement), or integration with Indonesia (Dunn 1995: 62). The Timorese people expressed widespread support for independence, remembering the shortcomings of the Salazar regime, and perceived themselves as culturally, politically, linguistically and religiously differentiated from Indonesians. Simultaneously, the Indonesian military launched a covert intelligence operation, *Operasi Komodo*, with the aim of “the integration of East Timor by whatever means necessary” (Dunn 1995: 62). A propaganda campaign directed towards the leaders of Fretilin was initiated, accusing them of being communists and anti-Indonesian. The operation brought the two major parties, UDT and Fretilin, closer and in January 1975 they formed a coalition for independence. However, later that year, as differences between the parties surfaced, *Operasi Komodo* intensified its propaganda war presenting fabricated evidence of connections between Fretilin and leading Communist parties in Asia. The coalition collapsed and a brief civil war

between UDT and Fretilin followed, leaving Fretilin in *de facto* control after their victory.

Indonesian military commanders now turned to direct military intervention, leading to their first major attack on East Timor on the 16th October 1975.²¹ Facing the creeping advance of Indonesian troops, Fretilin declared East Timor independent on the 28th November 1975. However, the independence was to be short lived. On the 7th December 1975, Indonesian forces invaded Dili with attacks from military, naval and airborne forces (Arenas 1998, Dunn 1995, 2003, Gunn 1999, Martinkus 2001).

Indonesian Occupation

The sullen atmosphere was particularly striking when compared to the cheery late afternoon crowds strolling along Dili's streets in 1973. After noon siesta, school finished for the day, the people would be out and about as the fierce heat and humidity abated. All this was gone; the city gave the impression that its heart and soul had been wrenched out. The prevailing atmosphere was unwelcoming, suspicious and fearful, the signs of an occupied territory in a state of permanent tension (Aarons & Domm 1992: 47).²²

²¹ This refers to the attack on the border village Balibo. Five Australian journalists and cameramen were killed in this attack. The Australian Government, who monitored Indonesian military transmissions, denied any knowledge of what happened to the Australian crew (Greenlees & Garran 2002: 12, Martinkus 2001: xiii). Martinkus (2001: xiii) argues that, “[i]t was from this point the Indonesians knew there would be no resistance from Australia for their planned incorporation of East Timor into Indonesia.”

²² Robert Domm, Australian lawyer and journalist, about his experiences upon return to East Timor in 1989, his first visit since 1973.

Days of indiscriminate murder, rape and torture followed the initial vicious attack where 500 East Timorese were killed. Accounts of large-scale public executions, systematic destruction of whole communities, and random killings in the streets of Dili permeate the descriptions of the first days after the invasion. It is believed that during these first days as many as 2000 of Dili's inhabitants died (Dunn 1995: 65, 2003: 246).

The full-scale attacks were to last for four years, leaving Indonesian forces with the control of the main towns and administrative areas on the coast. Summary killings, rape and torture were reported as daily occurrences in the areas under Indonesian control. The initial attack and the continuous violence forced tens of thousands to flee to the mountains where Fretilin's military wing, Falintil (Forças Armadas de Libertação Nacional de Timor-Leste), retained control (Dunn 1995: 65, 2003: 253).

The Indonesian military maintained a substantial presence in East Timor, and in the years between 1975 and 1981 a series of campaigns were carried out. The initial attempt to pacify the territory (1975-1977) was followed by encirclement and annihilation of the people living outside Indonesian-occupied areas (1977-1978). In the 1980s, with the aim of hunting down Fretilin groups, "fence the leg" operations were initiated, in which Timorese people, young and old, were rounded up into human chains and forced to walk in front of the Indonesian units during their encirclement of the guerrilla fighters. Thousands of Timorese died during this campaign as a consequence of starvation or murder (Dunn 2003: 296, *Death of a Nation. The Timor Conspiracy* 1994, Pilger 1998: 168, Taylor 1995).

During the early years of Indonesian occupation, at least 200 000 Timorese lost their lives, a number that later increased (Arenas 1998, Dunn 1995, Silove et al.

2002). At the military level, the genocide was carried out through mass murder, bombing with napalm, and starvation. However, the social and cultural genocide ensued outside the framework of military actions. Through forced movement of the population into ‘resettlement camps’, the process of ‘Indonesianisation’ was advanced. Up to 80 per cent of the population were resettled in towns or in concentration camps with little food and medicine. The camps had devastating effects on local social systems, people’s physical and psychological health, and on the spread of diseases such as malaria and tuberculosis (Dunn 1995: 65-66, UNDP 2002: 71, Wise 2002: 39).

On the 17th August 1976, East Timor was officially incorporated into Indonesia as its 27th province. As one of two countries, the United States was the first country to recognise East Timor as a *de facto* of Indonesia, followed by Australia in January 1978 (Dunn 2003, Gorjao 2001).

12th November 1991

At 6 am on the 12th November 1991, a Catholic Mass was held in the Motael Church in Dili commemorating the death of the young student, Sebastiao Gomes, who was shot dead by Indonesian troops two weeks earlier. After the mass, the mourners walked to the Santa Cruz cemetery to place flowers on Sebastiao’s grave. A peaceful demonstration had been planned and, as they walked, t-shirts and banners were revealed. However, as they reached the cemetery, they were, without any provocation, randomly fired at, stabbed or beaten to death by the Indonesian armed forces (ABRI). Despite some dispute over the exact number of deaths, it is believed that between 250 and 400 people were killed that day or ‘disappeared’ after being

removed by Indonesian security forces (Anderson 1998, Arenas 1998, Dunn 2003, Greenlees & Garran 2002: 22, Martinkus 2001: xiv).²³

This event stands out as a ‘turning point’ in the history of East Timor. The massacre is only one of numerous similar events, however it differs from both preceding and succeeding violence as it was filmed by the British cameraman Max Stahl. The film was later smuggled out of the country and broadcast around the world, increasing the attention and recognition of the humanitarian disaster in East Timor within the international sphere.²⁴

The Resistance Movement

Many of the demonstrators at Santa Cruz were young students. This generation, who grew up under the Indonesian regime, would become one of the strongest voices against the occupation. They mobilised oppositional demonstrations, and initiated individual and sporadic, as well as collective and organised, forms of resistance. Individual and sporadic resistance could be the expression of rage and dissatisfaction with no particular goal and constructive end. Collective and organised resistance on the other hand was reflected in mobilisation of major demonstrations, such as the demonstration on the 12th November 1991 (Arenas 1998).

²³ As John Pilger (1998) reports, a more typical, unreported massacre took place after the event at the cemetery. Through the voice of a young man, he conveys how the Indonesian military, after the killings at the cemetery, removed the dead and injured people. The injured were told to stand up, after which they would be hit and abused to the extent of death. Some were also given paraformaldehyde tablets. At the hospital the killings continued. Soldiers would run over people who were still alive, and, together with Indonesian military doctors, they would give the wounded pills, poison liquid, and injections of sulphuric acid.

²⁴ Max Stahl was one of several foreigners present when the massacre took place. Another foreigner was Russell Anderson who later submitted a report about the massacre to Australia’s Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (See: Anderson 1998).

The student movement was part of a very successful clandestine (underground) support network, which organised demonstrations and supplied food and medicine to the fighters in the mountains. The organisation of the underground networks developed in 1981, after Falintil experienced massive losses following immense bombing of their forces. Previously, Fretilin had followed a traditional 'central command' structure, however, with 80 per cent of the 4000 troops depleted and 90 per cent of their weapons lost, a reorganisation of the leadership and resistance was pivotal. In 1981, Xanana Gusmão became the new commander of Falintil, and a military and political strategy abandoning permanent bases was introduced, breaking Falintil into highly mobile guerrilla units (Dunn 2003: 294-296, Wise 2002: 41).

In 1992, Gusmão was captured and jailed for life in Java's Cipenang Prison. He was, however, released in 1998 following the fall of Suharto. It appeared that his influence was even greater from prison than in the jungle. Although his imprisonment weakened the armed resistance, his courageous stand during his trial and subsequent statements and writings from prison gave the Timorese people a martyr, and his stature as a beloved and respected leader grew (Dunn 2003: 336, Greenlees & Garran 2002: 23-24).²⁵ As Dunn (2003: 297) puts it, "[h]e was the symbol of an uncrushable Timorese spirit, inspiring the population at large not to bend before the Indonesian will."

From prison, Gusmão continued his command of Falintil. In 1994, he successfully brought UDT and Fretilin together by organising a coalition of disparate

²⁵ The subsequent statements and writings were smuggled out by Australian Kirsty Sword. Ms Sword married Xanana Gusmão in 2000.

parties into one supreme nationalist organisation, Conselho Nacional da Resistencia Maubere (CNRM, National Council of Maubere Resistance).²⁶

External Support, the Catholic Church and Diplomatic Resistance

Three other modes of resistance played a major part in the fight for independence: the support from international solidarity movements, the uniting force of the Catholic Church, and the diplomatic role of José Ramos-Horta. In the 1990s, the work of international solidarity movements enhanced international awareness of the situation in East Timor. In Australia the solidarity movements gained additional strength, as many Australian people saw their government's refusal of East Timor's right to self-determination and its rejection of Timorese refugees as a betrayal of their obligations towards the Timorese people following their efforts during the Second World War.²⁷ The solidarity campaigns, both inside and outside Australia,

²⁶ Mau-bere is a Polynesian word, which means "big (bere) man (mau)". The Portuguese used the term in a derogatory way, giving it connotations such as "uncivilised" and "ignorant". However, by 1975 Fretilin had adopted the term as a symbol of pride and independence, and to characterise the party's version of social democracy. Fretilin appropriated the term to distinguish the Timorese from the Portuguese, Chinese and others. Maubere became intimately linked to the Timorese national identity, symbolising their cultural distinctiveness, pride and belonging (Arenas 1998, Ramos-Horta 1987: 37, Wise 2002: 43). CNRM was later to become Conselho Nacional da Resistencia Timorese (CNRT, National Council of Timorese Resistance) of which Gusmão was appointed president in 1998.

²⁷ In relation to the Australian solidarity campaign, Goodman (2000: 41) argues that, "[t]he solidarity campaign successfully constructed the East Timorese people as a primary concern of the Australian people, and a primary responsibility for the Australian Government." This must be understood in relation to the role played by the Timorese people during World War II, when East Timor became a target of hostile fighting between Australian and Japanese forces despite the neutrality of the Portuguese territory. The Australian military contemplated a possible Japanese invasion of Timor and worried that Japanese forces would use Timorese territory as a base for an offensive against Australia (Dunn 2003: 19, Thatcher 1992: 32). In December 1941, approximately 400 Australian and Netherlands Indies troops were sent to East Timor to 'protect' its people, disregarding the protest of the Portuguese who wanted to remain neutral. Accordingly, Japan ultimately committed more than 20 000 troops to East Timor, making the occupation of the territory a reality. The East Timorese supported the Australian troops throughout the occupation by providing protection, shelter, medical aid, food and guidance in the foreign terrain (Turner 1992). With the protection and support of the local population, the Australians fought with little ammunition and few supplies. Nevertheless, facing an overwhelming Japanese force, the Australian troops were evacuated in January 1943, leaving the population to its fate. Between 40 000 and 60 000 East Timorese died as a result of the war, and the

and the solidarity movements' strenuous advocacy of humanitarian principles, put enormous pressure on the Australian Government and other international political powers, contributing to a change in the international attitude towards the Indonesian occupation of East Timor (Goodman 2000: 35-41).

International solidarity movements acquired their strength from reports about the humanitarian situation in East Timor. Between December 1975 and January 1989, East Timor's borders were closed. During this period, the Catholic Church represented the only local institution capable of informing the outside world about the severe situation of the East Timorese people (Carey 1995: 9). However, the Church did not only represent a voice of the East Timorese people's suffering, it also manifested a unified forum in which the various ethnic and linguistic groups could meet.

Prior to the Indonesian invasion, less than 30 per cent of the Timorese population had converted to Catholicism. However, throughout the Indonesian occupation, this number grew and today around 90 per cent of the East Timorese associate with the Catholic Church. The growing allegiance to the Catholic faith can be explained in two ways. Firstly, the Indonesian Government required all its citizens to identify with one of the five "official religions" (Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Hinduism, and Buddhism). Confronted with their predominantly Muslim occupiers, Catholicism fostered a nationalist identity, reflecting a distinct heritage and different history to their occupiers. Secondly, the Catholic Church afforded some protection, as well as a ritual space in which the Timorese could express their collective suffering (Arenas 1998: 138, Wise 2002: 44).

occupation left the colony desolated and economically ruined. The literature is not consistent on the number of Timorese casualties during the Second World War. Dunn (2003), Wise (2002) and Thatcher (1992) contend that an estimated 40 000 Timorese died; Taylor (1995) and Wesley-Smith (2002) believe this number was closer to 60 000.

In 1981, Portuguese was banned by the Indonesian authorities (Carey 1995: 12). In response to this, the Catholic hierarchy adopted Tetum, rather than Indonesian, as the language of the Church. This reinforced Tetum as the East Timorese *lingua franca* and facilitated the emergence of a distinct national language. Furthermore, it emphasised the Timorese people's distinctiveness, strengthening their arguments for self-determination (Leach 2002: 43-44).

The third mode of resistance is represented by the diplomatic work of resistance activist José Ramos Horta. Living in exile, Ramos Horta promoted his people's cause, seeking international support and awareness. Like the Catholic Church, he ensured, through his diplomatic work and his involvement with the United Nations and various solidarity movements, that the international awareness of the situation in East Timor was sustained (Wise 2002: 43).²⁸ In 1996, Ramos Horta, together with the East Timorese Roman Catholic Bishop Felipe Ximenes Belo, received the Nobel Peace Prize for their self-sacrificing contribution to the East Timorese people (Arenas 1998).

Referendum, “Scorched Earth” and Independence

On the 21st May 1998 the Indonesian president, Suharto, was forced to resign. B. J. Habibie, whose office would play a significant part as East Timor moved towards independence, replaced Suharto.²⁹ Following the fall of Suharto's repressive New Order regime, the crisis in East Timor attracted significant international interest.

²⁸ Ramos-Horta was exiled to Mozambique in 1970-71 following a political indiscretion where he criticised the Portuguese colonial authority. Ramos-Horta left East Timor before the Indonesian invasion, and he remained in exile until 1999. He is today the Foreign Minister of East Timor (Dunn 2003: 53, Wise 2002: 43).

²⁹ For a more in-depth exploration of the fall of Suharto and subsequent events in East Timor see: Greenlees & Garran 2002.

Timorese students in Jakarta showed growing courage and started protesting outside the Cipenang Prison, calling for the release of Xanana Gusmão. Simultaneously, dialogues between East Timorese students and local village representatives questioned the future of the territory, requesting the East Timorese people's right for self-determination (Martinkus 2001: 51-81, Wise 2002: 47). Facing both international and domestic pressure, the political and security committee of the Indonesian cabinet proposed a solution offering East Timor "wide-ranging autonomy", an offer rejected by the East Timorese resistance movement. Confronted with continued opposition, Habibie surprised everybody as he offered an act of free choice to the people of East Timor.³⁰

Despite intimidation and violence, on the 30th August 1999 the East Timorese people voted in favour of independence. An overwhelming 98.6 per cent of the registered voters cast ballot, out of which 78 per cent voted for independence (Greenlees & Garran 2002: 182-192). Within a day after the referendum, tension started to build, and on the 4th September, only two hours after the announcement of the results, the Indonesian national army's punishing response began. Together with the Indonesian supported militia, armed forces stormed Dili and, as Dunn (2003: 352) narrates:

[w]ithin a few days the entire city was on fire, its houses and building [*sic*] having first been systematically ransacked by troops and militia with the loot being loaded onto barges and shipped to Indonesia, mainly to Flores. The deportations also proceeded in the same way. The Timorese were

³⁰ An example of the continued opposition was a student demonstration held in Dili on the 15th June 1998, where 15 000 students called for a referendum and the release of Gusmão.

ordered to leave, mostly by TNI [Tentara Nasional Indonesia] officers, with those who hesitated being threatened with weapons.³¹

The majority of public buildings, private homes, and essential utilities were damaged during the violence in 1999 (United Nations Security Council 2000: 7). An estimated 290 000 East Timorese fled or were forcefully deported over the border into West Timor (UNHCR 2000, United Nations Children's Fund 2004), and an additional 200 000 fled inland, seeking refuge in the mountains (Dunn 2003: 352, United Nations 2002). The Indonesian military, who had been given responsibility to maintain order during the election, refused to act (and were intimately linked with the unfolding violence), and the people in East Timor begged for international intervention. Three weeks after the violence started, on the 21st September 1999, an Australian led multinational force, INTERFET (International Force East Timor) landed in Dili.

The last Indonesian troops left East Timor on the 1st November 1999, and in February 2000 INTERFET transferred military command to a multi-national Peacekeeping force, which was part of the United Nations Transnational Administration in East Timor (UNTAET).³² The first democratic election in East Timor was held on the 30th August 2001, with the East Timorese electing an 88-member Constituent Assembly. The election took place peacefully, and Fretilin won

³¹ This strategy is called 'scorched earth' (Indonesian: *bumihangus*). It is a well-known Indonesian military doctrine. Abdul Harris Nasution described its use against the Dutch as follows: "To slow down their progress, there were obstacles placed along the street and some shooting from the side, allowing us time to totally destroy and burn the cities (so it would be difficult for our enemy to use for political and economic purposes and also to live in) and to evacuate the civilians..." (Abdul Harris Nasution, quoted in Greenlees & Garran 2002: 201).

³² UNTAET was established in the UN Security Council on the 25th October 1999. It embraced various objectives, such as providing law and order, creating an effective administration, assisting development of social and civil services, supporting the development of self-government, and ensuring humanitarian assistance, as well as rehabilitation and development assistance (United Nations 2002).

resoundingly with a 57.3 per cent share of the vote. On the 30th November the same year, the Constituent Assembly approved the structural outlines of the constitution, and in East Timor's first presidential election on the 14th April 2002, Xanana Gusmão was elected President with an overwhelming vote of 82.7 per cent. Finally, on the 20th May 2002, UNTAET handed over power to the Constituent Assembly, and the new nation, Timor Leste, was formally born (Dunn 2003: xi-xii, United Nations 2002).³³

Challenges Facing the Newly Independent State

Only six months after the independence, violence and riots threatened the newborn nation. On the 4th December 2002, young students demonstrated outside Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri's home. Two young men died and 26 were injured as the police replied with bullets and tear gas (Pedersen 2002). The riots were, according to reporter McPhedran (2002a: 58):

an outburst of frustration on the part of native East Timorese people who felt that they had been treated unjustly in terms of distribution of wealth and power compared with East Timorese of Portuguese stock.

Much of the political leadership belongs to the minority of older Portuguese-speaking people, and the younger generation, educated in Bahasa Indonesian, feel

³³ The UN has continued its presence in East Timor through the United Nations Mission of Support in East Timor (UNMISSET), supporting the nascent State and its authorities in areas of democracy and justice, stability and security. Its original mandate lasted from 21st May 2002 – 20th May 2004. However, the public administration remains weak and fragile and, as stated by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, East Timor has “not yet reached the critical threshold of self-sufficiency” (UNMISSET 2004a). The mandate has, therefore, been extended to the 20th May 2005 (UNMISSET 2004a, 2004b).

excluded from important sectors of the political and cultural scene (Leach 2003). The young Timorese express frustration and aggression over the many problems facing the newly independent state, and the government's inability to deal with them. They are subjected to immense poverty, an unemployment rate of between 50 and 65 per cent (*Sydney Morning Herald* 7th December 2002: 36, Pedersen 2002), and, as a consequence of the presence of UN and NGO workforces and the introduction of the US dollar as national currency, vast inflation. Unemployment and inflation have created economic and social gaps within the population (McPhedran 2002a, 2002b). Other challenges facing the East Timorese people and their government are connected to the growing young population. Of the 800 000 population, 44 per cent is under 15 years of age. The school system is facing vast difficulties, as there are few teachers and minimal access to resources, such as books. 15 per cent of the children die before five, and 70 per cent of those over thirty have never attended school, consequently leading to a high level of illiteracy (Hederman 2003, UNDP 2002).³⁴

³⁴ The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) estimated in 2002 that East Timor is the poorest country in Asia, and that 41 per cent of the population live on less than US\$0.55 per person per day (UNDP 2002). East Timor is dependent upon the rich oil reserves in the Timor Sea. However the development of the oil fields is being held up by a thirty-year long dispute between Indonesia, Australia and East Timor. In 1972, Portugal and Australia agreed on a seabed border following the southern edge of the Timor Trough. This border is much closer to East Timor than to Australia. Negotiations over the resource rich area known as the 'Timor Gap' were instigated by Portugal and Australia. However, when Portugal lost its hold of East Timor, Australia initiated talks with Indonesia, leading to the Timor Gap Treaty of 1989. The treaty closed the gap by carving out a joint development zone, of which royalties from oil and gas within it should be split 50/50. The treaty was a sell-out, excluding East Timor from its rightful resources. In 2001, following the independence of East Timor, Australia assigned 90 per cent of the royalties back to East Timor. The area is still of great interest to Australia, and intense negotiations are being conducted between the two countries. The negotiations have, however, been stalled by the Australian Government. Simultaneously, Australian companies exploit the area for \$1 million a day, limiting and delaying East Timor's development of the area and their vulnerable economy (Allard 2004, Brennan 2004, *Rich Man, Poor Man* 2004).

HISTORICAL LEGACY AS PART OF NATIONAL IDENTITY

As suggested above, a generational gap has developed within the East Timorese population post-independence. This gap can be traced back to the different historical experiences of the older and the younger generations and the narratives of the State. Two major factors feature within the Timorese master narrative: ‘valorisation of resistance’ and East Timor’s distinctive cultural heritage, both reflecting the historical layers outlined above. It reflects the legacy of national heroes, national symbols, and a national legend of community, heroism and courage conveyed by the resistance movement, and the nation’s affiliations to Portuguese language and cultural heritage (Leach 2002, 2003).

East Timor’s constitution (Constituent Assembly of Timor-Leste 2002) articulates the State’s privileged ties with other countries whose official language is Portuguese and maintains a cultural affinity with Portugal through choice of Portuguese as co-official language together with Tetum.³⁵ The young people’s feelings of exclusion are primarily reflected in the question of official language and the implications this may have on their lives (Leach 2003: 141).³⁶ However, there is, regardless of such feelings, a general recognition of cultural characteristics inherited from the Portuguese. As Leach (2003: 141) argues:

³⁵ Portuguese and Tetum share status as official languages of East Timor. However, as Tetum is not a written formalised language, Portuguese is widely used within the administration and state bureaucracy. Portuguese is spoken by less than 10 per cent of the population, of which older Timorese assume the vast majority.

³⁶ For further exploration, see: Leach 2003, who examines the East Timorese debate surrounding cultural heritage and language policy, and Dibley 2004, who provides an analysis of attitudes amongst Indonesian-speaking Timorese towards the choice of Portuguese as one of the official languages.

the Portuguese colonial heritage marks the nation as a distinctive grouping—an important signifier of cultural difference not only in relation to Indonesia, but, equally, to the indigenous peoples of Dutch-colonized West Timor.

The disparities between Dutch and Portuguese colonial rule distinguish the East Timorese from their neighbours, and a distinct identity stems from their Portuguese affiliation (Greenlees & Garran 2002: 3). With the exception of language, there is a high degree of consensus with regards to Portuguese heritage. An example is the valorisation of Catholicism. The Catholic faith, which was introduced by the Portuguese, is portrayed as a major factor in Timorese nationalism (Anderson 1993, Arenas 1998, Leach 2002, 2003).

According to Anderson (1993), prominent historical awareness did not manifest itself within the Timorese nation until after 1975. He argues that, “in 1974-75 true East Timor nationalism was still quite thin on the ground; perhaps only a small percentage of the population could then really imagine the future nation-state of East Timor” (Anderson 1993: 26). This is echoed in Leach’s (2002: 45) reasoning, in which he suggests that “[a] true *national* sense of East Timorese identity and community arises primarily from the collective experience and memory of the brutal Indonesian occupation.” The Indonesian regime infiltrated and disrupted local and traditional bonds to a much greater extent than the Portuguese (Leach 2002: 44). The Portuguese colonial rule had only tenuous impact on the East Timorese cultural and social structure, and the basic aspects of the Timorese society, its indigenous economic, cultural and social system, were largely maintained and reproduced despite

colonial control (Taylor 1995: 28-29, 1999: 3).³⁷ In contrast, the Indonesian regime implemented an active policy to impose Indonesian identity and eliminate cultural and political manifestations opposing Jakarta's integrationist agenda (Arenas 1998: 131). As Hull (2000: 7) summarises:

Portuguese rule had been generally minimalistic and laissez-faire. The Portuguese had spread their religion and elements of their culture, but traditional society carried on largely undisturbed. Portuguese rule in Timor had not been sullied by massacres of civilians, arbitrary arrest and torture, the destruction of rural cultures, coerced conversions to a new religion, forced resettlement of populations and plantations of colonists. Indonesian rule was guilty of all this.

Through military repression, transferral of "transmigrant" workers, and the establishment of an education system "designed to foster admiration for Indonesia's values and practices" (Arenas 1998: 131), Indonesia attempted to impose its identity on the East Timorese. The Indonesian Government invested heavily in the development of East Timorese infrastructure, particularly in the area of education

³⁷ According to historical research by Gunn (1999), the Portuguese administration's influence was, until the end of the 19th century, limited to the level of the local kingdoms, *raias* (three main administrative levels constituted the traditional political system of East Timor: *raias*, *sucos*, and *cnuas*; that is kingdoms, territorial divisions, and villages). Economic exchange had previously followed the indigenous kinship based political systems, restricting the Portuguese ruler's influence. The colonial power's restricted intervention in the Timorese people's lives was further reinforced by the "distance, isolation from other colonies and neglect due to Portugal directing attention and resources elsewhere in its empire" (Wise 2002: 29-30). At the end of the 1800s, the Portuguese introduced forced labour in order to develop roads and infrastructure, expand cultivation for export, and extend the trading system. Such policies required widespread political control, leading to heightened intervention into various levels of the Timorese society (Gunn 1999, Taylor 1995: 28-32). However, as John G. Taylor (1995: 32), Professor of Politics at South Bank University in London, suggests, "although the kingdoms had been formally abolished, the ideologies legitimising the traditional political hierarchy and the rituals of exchange were perpetuated...Consequently, two political systems, the colonial and the indigenous, co-existed in a rather uneasy truce. Whilst the former was sanctioned through coercion and the use of force, the latter was underpinned by a powerful set of cultural traditions."

and health. At the end of the Portuguese colonial era, the socio-economic conditions in East Timor were deplorable. Through its improvements and investments, the Indonesian Government attempted to show the benefits of integration with Indonesia (Wise 2002: 39). From 1975 to 1993, the number of elementary schools rose from 47 to 612, the number of high schools from five to 34, and the number of hospitals from two to 10. Moreover, in 1986, East Timor got its first university, teaching education, social and political science, and agriculture (Arenas 1998: 139, United Nations General Assembly 1993: 15, 1994: 13).

The school system became Indonesia's prime site for promoting Indonesian culture and values. The curriculum was designed to subdue East Timorese national consciousness, and to promote Indonesian language, values and state ideology.³⁸ However, instead of creating an 'Indonesian' generation of East Timorese young people, the Indonesian propaganda acted as a catalyst for the development of a national consciousness. As Anderson (1993: 27) argues:

Indonesian power is infinitely more penetrating, infinitely more widespread, than Portuguese colonial power ever was. It is there in the smallest villages, and is represented by hundreds of military posts and huge intelligence apparatus. Thus, the consciousness of being East Timorese has spread rapidly since 1975 precisely because of the state's expansion, new schools and development projects also being part of this.

³⁸ The education system also introduced another method of 'Indonesianisation' through which young high school girls would receive injections with the contraception Depo Provena. This program of sterilisation commenced without the girls' knowledge or consent. The injections were also given to women in clinics and women who were unconscious after operations (Arenas 1998, Taylor 1991).

Through the relations with Indonesia and the Indonesian programs of education, repression and development, the East Timorese came to understand the nature of colonialism and their right to self-determination.

Manifestations of Historical Heritage

The impact of the Indonesian Government's programs on national identity and historical awareness is apparent throughout the interviews for this study. The historical layers have influenced the participants of the study in various ways, manifesting themselves in their personal life-stories. Whereas the Portuguese colonial time has had an indirect influence on their life through national myths, language and religion, the Indonesian occupation directly affected their life and their present situation.

Despite the violence and struggle dominating the environment within which they grew up, many of the participants describe their childhood as relatively calm and protected. This is particularly evident in the narratives of the younger participants whose parents were not actively involved in the resistance movement, such as 18-year-old Sebastião who arrived in Australia when he was 10. He explains how he perceives his childhood as similar to that of any other child. However, as the quote beneath illustrates, he recognises that his experiences may be different from those of his older peers:

Basically, the way I see it from here, and my childhood life that I had there, to compare with, like any other kid here [in Australia] there is no difference,

there's not much different in a childhood life, but I'm not sure in the other life there.

Sebastião 18

Sebastião's childhood was relatively protected, and the occupation did not affect his everyday life to a great extent. His story is different from that of Josef, whose father was a member of Fretilin. Josef was born in 1974, and at an early age he and his family had to flee their home in Bacau, seeking refuge behind Fretilin lines:

I was born in Bacau, and [for] three years I live in the jungle. I grew up in the jungle...Like we're like a refugee when we went to the jungle, but my father is like delegation delegate [for] Fretilin and then also we [are] in the guerrilla...I got back from the jungle when I was five or seven years old.

Josef 30

Josef later became actively involved in the student resistance movement. Throughout his childhood he was aware of the political situation, however his political engagement was enhanced during his high school years. The majority of the participants' narratives illustrate how, through schooling, they experienced the authoritarian occupational power of the Indonesian Government. This power was maintained through the occupier's promotion of the Indonesian master narrative, the neglect of East Timorese history, and its authoritarian control of Catholic education. This is evident in the following two statements by Maria:

I don't really know about Timorese culture, because in Timor we don't learn anything about Timorese culture, we're not allowed to. The only culture we're supposed to learn is Indonesian. Like if someone come and ask about Indonesian culture, like we know everything. But when it come to East Timor, I don't know, like I don't even know how many population is Timor, how big is Timor.

Maria 26

It's [school's] terrible, like you don't have the full term, like every now and then it's break it. Cause if something's happened -- I used to go -- I went to junior high school at the Catholic School, and Indonesians always come because they, it was a trouble school, cause in there there was trouble makers, so they always come, so we always have to run, it was awful. Sometimes we have a weeks holiday, two weeks holiday, three days off.

Maria 26

The older participants of the study explain how they, during their high school years, would become more aware of the situation and the discrepancy between what they were taught at school and their personal experiences. As Tomás explains, it activated a growing awareness of injustice, enhanced their call for freedom, and increased their notion of a distinct East Timorese identity:

But once I got to high school now I think that I started to pick up, to read and write and started to think, but once I growing up, everything is in different way because I'm always with my mates and I don't like what the Indonesian

Government do to our people, then study for me is not my first priority anymore. I'm more -- because you know exactly what behind what they do to your people and in front they really nice and they do this, they say this, write this. But behind you they don't do what they say. So you don't really, my focus in school is not one hundred per cent anymore. It's like I go to school because I have to go to and because all your mates go to school and you got nothing, so you just go and when you finish school you're just coming out and hanging around with your mates, and then you started to find a group that thinks "okay, I gotta do this for this organisation" and mostly my life is involved with politics and school. And once you're in politics, your life is dangerous.

Tomás 28

The awareness of a distinct identity was founded upon the Portuguese colonial time, differentiating them from their Indonesian rulers. Being socialised into a Catholic community, they differentiated themselves from their Muslim occupiers. Moreover, Portuguese, rather than Tetum, was the language of the resistance (Hull 2000), representing a symbolic source embodying the resistance and the East Timorese people's unique heritage. Accordingly, the Portuguese legacy of religion and language influenced the young East Timorese people's childhood. However, whereas Catholicism and the Catholic Church represented a refuge (see above), the Portuguese language, seen as a threat by the Indonesians, embodied a danger. Maria, whose first language is Portuguese, told me how speaking Portuguese, even within families, could be dangerous:

I don't know. I used to remember my mum used to hide -- If my uncle in here [in Australia], if they write a letter for her, cause they write in Portuguese, after she read it she usually burn it, she doesn't keep anything. Cause later I ask why, and she said "If I keep it, they come and they don't understand the language there and they might think that I do something wrong. And then they come and punish me for that so I can't keep it." So everything that come from overseas after she read it, she will burn it, she won't keep it with her.

Maria 26

The historical realities of East Timor influenced the young East Timorese asylum seekers' life-stories. They generate particular cultural, institutional, structural and organisational frameworks within which the participants have been socialised. Different historical layers affect their experiences and influence their journey throughout life. A major consequence of these historical realities was their flight and resettlement in Australia.

MIGRATION PATTERNS

The brief civil war of 1975 led to the first wave of refugees from East Timor. Following the Indonesian occupation and the ensuing violence, thousands of East Timorese refugees fled to Australia and other countries. The exodus was greatest during the 1970s and 1980s (Goodman 2000: 31). However, following the Santa Cruz massacre in 1991, there was a further large-scale flight, including about 1650 people who sought safety in Australia.

The East Timorese asylum seekers arriving after the Santa Cruz massacre were to encounter a different set of immigration policies than the refugees arriving in Australia in the previous decades. During the 1970s and 1980s, the East Timorese arrived on various family reunion schemes and under SHPs, which acknowledged and accepted East Timorese people's broad understanding of close kin, allowing the reunion of extended family members and informally adopted children. From the early 1990s, asylum seekers were granted temporary bridging visas. Their application for refugee status was put on hold and their applications were not processed until after the realisation of independence in East Timor. For many of the asylum seekers this was up to twelve years after their arrival. This created a different fate from the refugees arriving in the 1970s and 1980s, many of whom rapidly acquired permanent residency.

In the 1990s, a harder line replaced the Australian Government's previously sympathetic stance towards the East Timorese refugees. In 1989, the Government signed the Timor Gap Treaty, giving a provisional solution to the question of how to divide the oil-rich fields of the Timor Sea that remained undefined under Portuguese colonial administration (Clark 1995: 74-75). Previously, Australian authorities had been able to accept refugees from East Timor without a negative reaction from the Indonesian Government. However, following the Timor Gap Treaty, the situation was more sensitive, and both the Hawke (1983-1991) and Keating (1991-1996) governments had to step carefully so as not to offend Jakarta. When 1200 East Timorese asylum seekers arrived in Australia during 1994, a new strategy was employed. Accepting these asylum seekers could be perceived as a public critique of, and offensive to, Indonesia. Accordingly, the Australian Government claimed that the asylum seekers should be entitled to Portuguese nationality, disqualifying them

from seeking refugee status regardless of the validity of their claims of persecution (Rees 2003b: 97, Silove et al. 2002: 454, Wise 2002: 66-68).³⁹

The East Timorese Diaspora in Australia

According to the 2001 Australian Census (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2001), there are 9391 East Timorese people living in Australia, with the majority residing in Victoria (5014) and New South Wales (2410). It is estimated that approximately 20 000 individuals born in East Timor or their descendants live in Australia. However it is difficult to determine the exact number as the East Timorese refugees were counted as Indonesian until the 2001 Census.⁴⁰ Looking at ‘language spoken at home’, it would appear that the great majority of the Timorese are of Chinese-Timorese background. Whereas only 724 speak Tetum at home, 7451 are said to speak Hakka (DIMIA 2003c: 21-23, Australian Bureau of Statistics 2001).⁴¹ However, as Wise (2002: 68) contends, these figures can be misleading. As the census does not distinguish descendants born in Australia and those who speak English, Portuguese or other East Timorese languages at home, it is more likely that the Chinese-Timorese constitute about half of the community. Comparing these numbers to ‘ancestries of people with selected birthplaces’, a more reliable number appears, in which 61 per cent answer that their leading ancestry is Chinese, 40 per cent Timorese and 10 per cent Portuguese (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2001).

³⁹ The legal process that followed will be explored in Chapter Four.

⁴⁰ This number is presented by Wise (2002: 86). It is derived from a “complex process of cross matching refugee arrivals from Indonesia who list their first language as Tetum, or Hakka, and by multiplying this by the anticipated birth rate” (Wise 2002: 305).

⁴¹ Hakka is the first language of the Chinese-Timorese.

The large number of Chinese-Timorese refugees can be seen as a consequence of their relative wealth. During the time of Portuguese rule, three distinct ethnic societies developed on the level of colonial administration, and there is a separation between native Timorese, *mestiço* and educated Timorese, and Chinese Timorese (Thatcher 1992: 56). As Wise (2002: 53) explains, ethnic separation was reflected in a rigid class and occupation structure, where:

Portuguese occupied the top level administrative positions, while the assimilated, educated *mestiço* were mostly employed in the middle and lower level positions in the civil service, or worked as nurses or some owned coffee plantations. The Chinese dominated the commercial sector, and the indigenous population were primarily employed as labourers on coffee plantations, were fishermen, or village-based subsistence farmers. In the cities, some found work as servants, cooks, cleaners, nannies or gardeners.

Most of the Chinese population lived in Dili, and the majority were engaged in trade. The Chinese controlled all import and export, and engaged 98 per cent of East Timor's commercial sector. Accordingly, the Chinese-Timorese would be more likely to raise funds for bribes, which were demanded in return for a visa, and the flight itself.⁴²

The makeup of the diaspora follows a pattern consistent with the various groups of arrivals. The first arrivals of the 1970s were primarily town dwellers and people connected to the Portuguese era. The 1980s arrivals were often refugees who

⁴² The Chinese-Timorese people's control over the commercial sector is even more astonishing when acknowledging that in 1975 they constituted only 1 per cent of the total population (Morlanes 1991: 48).

had lived in Portugal for some time before arriving in Australia through the family reunion scheme. The 1990s group, on the other hand, were often younger people who had been socialised into the Indonesian system and who spoke fluent Bahasa Indonesia. The major separation within the community is, however, that between Chinese-Timorese, and *mestiço* and indigenous Timorese. The Chinese-Timorese have established a separate community, with their own organisations and community events, and are also often linguistically and religiously separated from the rest of the community as they speak Hakka and are generally Buddhists. Interestingly, my data suggest a change within the ethnic classification of the younger generation of East Timorese living in Australia. Asked about their ethnic background, the Chinese-Timorese confirmed their Chinese heritage, however they would simultaneously argue that they were Timorese and, in the context of the interviews, they did not distinguish themselves from the indigenous Timorese and *mestiços*.⁴³

CONCLUSION

The Indonesian invasion in December 1975 initiated a 25 yearlong occupation, which would change organisational and institutional structures and have a major impact on the East Timorese people's lives and their national awareness. A complex pattern of colonisation and occupation has created a distinct national awareness, reflected in both personal and official narratives. It marks the way the East Timorese people comprehend themselves, their situation and their community. Recognising the particular historical heritage of the East Timorese people may promote an enhanced

⁴³ Thatcher's thesis *The Timor-Born in Exile in Australia* (1992) further explores the difference between the Chinese-Timorese and the *mestiço* and indigenous communities.

understanding of their present situation and their development of identity and sense of belonging, which will be explored further in subsequent chapters.

LOST IN TRANSITION?

The Impact of Uncertainty and Temporariness on Identity

The contemporary Australian immigration debate has largely centred on issues of border protection and how to deal with so-called “illegal” immigrants, “boat-people” and “queue-jumpers”. Through political campaigns and media stereotypes, fear and uncertainty concerning the inundation of Australia by “illegitimate” asylum seekers and refugees has manifested within sections of the Australian community. One of the approaches adopted by the Australian Government to quell this rising fear and uncertainty has been a reinvigorated focus on the policy of temporary protection, through, for example, the introduction of the TPV in 1999 (Leach & Mansouri 2004, Rees 2003a).

In 1998, Pauline Hanson and her political party One Nation proposed “a program of temporary refuge for those who meet the UNHCR definition of a refugee, with repatriation when the situation resolves” (Hanson 1998: 14). Objecting to this stance, the Minister for Immigration, Phillip Ruddock, replied:

What One Nation would be saying is that they [the asylum seekers] have no place in Australia. They are only to be here temporarily...Can you imagine what temporary entry would mean for them? It would mean that people would never know whether they were able to remain here. There would be uncertainty, particularly in terms of the attention given to learning English, and in addressing the torture and trauma so they are

healed from some of the tremendous physical and psychological wounds they have suffered (Ruddock 1998, cited in Leach & Mansouri 2004: 1).

Despite his concern regarding the psychosocial consequences of temporary entry, the Minister introduced TPVs only a year after making the above statement. Research on the impact of the TPV policy (Leach & Mansouri 2004, Mann 2001) confirms the Minister's presumptions regarding the consequences of these visas, emphasising "the prolonged psychological trauma associated with the ongoing uncertainty of life under temporary protection" (Leach & Mansouri 2004: 98). The situation of TPV holders can be compared to the circumstances of the East Timorese asylum seekers who arrived in Australia during the 1990s. Although this group were not granted TPVs, their situation exemplifies the impact of temporary entry on individuals and their wellbeing.⁴⁴

From the early 1990s, East Timorese asylum seekers were granted 'bridging visas'.⁴⁵ Mirroring the temporary nature of TPVs, these visas allowed them to live and work within the local communities. However, their lives were marked by the continuous threat of deportation.⁴⁶ The liminal situation they found themselves in

⁴⁴ The East Timorese asylum seekers must not be mistaken for TPV holders. People on TPVs are predominantly refugees from Iraq and Afghanistan who arrived between 1999 and 2000. A key difference between TPVs and the visas granted to the East Timorese asylum seekers is that TPV holders are recognised as refugees.

⁴⁵ Most of the East Timorese asylum seekers who arrived during the 1990s were granted 'bridging visa A' while waiting for the assessment of their application for protection. This visa provides the asylum seeker with work rights (however, access to employment is limited due to the temporary nature of the visa), healthcare and some language assistance. Minors get access to primary and secondary schooling. Similar to the TPV, bridging visas do not provide rights for family reunion, and there is no automatic right for return if the asylum seeker was to leave the country.

⁴⁶ The treatment of the East Timorese asylum seekers led to an unprecedented reaction from the Australian public. A large number of solidarity groups were established, amongst them the 'Sanctuary Network', founded by a group of Catholic Sisters in 1995. The group aspired to protect the rights of the Timorese seeking asylum in Australia, and promised to provide housing, food and clothing to any of the Timorese asylum seekers who were refused refugee status and could be forcibly deported (Wise 2002: 67). In 1998, the organisation had been contacted by between 10 000 and 12 000 individuals, Catholic and otherwise, who offered sanctuary for the asylum seekers, despite the risk of six months in jail due to civil disobedience (Graydon 1998, Wise 2002: 67).

has been described as a position of 'being in limbo' (Banham 2003, *Living in Limbo* 2001, Leach & Mansouri 2004). 'Living in limbo' refers to the uncertain and ambiguous circumstances of the 'temporary' refugee and asylum seeker. In their book *Lives in Limbo: Voices of Refugees under Temporary Protection*, Leach and Mansouri (2004) employ the term 'limbo' when discussing how asylum seekers or refugees on temporary visas are separated from their home, family and friends, while simultaneously being denied the right to re-establish their lives in exile. It is an evocative term, not only used within the media and scholarly writings, but also adopted by those who are subjected to the temporary entry.

Many of the participants in this study used the term 'limbo' when describing their feelings of uncertainty, doubt, frustration, antipathy, hopelessness and ambiguity. Josef, who arrived in Australia in 1999 at the age of 25 and who waited five years for the assessment of his application, explains how 'limbo' can be experienced to varying degrees in all aspects of life. He portrays limbo as an emotional state, as the feeling of not fitting in, as a situation where you await a decision, as being stuck, and as being entangled in circumstances where you are unable to plan for your future. His description of limbo encapsulates the complexity of the concept, as well as its consequences. Limbo can be experienced as a physical state of waiting. While awaiting a decision, generally a decision that will have extensive impact on the individual's life, feelings of uncertainty, insecurity, powerlessness and loneliness can evolve, leaving the individual immobilised, and without emotional power to deal with the situation and move into the future. When I asked Josef what he meant by limbo, he answered:

...like asylum seeker, you didn't see clear about your future, you stay here or you go back to your country, and when...We didn't know this, you know. The government doesn't give you answer. This is being in limbo. And then it's really hard to as well to organise, to make prepare for yourself, like you wanna buy a house, you wanna study, you wanna working for living...And you can't go back to your country, 'cause it's hard for you as well to make a decision when you feel in limbo, 'cause you can go see everything is dark for your soul, you can't see the light. If you wanna go this, a little bit of worry, you know, I can get in trouble. You can't go back, can get in trouble. You can't go forwards. You stuck in the middle.

Josef 30

While not all of the participants used the term 'limbo', they all illustrate experiences of 'being stuck in the middle', and they all express exasperation over the way DIMIA had dealt with their circumstances.

Through an analysis of the young East Timorese asylum seekers' discussion of issues concerning their visa situation, this chapter will outline how their insecure and uncertain visa status influenced their identity and sense of belonging. The chapter will examine how the visa situation affected all aspects of their life. It will look at the period of resettlement and how particular entitlements, or lack of such, influenced their day-to-day life. Moreover, it will explore the legal battle and the application process, particularly looking at the loss of entitlements and resulting financial and legal hardship. The psychosocial consequences of uncertainty will be analysed in relation to trauma, however there is a limitation to this particular discussion. Due to ethical considerations and my limited psychological training, the

participants were not asked directly about specific traumatic experiences. Some of the participants did, however, recount stories of trauma and loss, and it is important to provide an outline of their experiences. This section will explore their narratives, consider the possibility for recovery from past trauma, and look at the various coping mechanisms employed. The chapter develops a theoretical analysis of the visa situation as it relates to the reciprocal relationship between, firstly, individuals and social structure (Bourdieu 1977) and, secondly, internal identification and external classification (Jenkins 1994).

THE PERIOD OF RESETTLEMENT

Because of the political environment and the intensified role of the younger generation in the political struggle in East Timor, many of the Timorese asylum seekers arriving in Australia in the 1990s were children or young adolescents.⁴⁷ The majority of the asylum seekers arrived on a valid visa, such as a tourist visa or visitor visa. Soon after their arrival they applied for refugee status, and were granted a bridging visa while waiting for their application to be processed, ensuring that they remained lawfully in the country. There are different types of bridging visas, giving asylum seekers varying access to services and disparate entitlements, depending on the timing of the application and its circumstances (Mohamed et al. 2002: 30).⁴⁸ The majority of the East Timorese asylum seekers were offered 'bridging visa A', which

⁴⁷ There are, unfortunately, no official statistics regarding this. This statement is based on information received from immigration and social workers involved with the East Timorese community in Australia.

⁴⁸ If the application for protection visa is launched within 45 days of arrival, the asylum seeker will be granted work rights as part of their bridging visa. Conversely, if the application is not submitted within this time frame, the applicant will be denied working rights, access to Medicare and the public health system (Mohamed et al. 2002: 30).

entitled them the right to work, and access to schooling and healthcare. They remained, as asylum seekers, not eligible to federally funded language services accessible for other refugees or migrants.

The literature on East Timorese asylum seekers in Australia (Graydon 1998, Rees 2003a, 2003b, Silove et al. 2002) depicts their process of relocation as an exhausting struggle filled with challenges. The period of resettlement is a vulnerable time where all immigrants, that is asylum seekers, refugees and voluntary migrants, require assistance in establishing their new lives, and they find themselves heavily dependent on the host-country's support systems and institutions. Important factors for successful resettlement include housing, financial and social support, information and orientation on services such as schools, transport and health services, access to employment and education, and development or enhancement of language skills (Mohamed et al. 2002: 29). The challenges facing the Timorese asylum seekers when settling in Australia followed an unfortunate incapability to satisfy these prerequisites. This is particularly evident in the case of the older East Timorese asylum seekers, as lack of eligibility for language support and employment programs, ensuing limited language skills and unemployment, as well as high levels of trauma and restricted access to mental health and psychosocial services, restricted the degree of resettlement and integration (Gibson 2001, Rees 2003a, 2003b, Silove et al. 2002).

English Language Skills

Issues regarding language assistance are exposed as pivotal to asylum seekers' resettlement and wellbeing in exile (Rees 2003a, 2003b). Language acquisition in exile depends largely on age (Birman & Trickett 2001: 472), and children and young

adolescents possess abilities to more easily adopt a new language as the development of their linguistic capabilities is still at its prime. Attending school also endows the young asylum seekers with a social field, which provides them with opportunities to practice the new language, which in turn accelerates the adoption of the language as members of this particular social field.⁴⁹

All of the young East Timorese asylum seekers who participated in this study express hardship in relation to language competence, declaring language difficulties as one of the major obstacles for their resettlement and integration. The younger participants articulate the importance of their age upon arrival and access to support and assistance at school as vital factors in overcoming these obstacles. This is evident in the following response by Sebastião. He fled East Timor together with his sister in 1995 when he was ten years old, four years before the rest of his family reunited with them in Australia. Reflecting on the effect of his integration into the Australian society at ten instead of fourteen years of age, he said:

...that's what made it easier, that's why, like I said, if I'd come back in '99 that would have been a lot harder, after, because I would have been 14 and that would have been a lot harder. That would've been during my teenage years, and

⁴⁹ The notion of social field refers to the work by Pierre Bourdieu who, in conversations and “oral publications” published by Wacquant, defines a field as “a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions objectively defined, in their existence and in the determinations they impose upon their occupants, agents or institutions, by their present and potential situation (*situs*) in the structure of the distribution of species of power (or capital) whose possession commands access to the specific profits that are at stake in the field, as well as by their objective relation to other positions (domination, subordination, homology, etc.)” (Bourdieu in Wacquant 1989: 39). A network of relations between objectively defined positions constitutes a field. It is characterised by its determinate agents, accumulation of history, forms of capital, and a particular logic for action. A social field refers to a social space whose agents express a sense of community, a common goal, and a hierarchical structure. Within each field there is a game of power, which follows particular rules by which the individuals act and negotiate their relations. Social fields are created and maintained through human interaction (Nygaard 1995: 113). Relevant aspects of Bourdieu’s work are discussed in this and later chapters of the thesis.

after, I would've been making friends there [in East Timor] as well, so that would've been harder, so yeah. Just being a young and starting it young made it really, really easy for me, especially the language, to pick it up.

Sebastião 18

In contrast, the participants who arrived as teenagers or young adults portray more extensive difficulties with regards to the new language. Without the support from school, which assisted the younger participants when learning the language, they had to find alternative methods for their acquisition of English. For Esmeralda, who did not speak any English when she arrived in 1994 at the age of 23, the assistance provided by her sister played an important role. Esmeralda's older sister had lived in Australia with her Hakka speaking aunt since 1975. She did not speak Tetum, and as Esmeralda explains, through their daily interaction, they had to develop an understanding of each other, subsequently learning one another's language:

And then now, since I came and I live with her, that's how I learn my English.

The good thing is I learned my English easily through her son and her and her partner, and another good thing for her is she learn Tetum from me.

Esmeralda 32

Fatima on the other hand had to learn the new language by herself. Prior to her arrival in Australia as a 19 year old, she had lived alone in exile in Portugal for four years. In Portugal she had to learn Portuguese, and the hardship of learning another language in Australia is evident in the following quote:

I start, I, I never, I never, I never, I couldn't speak English that time and it's like really difficult for me. Very hard like for me because I had to make it myself.

Fatima 28

The importance of age upon arrival is manifested in the participants' present levels of English. Although they are all proficient in English, the younger participants appear more secure with regards to their language skills, they are more fluent, and have only a minor accent compared to the older participants.

School and Post-Secondary Education

Arriving in Australia during childhood or early adolescence alleviated the young East Timorese asylum seekers' language difficulties compared to older peers and their parental generation. This led to subsequent opportunities for the young Timorese to overcome further challenges confronting individuals when resettling in a new country. As they learnt the language, the young asylum seekers were able to access information and orientate themselves within the new society and, moreover, to develop a perception of their place within the new sociocultural context. Again, school was a fundamental mediator. It provided an environment in which the young people were isolated from concerns regarding their visa situation, as it did not directly affect their everyday-life, and they were able to live 'a normal life'. Sebastião explains:

Well, when we applied our application, and we went, 'cause I didn't actually know anything about the application and things like that 'cause I was only about ten. But, yeah, I was just living a normal life and things like that, and doing, you know.

Sebastião 18

As they grew older the participants became more aware of their visa situation and its implications for their life. Specifically, awareness of the implications of their legal status followed from the young Timorese asylum seekers' personal experiences of its constraints and limitations. The narratives of difficulty and uncertainty are therefore primarily based in their more recent experiences, and they only slightly represent reflections on experiences of restrictions and entitlements upon arrival in Australia.

The majority of the participants completed secondary education in Australia. The constraints of their legal status are particularly evident in relation to their concerns about difficulties obtaining post-secondary education. As Joana narrates, the young Timorese asylum seekers were excluded from government funded university education:

...and then I went to year ten and then I finish off my high school. And then after that I wanna go to uni, but I can't because, even through special consideration, the government don't agree because if you're asylum seekers or you refugee like you have no access to be a student.

Joana 26

The increased awareness of how legal status could deter opportunities for university education appears to augment as the participants entered the last years of secondary school. This could influence their motivation at school, and, as Amelia explains, enhance feelings of hopelessness and desolation:

...when I got to year eleven and twelve...I kind of discovered that being an asylum seeker I couldn't go to uni. So I didn't take school seriously at all. Which I regret now! So much! Like just doing, because I knew, I knew that, what's the point, even if I get the enter score to get into university, I have no hope. So you know, why bother?

Amelia 25

As asylum seekers are neither permanent residents nor overseas students, there are no clear criteria for university admittance (Baker 1999). Nonetheless, if they manage to gain admission, they are considered international students, and must, subsequently, pay full international fees (Rees 2003b: 99). The fees are high, and with meagre incomes and limited financial support, only those with extensive family support can afford higher education, a dilemma expressed by Mariana in the following quote:

...before I had my permanent I was doing year twelve, and then we had to put in application for uni, want to go, what kind of course you want to do. Yeab, I applied for all the uni course, but my teacher said that, my coordinator said that I can't get in because I'm asylum seekers. Can only get in if you're permanent resident. 'Cause asylum seekers like you have to pay a lot of money just to get

in, because they're going to take you in as an overseas student. Yeah, that's kind of the bad ways. Kind of thing, so yeah. So I kind of like hated it for doing that.

Mariana 22

The exclusion from university education did, however, not eliminate all opportunities for higher education. As TAFE courses are part of the state governments' educational portfolio and are more affordable than university courses, many of the asylum seekers were able to gain a diploma or a certificate within career-oriented areas. Nonetheless, access to TAFE did not remove feelings of frustration and disappointment. Three out of the six who attended TAFE courses experienced interruptions and delays throughout their studies, and many were later unable to get work related to their educational background. Esmeralda explained how confusion regarding her eligibility for studies made her time at TAFE difficult:

I had experience very hard with TAFE, I was studying my diploma for Community Service and Child Study, my dream, but at the time they, you know, I can't access to, I didn't have, was a big drama with the principal of it there, because they say 'you are not permanent residency, you're not allowed to study'.

Esmeralda 32

The majority of the participants expressed a wish to study at universities when finishing high school. Both those who had attended TAFE courses and those who recently finished high school articulated such aspirations. Whereas the first group appeared disappointed by their inability to pursue their wish, the second group, who

at the time of the interview were in the process of deciding their educational path, expressed frustration and resentment with regards to their exclusion from universities.

There is an exception to the participants' general wish for university education. Abelio has been working as a mechanic after he left school in year 11. In contrast to the other participants, he never aspired to attend university. As he explains in the quote beneath, his interest is cars and his dream is to one day open his own workshop:

Yeab, just started because always interested in cars, so I'm, yeab, started learning about it. Hoping that some time, somewhere, open up my own shop or something. That's the future...

Abelio 22

With the exception of Abelio, the participants suffered greatly as a result of the restrictions on their educational opportunities. As children, they had experienced acceptance and inclusion through their access to schooling. Yet, as adolescents they felt rejected by the education system that had previously accepted them despite their status as asylum seekers, and they experienced feelings of simultaneously being inside and outside the social community with which they were now associated. Their exclusion from university education, combined with their profound wish for post-secondary studies, intensified their desire for permanent residency. Reflecting on the financial difficulties, Sebastião explains:

I mean, even, even if I do get enough marks to go into university now, I, I still don't have the entitlements for HECS, for government funding sort of things, and yeah, I mean, I mean obviously that would be another factor, because the family doesn't have the money to pay up funds for courses and things like that, so that's why I really want to get permanent residency soon.

Sebastião 18

The battle for permanent residency had been ongoing since the Timorese asylum seekers' arrival in Australia. However, with the realisation of independence in East Timor, the controversy regarding the status of the asylum seekers intensified, and their plea for recognition grew even stronger (*7.30 Report 2003*, Clausen 2002, *Return to Timor?* 2003, Hearman 2003).

THE LEGAL BATTLE: APPLYING FOR RESIDENCY

The legal battle mounted as DIMIA decided to recommence processing of the Timorese asylum seekers' visa applications following the independence of East Timor in May 2002. In December 2001, the asylum seekers received letters from the government informing them that their claims would be assessed and cases processed, a process that commenced in June 2002 (RILC 2001-2002, 2002-2003). The claims were assessed on the current situation in East Timor, and the asylum seekers were advised that unless they could prove that they faced persecution in an independent East Timor they would be deported. Between October 2002 and May, 2003 DIMIA rejected all applications, demanding repatriation to East Timor within 28 days (*Return to Timor?* 2003, RILC 2001-2002, 2002-2003, Wise 2002: 67-68). Seemingly out of

danger some of them returned, but many disputed the government's decision and fought for their right to stay.

The Application Process

In the decade between 1992 and 2002, consideration of the East Timorese asylum seekers' appeal for refugee status was stalled by the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs and the Refugee Review Tribunal (RRT). This was followed by continuous delays, as claims were deferred by appeals to the Federal Court, questioning whether the East Timorese asylum seekers were Portuguese nationals (Carrington, Sherlock & Hancock 2003). In 1997 and 1998, the Federal Court rejected the Australian Governments' claims of Timorese nationals' entitlement to Portuguese nationality.⁵⁰ As Head (1999: 280) explains, the Court found that "the Portuguese Government did not automatically regard East Timorese as nationals and therefore was unlikely to afford them protection if they were deported to Portugal." The Administrative Appeals Tribunal again rejected the government's assertions in 2000.⁵¹

The irony embedded in the sudden interest in their cases post-independence was that, as Sebastião explains, if their application for refugee status had been processed soon after their arrival, the majority of the asylum seekers would have been granted permanent residency, on the basis of the validity of their claims of persecution. However, as their claims for refugee status were assessed on the current

⁵⁰ *Jong Kim Koe v. Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs* (1997) and *Lay Kon Tji v. Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs* (1998).

⁵¹ *SRRP [pseudonym for applicant] v. Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs* (2000).

situation in East Timor, most of the Timorese asylum seekers living in Australia did not qualify for protection under the 1951 United Nations Convention and the 1967 Protocol Relating the Status of Refugees (Carrington, Sherlock & Hancock 2003).

When we applied our application in '95 we just waited, and we just stayed on bridging visa, and that one just lasted until the application was processed. But, the application wasn't processed until last year. And -- We applied for protection visa, and if the application was processed during '95, just before the independence, we would have received permanent residency because we were legitimate refugees. But now, when it was processed last year, the country had independence, so then we couldn't, we didn't have enough things that said any more statements regarding us being refugees and things like that. So, that's what made it hard.

Sebastião 18

With their applications rejected by DIMIA, the Timorese asylum seekers appealed to the RRT. Between November 2002 and September 2003, there was an intense period of hearings at the RRT, with 249 hearing dates. The majority of the cases were again rejected (RILC 2001-2002, 2002-2003). After receiving the RRT's determination, the asylum seekers had 28 days to lodge a petition to the Minister of Immigration. The Minister's discretion was the asylum seekers' last hope, however, as the quote beneath illustrates, his stance was clear and consistent, and he showed little flexibility with regards to the asylum seekers' individual stories:

East Timorese people who have applications under consideration will be able to remain in Australia until their applications are finally determined. If they are approved, they will be granted a protection visa. If their applications are refused, they will have access to review of these decisions. However, it is reasonable to expect people who are found not to be refugees and so do not have a well-founded fear of persecution, to return home when their country is safe and secure (Ruddock 2002).

Lost Entitlements: Financial and Legal Hardship

Subsequent to the rejection of their applications by the RRT, the asylum seekers lost their right to work, along with access to Medicare and the Asylum Seekers Assistance Scheme (ASAS), a DIMIA funded program providing casework support and financial assistance, administered by the Australian Red Cross.⁵² The East Timorese had previously possessed rights to work and been eligible for Medicare as they had lodged their application for refugee status within the '45 days' requirement period, that is within 45 days of their arrival in Australia (Graydon 1998, Rees 2003b: 99). Those who, due to various reasons, were unable to work could apply for ASAS. This support scheme is available to asylum seekers who have not received a primary decision on their visa applications within six months of its lodgement, and who can prove financial hardship. ASAS constitutes 89 percent of Centrelink's Special Benefits payment (Graydon 1998, Hearman 2003, Mohamed et al. 2002: 32). The

⁵² A rejection from the RRT entails a loss of working rights for asylum seekers in general. However, these rights are reinstated if the Minister personally considers the application. In the case of the East Timorese asylum seekers, an unusual directive was issued as the Minister proclaimed that he would personally reconsider all the cases. Hence, all the East Timorese asylum seekers regained the right to work.

withdrawal of ASAS, Medicare and the right to work left an already financially disadvantaged group in a desperate situation. Financial and legal difficulties were further intensified by the 1997 introduction of a \$1000 penalty fee to unsuccessful appeals before the RRT, and the withdrawal of Legal Aid to asylum seekers (Graydon 1998).

Stranded in a dehumanising position and denied access to fundamental support, the Timorese asylum seekers' wellbeing relied on extensive assistance, both financial and legal, from their local communities and non-government welfare organisations, such as the Refugee & Immigration Legal Centre (RILC) (Graydon 1998, Rees 2003b). The RILC has, since 1993, provided legal representation for East Timorese asylum seekers through the "East Timorese Legal Representation Project". The demands on this project increased significantly as the government ordered the deportation of the Timorese asylum seekers (RILC 2001-2002, 2002-2003). The importance of the assistance provided by the RILC cannot be underestimated; nor can the remarkable support from local community organisations, solidarity networks and individuals in the local communities who coordinated fundraising events aimed at assisting the asylum seekers by contributing to the expensive application process, lobbying at all political levels, and offering emotional support and understanding.

Despite widespread community support and the reinstatement of work rights, financial hardship was, as the following quote by Esmeralda suggests, a continuing reality for the young asylum seekers. Esmeralda found herself in a paradox where the legal battle obstructed financial opportunities while economic difficulties hindered the development of her legal case as it led to further delays in the finalisation of her application. At the time of the interview, Esmeralda was in the last phase of her application process. The Minister was willing to accept her

application for permanent residency on humanitarian grounds if she could produce a medical certificate confirming her health status. As she explains, the financial pressure made it very difficult for her to, firstly, get time off work and, secondly, afford a medical consultation:

Yesterday I went to my lawyer. He was so upset say, "you know, in six months you were supposed to be already done" [she should have been granted Permanent Residency]. But I'm really sorry I have no time [to go to the doctor], scared, if I'm not going to work, they not pay me, see financially I have to go there [to work]. And then, plus I don't have a medical card, every time I see the doctor 40 dollars, but, so I was just have to try to plan what time's the suitable best for me to go [to the doctor], financially too.

Esmeralda 33

This financial hardship and insecurity was a persistent aspect of Esmeralda's everyday life, and financial difficulty, particularly related to the expenses of legal action, was expressed by all the young people interviewed for this study.

PSYCHOSOCIAL CONSEQUENCES OF 'LIVING IN LIMBO'

The young Timorese asylum seekers' experiences of financial and legal hardship went hand in hand with a growing uncertainty about their situation. They suffered through amplified experiences of being 'in limbo', and expressed frustration and antipathy towards the Australian Government's treatment of their cases. The frustration derived from a sense of betrayal, reflecting the unfairness they felt regarding the

government's ignorance towards their cases. Regardless of their sincere hope for protection and their fear of repatriation, many of the participants, such as Josef, would have rather been told to leave when they first arrived than be held in a state of temporariness and uncertainty:

...when come here they don't wanna do the process, just keep the process, leave it like that. Just leave it, leave it, leave it. They say, "they are not Timorese, they are Portuguese, and bla bla bla." There's so many thing happen in Australian Government, always in decision to make decision for the people and thus keeping the people living more than decade. And that's their [the Australian Government] fault, that's not the people individual fault. If the government wants to send the people back to their own country, why, when the first time they come here you just tell them straight away, just giving them three days or three hours. "We don't want you live in here, you'd better go back." So the people know exactly. But this is why, "you can come here, you can live here, you can working for us", and we've payed tax for ten years! And after ten, fifteen years they come, "now, you finish, you can go back home." It's not fair!

Josef 30

The comprehension of how these experiences of unfairness and betrayal influenced the participants' psychosocial health necessitates an understanding of their emotional baggage when arriving in Australia. Social psychologist Varvin (2003: 112) argues that traumatic experiences can disrupt or obstruct resettlement and integration due to their potential impact on individuals' adaptability, trust, and development.

Furthermore, uncertainty and temporariness can restrain personal capability and motivation to move on with life, potentially creating a situation of continued trauma.

Trauma and its Consequences

When discussing trauma it is important to distinguish between traumatic experiences and the consequences of such. The concept of trauma was originally developed within the medical field and referred to the destruction of bodily tissue or organs. This model was later transferred to psychiatry and psychology, signifying the damage to ‘mental tissue’ which external violence might cause. ‘Mental tissue’ indicates the network of organised connections between thoughts and reflections. When exposed to physical harm, these connections might be destroyed, hence damaging the ability to provide meaning to the experience (Varvin 2003: 111-112).

Trauma here is used in reference to traumatic events, such as torture and other human rights abuses, and it should not be confused with post-migration difficulties. There is, however, as Clarke, Sack and Goff (1993) suggest, a strong relationship between previous trauma, resettlement strain, and signs of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). In their study of stress in Cambodian adolescent refugees, they propose a separation between PTSD symptoms and depressive symptoms, arguing that:

[a] strong relationship exists between war trauma experienced in childhood and PTSD symptoms reported as later adolescents and/or young adults. Subjects reporting PTSD symptoms also report greater amounts of resettlement stress. In contrast, depressive symptoms are

more closely tied to recent stressful events than to prior war trauma or resettlement strain (Clarke, Sack & Goff 1993: 76).

This differentiation between trauma, PTSD, stress and depression is important when analysing the situation of the young asylum seekers who participated in this study.

A Traumatized Population

During the Indonesian occupation, the Timorese people were exposed to great suffering. Violence, torture, starvation and coercion created a highly traumatized population. A study on torture and trauma in post-conflict East Timor, conducted by the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims (Modvig et al. 2000), reports that, of all its respondents, 97% (988) had experienced at least one traumatic event.⁵³ The most common events were direct exposure to fighting (76%), sickness with no medical care available (60%), and lack of shelter (64%). Loss of father was experienced by 31% of the participants, while another 24% had lost their mother. Separation from their children or seeing their children injured was experienced by 22% of the parents partaking in the study. Torture, physically and/or psychologically, was reported by 39% of the respondents, confirming that torture was widespread in the Indonesian occupied East Timor (Modvig et al. 2000).

⁵³ This assessment was carried out in June and July 2000 with the aim of assessing the extent of torture and trauma in East Timor, and its impact on the population. The results of the study would later be utilised for the development of the National Psychosocial Rehabilitation Program. 1033 households in 13 districts were interviewed. One respondent who was considered to be a reliable informant represented each household. Through a “community trauma mapping activity”, the study aimed at the development of an understanding of the health system within each district, and the identification and establishment of potential partners and support systems. The participants were presented with a questionnaire “designed to ascertain trauma and torture history, PTSD symptomatology, self-perception of health, potential for recovery, and help-seeking behaviour” (Modvig et al. 2000: 1763).

In a study of the relationship between traumatic experiences and refugee adolescents' attitude towards the future, Frančišković et al. (2000: 579) contend that:

[t]raumatic experiences to which children and adolescents are most often exposed in war are separation from members of their families, refuge, observation of fear and weakness of parents, death of a close member of the family, bombing and other indirect menace of life, economic destruction of the family and similar.

Of the participants in this study, 10 out of 13 recounted stories of traumatic experiences similar to those outlined by Frančišković et al., the major trauma events being exposure to combat situations and death of friends or family members. Due to ethical guidelines and the scope of the study, the participants were not asked directly about trauma, and the data are therefore limited. If the participants decided to reveal stories of traumatic experiences, I would, however, give them the opportunity to voice their concerns. Most of the participants did not go into detail about their experiences, but spoke about them in detached terms. In these circumstances I would not pursue the issue further. However, two of the participants expressed a wish to tell their stories. Sections of their narratives are presented below.

Narratives of Trauma

The participants in this study articulate various degrees of trauma. There appears to be a pattern between the participants' age when leaving East Timor and their memory of traumatic experiences. The participants who left Timor as children, like

Sebastião who departed at age 10 (age 18 at the time of the interview), appear to have little, if any, memory about their life in East Timor.

All I can remember from overseas is the school was a bit strict, and I was learning Indonesian language and things like that...I mean I, I can't remember too much, I don't think I remember anything from my background, so yeah.

Sebastião 18

There is a clear difference in the narratives of those who arrived in Australia in early adolescence or as young adults. Of the participants, ten convey memories of political instability, combat situations, interrogation, loss of family members or friends, personal involvement in the political resistance, torture or persecution.⁵⁴ When asked about her childhood, Maria, a young woman who arrived in Australia at the age of 17, told the following story:

Oh, it [my childhood] was beautiful, but the thing is you get scared all the time, because at night...I remember when I was a little kids, a night-time, at midnight, the Indonesian Army they used to come and search the house. And they come and like they turn everything upside down, and I don't know what they looking for. Back then I don't know what's going on and my mum just sort of say, "Just don't say anything, just do whatever they ask you to do and don't say anything." So every time they knock at the door my mum will come to my room and wake myself and all my uncles and we just get up and go to living

⁵⁴ One of these was Christina who arrived when she was 12 years old. She is the only participant of those who arrived between the ages of 10-12 who recounted experiences of traumatic events.

room and wait for them to search and sometimes they ask us to go outside. And then once they finished we come back inside. So it's a bit scary, you know, you're sleeping, dreaming and then they come and wake you. And then when I grow up it happens until I left Timor. So I get scared.

Maria 26

Josef was 8 years older than Maria when he fled East Timor at the age of 25. As a child of a high profile political family, and later as a political activist in the student resistance, his narrative contains numerous instances of ill-treatment and trauma. In the quote below he tells the story of how he was captured by the Indonesian police three times before he managed to escape, divulging how he was tortured and mistreated:

They capture me, all our family and they kill my brother in law at the front of all the family because they suspect my family in helping the guerrilla. That's why they destroy our family. I was eight years old. And I got another capture at eleven years old. They got suspect we have the clandestine movement with Xanana and Ramos-Horta again, with the police they capture and interrogation 24 hours...And I feel, I can feel the people put the knife, they do interrogation [referring to the third time he was captured]. They put the knife in here [points towards throat], and two gun in here [points to head], and they smack in the stomach. The interrogation they put your feet at the bottom in the chair, you sit like this, and you sit in the top, and then they put your, they put your hand at the back [of the chair] and they put the knife in here [points towards throat], they do interrogation, and they put the gun in here [points towards head], and

they smack the part of your, yeah, that part of your stomach. And then they doing the smoke, and they do, they burn your skin. And then they burn your skin. And they burn your skin wherever they like it.

Josef 30

Regardless of the widespread and systematic use of torture throughout East Timor (Pilger 1998: 170), none of the other participants disclosed similar experiences as those articulated by Josef. The older participants, such as Esmeralda and Tomás, did however explain how their involvement in the student resistance endangered their situation. The dangers they faced are illustrated in Tomás' story of how he, after the Santa Cruz massacre, had to leave Dili, change his identity, and live in hiding in another village until he fled to Australia in 1994.⁵⁵

Recovery from Past Trauma

The vast majority of the East Timorese refugee diaspora have experienced trauma in one form or another, and the community is often portrayed by trauma counsellors and social workers as being highly traumatised (Wise 2002: 157). The effects of trauma are many. Within the East Timorese community it is reflected in high levels of domestic violence, increased alcoholism, breakdown of basic structures of trust, and, subsequently, high levels of distrust, suspicion and anger (*Living in Limbo* 2001, Wise 2002: 159). As Wise (2002: 159) contends, “[f]or many, any sense of future or hope is lost, resulting in high levels of poverty, unemployment, depression and a

⁵⁵ The related quote by Tomás is disjointed and very long, and I have therefore only provided a brief summary of the consequences he faced following his participation at the demonstrations leading to the Santa Cruz massacre.

general sense of atrophy.” A sense of hopelessness is particularly evident in the case of the asylum seekers, however this is not necessarily a consequence of trauma. Alternatively, loss of hope may be attributed to the financial and emotional pressures of their uncertain situation, resulting in similar effects on the community as those associated with trauma (*Living in Limbo* 2001). Ironically, these pressures have the potential to stagnate the asylum seekers’ mastering of traumatic experiences.

The Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture (1998) claims that if refugees and asylum seekers are to convalesce from past trauma they require the capacity to get on with their lives in the new country. Accordingly, the uncertain status of the young East Timorese could potentially lead to prolonged psychological trauma. Referring to the emotional adversity deriving from the prolonged situation of uncertainty, Liz Biok, a member of the International Commission of Jurists who has intimately followed the case of the East Timorese asylum seekers, proclaimed that “[i]t’s as if they [the East Timorese] were tortured by the Indonesians physically when they were in East Timor, then when they’ve come to Australia they’ve been tortured emotionally” (*Living in Limbo* 2001). The continuation of trauma was further augmented by separation from family and the loneliness that ensues from this.

Regardless of the differences in the participants’ traumatic experiences and the divergence between their memories of life in Timor, all the respondents articulated a degree of distress as a result of their separation from their homeland, family and friends. According to Hage (2002), migration can be a guilt-inducing process. He develops the concept “migration guilt”, which derives from the individual’s sense of indebtedness to their moral community of social belonging. Individuals find themselves in a reciprocal gift-exchanging relationship in which they are given the gift of social or communal life. This gift of communality is repaid by

the individuals' life-long participation in the family and community or whichever communal group they are indebted to. Hage (2002: 203) suggests that

[t]his guilt-inducing state of indebtedness is most apparent in times of crisis when your family, your village or your nation is going through a hard time and you (the subject organically related to the community through the original debt of social/communal life) are not there to help. When you do not share the fate of the collectivity which gave you social life, you are guilty of letting others pay alone for a debt you are collectively responsible for.

Through his research on Lebanese migrants, he contends that by means of “strategies of intensification”, including utterances, interactions and bodily movements, the refugees adapt “guilt-ridden moves” and increase affective identification with the topic at hand.⁵⁶

Silove (1999: 202) argues that psychiatric symptoms, particularly depression and PTSD, are perpetuated by family separations and disruptions of social networks. Moreover, continued fear for the safety of family members in East Timor, and feelings of guilt and responsibility for those left in Timor, can lead to enhanced stress (Silove et al. 2002: 461, Wise 2002: 159). All the participants who still have family and friends in East Timor expressed concern regarding their wellbeing. This could create high levels of anxiety and stress, as expressed by Maria, who has lived in Australia without her immediate family since 1995, in the following quote:

⁵⁶ See: Wise 2002 (Chapter Four) for a discussion of this in relation to the East Timorese refugee diaspora in Australia.

'Cause when I came here, if I get the phone call at midnight, I think, "Oh someone's dying or someone's missing." I got scared to answer it...

Maria 26

Forced separation from family is one aspect of what Leach and Mansouri (2004: 103) call "vulnerability factors", which are factors that impact upon the psychological wellbeing of refugees. Other vulnerability factors include "unemployment, lack of access to welfare services, and difficulties associated with the visa application process" (Leach & Mansouri 2004: 103). Consequently, it is obvious that the extended uncertainty about their visa situation could continue, reinforce or cause psychological stress, potentially restraining the young asylum seekers' ability to recover from past trauma and progress with their lives.

Losing Ontological Security

In his work on social agency, sociologist Anthony Giddens develops the concept of "ontological security". Ontological security refers to individuals' ability to trust people, institutions and things around them. A basic trust between agents is essential for the existence of social relations, and it facilitates, through the individual's construction of coherent narratives of selfhood, a foundation for self-identity (Giddens 1990, 1991). Vulnerability factors, such as those outlined above, depict emotional states where individuals lack significant others whom they can trust. Accordingly, being subjected to such factors can potentially result in loss of ontological security; that is, loss of confidence in the reliability of persons and things.

In a study of environmental risk perception and wellbeing, Wakefield and Elliot (2000) employ Giddens' concept of "ontological security". Through comparative research in two southern Ontario communities awaiting determination of a local landfill site proposal, they explore the effects of the siting process on individuals and communities, proclaiming that "the well-being of individuals and communities is impacted as much (and perhaps more) by the process of making the decision as by the outcome itself" (Wakefield & Elliott 2000: 1139). They indicate that the uncertainties embedded in the siting process are more likely to produce psychosocial effects, such as concern, worry and anxiety, than the exposure itself (Wakefield & Elliott 2000: 1139-1140). They connect psychosocial instability, as well as growing lack of trust, to the perception of ontological security. Ontological security is usually sustained by ignoring intimidating and frightening areas of life. However, when exposed to risk, the processes of excluding insecure areas are compromised, and ontological security can be at threat, subsequently jeopardising the individual's wellbeing (Wakefield & Elliott 2000: 1140-1141). Losing ontological security can undermine sense of control, trust, and sense of power (Wakefield & Elliott 2000: 1152).

Wakefield and Elliot's analysis of risk, ontological security and psychosocial effects is useful when attempting to understand the processes of psychosocial stress to which the young East Timorese asylum seekers are exposed. Data collected through the interview process confirm Wakefield and Elliot's argument regarding psychosocial effects as a consequence of protracted and uncertain processes, rather than the outcome of these processes. This was particularly apparent in Christina's discussion about her visa situation. Christina arrived in Australia in 1997 at the age of 12 together with her sister. At the time of the interview she had just finished the

Higher School Certificate (HSC). Following the Minister's consideration of her case, she was granted a student visa that enabled her to finish her studies. However, she had to leave the country within three months after her final exams. She expressed concern, frustration and confusion with regards to her situation. Despite her fear of being repatriated, the anxiety and stress caused by her circumstances led to a situation where finalisation of the process, and an explanation of the outcome, became even more imperative than the decision itself. In the quote beneath, she articulates these feelings:

'Cause the only thing I'm worr -- like, I wanna know just the reason why [I was not offered permanent residency]. 'Cause one thing was, if he wants to send me back it doesn't matter -- do worr -- like I don't wanna go, like. But, like, I just want to find out the reason.

Christina 18

Fear of repatriation was reflected in the vast majority of interviews. Such feelings enhanced stress and anxiety, and reinforced the importance of finalising the process. Amelia, who was granted permanent residency in autumn 2003, expressed how the constant worry of being deported influenced her wellbeing. She said:

Like every time you feel oh my God they're gonna send me back, oh my God they're gonna send me back. You know, what's gonna happen to me. That kind of feeling. And it's not a good feeling.

Amelia 25

Fear of repatriation and ongoing uncertainty permeated the young peoples' everyday life. Concern regarding the outcome of the application process compromised their ontological security and, thus, their wellbeing. They articulated a sense of their lives being put 'on hold', affecting their capacity to plan and relate to their future. Some of the participants convey feelings of loneliness, as well as signs of depression and anxiety, and many expressed ongoing feelings of helplessness and lack of control over their own lives, as articulated by Joana in the following quote:

When I went to tribunal, the tribunal member said that, because there was an argument over my case or whatever it is, arise, so it stop move, where, they recognise us as Portuguese, not East Timorese. Sometimes like that, I'm not really sure. That's why they stop our application. It makes us really frustrated. 'Cause you, when you think about it, it's almost like you have no rights. Just depend on whatever the government do. Yeah. That's the difficult part. That's hard.

Joana 26

The psychological effects, among them anxiety, depression, loneliness, hopelessness and powerlessness, ensued from the asylum seekers' exposure to various vulnerability factors, most importantly the difficult visa situation. The distress they experienced could, as Maria articulates, lead to diminished trust in others and undermined or lost ontological security. Maria arrived in Australia in 1995 as an international student. She was originally meant to return after finishing her studies, but, as the situation in East Timor deteriorated, her father told her to stay in Australia. I asked her what have been the most difficult aspects of living in Australia, to which she replied:

I don't have my parents around and I'm so close to them, and it's really hard because I don't trust anybody and it's so hard for me to open up to friends. Or even some of my mum's family members in here. So like if something happen to me, usually I don't know who to turn to.

Maria 26

When I asked her: “when you say it’s difficult to trust them, is that because...”, she interrupted me and answered:

It's [because of my] experience. It's life experience.

Maria 26

In the introduction to the book *Mistrusting Refugees*, anthropologists Daniel and Knudsen (1995: 1) contend that:

[t]he crisis that precipitates the refugee status is at once personal and social, and therefore it is a crisis that pursues the refugee well into his or her life in the country in which he or she seeks asylum. Such crises of being are invariably accompanied by the erosion of trust.

The experiences of a refugee “put trust on trial”, and will lead to lost ontological security. According to Daniel and Knudsen, trust is not necessarily reconstituted in exile following the lack of control over their own life, and “in the life of a refugee, trust is overwhelmed by mistrust, besieged by suspicion, and relentlessly undermined by caprice” (Daniel & Knudsen 1995: 1-2).

The older participants in this study articulate narratives reflecting the disruption of trust during their adolescence in East Timor. The narratives of the younger participants, however, illustrate how refugees' inability to trust does not necessarily follow experiences preceding their flight, but also circumstances in exile. Before seeking asylum in Australia, these participants had a limited understanding of the situation in East Timor and little knowledge about the flight, and were therefore not exposed to risk factors that otherwise could influence their ontological security. When asked if she remembers anything about the circumstances before leaving East Timor, Mariana, who arrived when she was 12, answered:

I had no idea [about what was happening], 'cause our parents doesn't really tell us what's going on. Try to keep it from us. So, yeah, when we got here, we watch the TV and everything, we didn't know that, that even happen there. Yeah. 'Cause our parents didn't really tell us. Try to keep it away.

Mariana 22

For those of the participants who experienced losing ontological security in East Timor, the reconstruction of trust was vital to their resettlement and integration. Contrary to Daniel and Knudsen's argument, the reconstitution of ontological security appeared through their reincorporation into the new culture and society. Their ability to reconstruct trust can be perceived as a consequence of their young age. However, within the uncertain and protracted situation characterising their everyday life, their ontological security could again be jeopardised. How did the young Timorese asylum seekers deal with loss of ontological security? How did they

rebuild their confidence in others? How did they manage the insecurity and temporariness that characterised their everyday life?

Coping Mechanisms

The young East Timorese employed different strategies for coping with their situation. The interviews display three particular coping mechanisms: ‘normalising experience’, ‘familiarisation and routine’ and ‘religious devotion’. These could be employed at different times or in varying combinations throughout their ongoing battle.

A number of participants, including Sebastião, dealt with the uncertainty and its consequences by attempting to re-establish ontological security through normalising the situation. When I asked him about his day-to-day life, he stressed that:

I'm just sort of living a normal Austr... , ordinary teenage life, sort of thing...

Sebastião 18

When I later asked him what he means by ‘normal life’, he replied:

Mainly just hang out with friends and things like that, hanging out. I mostly work during the weekends, as well, and spending time with families and friends. I play soccer as well during the weekend, for clubs.

Sebastião 18

Sebastião explained how learning to live with the situation enables him to lead a 'normal life'. In essence, his attempts to normalise his experience act as self-fulfilling prophecies; that is, by attempting to live a 'normal life', and relating this normality to himself and others, his experience becomes compatible with those around him, subsequently reducing the impact of his extraordinary circumstances and feelings of being different.

However, in reality, Sebastião's ability to live a 'normal life' is tempered by his visa situation, reminding him about his uncertain future, thus reducing the effectiveness of 'normalising experience' as a coping strategy. As Sebastião told me:

...the feeling of uncertainty was just really getting to me [when he received the rejection of his visa application]. I mean it's still now, sometimes when I think about it, but through the year, like 'cause they've processed our application like in August last year, so since then until now, I mean, I've sort of learnt to live with it now, it's sort of be like part of my life sort of thing now, so. But sometimes when I think about it, it really gets to me.

Sebastião 18

A different, although related, coping mechanism is a strategy of familiarity and routine. Some of the participants deal with their uncertain situation by keeping themselves busy and retreating into their everyday life. Their attention is drawn to the household, friends and family, studies, work, and involvement in community groups and non-governmental organisations. Through routine and familiar activities, the participants naturalised their situation, additionally decreasing stress. When asked about his everyday life, Josef highlighted the importance of routine:

Anyway, my ordinary life is like every human being. I wake up early in the morning, have a shower, put the music on, and sometime I have my breakfast, sometimes I not. But I love drink orange juice, no coffee no tea for myself or water. And then I prepare go for working or go for study. And then after twelve o'clock or eleven thirty I feel hungry, go some have snack for eating, and go to study or working and do that stuff and after lunch, have something for lunch and go home have a big dinner...Everyday, just ordinary day of life.

Josef 30

Others restored their ontological security through faith in God and connection to the Catholic Church. This is a coping mechanism recognised by Varvin (2003: 100). In his analysis of the narratives of extremely traumatised refugees, he contends that God is not only someone who gives encouragement, support and forgiveness, but also someone who represents something fundamentally good. Upon the loss of objects of trust and ontological security, God and religion become representations of security and the last pillars of good (Varvin 2003: 100).

The Catholic Church played an important role for the East Timorese people during the Indonesian occupation, and provided a place for sanctuary and a communal space in which they could share their suffering. In exile, the importance of religion was continued, and God became, as Fatima suggests, an object of trust and relief:

What brought with me is when I left East Timor I feel, I really feel and I felt really alone and lonely, but what I always have with me, like what I have in my heart and what I have always in my mind until today is like, thank God,

thank God that my parents teach me to turn to God for every day in our life.

So, I never, I never think that I'm lonely.

Fatima 28

It is important to note that, despite the generally encouraging and positive narratives related to the way the young East Timorese asylum seekers cope with their uncertain and difficult circumstances, there are those, who were not part of this study, who portray a negative pattern of resettlement, often characterised by substance abuse and crime. Carol Fatouros, youth worker at the North Richmond Community Health Centre, told me how this damaging pattern is common amongst young males who fled without parental guidance. Escaping political persecution, they were sent to Australia to live with distant family members or extended family. Without parental supervision, some of these young people found themselves in trouble with the law (*Living in Limbo* 2001). For some, this has been a coping mechanism, a way of dealing with the trauma, loneliness and uncertainty, while for others it may be attributed to 'experimentation', a common reaction by teenagers trying to establish their place in the world.⁵⁷

Receiving Permanent Residency

The sizable impact of the visa situation on the young asylum seekers' wellbeing is evident when comparing the interviews conducted in Melbourne and Sydney. As

⁵⁷ There is unfortunately little material on this critical issue, and my knowledge is primarily based on the information I received through the interview with Carol Fatouros. Research projects are more likely to reach out to asylum seekers and refugees who are connected with the community and who are coping in exile. Academic research on the situation of this neglected group is therefore limited, and the material on which to base an analytical discussion restricted.

outlined in Chapter Two, there is a significant difference between the participant groups in Sydney and Melbourne, as all the participants in New South Wales were still awaiting the Minister's decision on their applications, while the participants in Victoria had previously been granted permanent residency. The impact of the visa situation on the participants' lives becomes obvious when hearing of the happiness and relief experienced by those who had received permanent residency by the time of the interviews. When asked how she felt when she received her permanent residency, Amelia replied:

Oh, I was thrilled! So happy. After paying, like about \$2000. But it was worth it. Yeah, my brother and I applied for it and we both were successful, yeah. But you had to go through a lot to, to get.

Amelia 25

Joana articulated similar feelings:

Oh, I was so happy! I feel like so free! Because sometime, before the, even the applied for the office like a bit hard, 'cause all the job I apply for they always ask are you permanent resident, are you, are you, for your identity, like your Australian citizen or permanent resident. And if you're none of those they don't accept you.

Joana 26

However, despite their relief and happiness, some of the participants, such as Mariana, experienced mixed feelings. When she turned 18 she decided to apply for a

Close Ties visa, thus separating her application from her family's.⁵⁸ At the time when she was granted permanent residency, her family was still awaiting the Minister's decision. In the following quote, her anxiety about being separated from her family becomes clear:

I felt kind of happy [being granted permanent residency] in the way that I got to study at uni, that's all I'm thinking about, that I got to study without paying a lot of money. But I kind of sad 'cause my parents, I'm not sure what will, what's gonna happen to them. Yeab, like they're either going back or not. 'Cause at the time, like, there's a lot of news say that they're sending back the Timorese. Yeab, it's kind of really, really sad. I don't wanna be here alone, 'cause we came together.

Mariana 22

Mariana's fear is an example of how the offer of permanent residency does not necessarily remove anxiety and uncertainty. Bureaucratic categorisation takes little account of kin and community, and might lead to differentiation and separation. This is also illustrated in the case of Christina and her sister. The sisters arrived in Australia together in 1997. They are dear friends, and their close relationship has developed throughout their time in exile. However, they fear being separated, as Christina's sister had been granted permanent residency, while Christina herself was, at the time of the interview, facing deportation. When she turned 18, Christina's sister, who is one year older, applied for a Close Ties visa. Christina was not eligible for this visa and retained her application for protection. As the following quote

⁵⁸ For details on eligibility requirements for Close Ties visa see: http://www.immi.gov.au/faq/migrate/migrate_special/special02.htm

suggests, it was hard for Christina to understand why she would be separated from her sister with whom she shares a common story. Lack of understanding can lead to further anxiety and stress, emotions reflected in the interview with Christina:

Yes we got [here on] the same one [visa]. Now my sister's got a permanent, so -- They give me student visa, so that's why I don't understand... But the thing is, I thought, 'cause they [people] were saying that they can't separate both of us 'cause we're sisters and that we came together the same time. The only difference like, what, years difference, mean like one year difference you know.

Christina 18

In the next section, questions concerning categorisation will be further explored in relation to the development and transformation of identity and sense of belonging.

VISA SITUATION, IDENTITY AND SENSE OF BELONGING

How did the prolonged state of uncertainty influence the young East Timorese asylum seekers' identity and sense of belonging? Consideration of this question draws upon an understanding of identity as processual and relational. Identity is developed, transformed and negotiated through an ongoing process of interaction between individuals and their social surroundings (Jenkins 1994: 199, Varvin 2003: 176). The concept of habitus, developed by Bourdieu in his book *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Bourdieu 1977), constitutes the core of my understanding of identity. Habitus refers to the principle of generating and structuring practices and representations, subsequently producing identity through particular dispositions and structures of

perception which are associated with a sensory environment. As Bourdieu (1977: 72) argues:

[t]he structures constitutive of a particular type of environment (e.g. the material conditions of existence characteristic of a class condition) produce *habitus*, systems of durable, transposable *dispositions*, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles of the generation and structuring of practices and representations which can be objectively “regulated” and “regular” without in any way being the product of obedience to rules, objectively adapted to their goals without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary to attain them and, being all this, collectively orchestrated without being the product of the orchestrating action of a conductor.

Acquired through primary socialisation in childhood and adolescence, habitus is continuously reproduced and transformed throughout the life of each individual, its reproduction being determined by its past conditions (Bourdieu 1977, Bourdieu & Wacquant 1993: 30-32).

When analysing the impact of the visa situation on the young East Timorese asylum seekers' identity and belonging, the development of their habitus through socialisation into *both* East Timorese and Australian social structures during childhood and adolescence must be accounted for. This habitus, generated by the young participants' practice in these communities, produces the foundation from which they create meaning and, moreover, perceive themselves and their surroundings. Due to the immigration complexities and their subsequent prolonged

stay in Australia, the young Timorese asylum seekers became socialised into the Australian sociocultural context, consequently, consciously or unconsciously, developing and modifying their habitus in relation to their multiple socialisation.

The dialectic relationship between incorporation and objectification embedded in the development, reproduction and transformation of habitus mirrors the interaction between individuals and the structures of meaning in which they find themselves. This structure is not just a material structure, but also a configuration of culture, symbols, power and social norms (Bourdieu 1977: 72). Following this, identity can be defined as individuals' ascription to signals and signs, the diacritical features that people exhibit, and their appreciation of basic value orientations, standards of morality and excellence (Barth 1969: 14).⁵⁹ Moreover, the relational aspect of identity is further corroborated by the individuals' agency in the development and transformation of identity. Jenkins (1994), reader in sociology and anthropology at the University College of Swansea, delineates this agency as he elucidates the transactional nature of identity, proclaiming that identity, whether social or personal, is created in the meeting between the social processes of internal and external definitions. Internal definition refers to the processes where actors signal, to themselves or others, their identification and ascription to particular values, signals and signs. On the other hand, external definition refers to the processes during which the individuals are defined by external sources. There is not an enforced link between the internal and external definition (Jenkins 1994: 198-199).

Jenkin's proposition highlights the importance of recognising not only the participants' socialisation into various sociocultural structures but also the dominant categories and definitions embedded within these structures. Jenkins (1994: 209)

⁵⁹ Barth's theory will be further explored in Chapter Six.

contends that “[i]dentity is produced and reproduced in the course of social interaction”, and that specific processes of social categorisation will occur within particular contexts. Through their socialisation into the East Timorese social structure, the participants would be exposed to particular categories and definitions, both internal and external, of their identity. Such definitions may follow ethnic lines, such as Chinese, Portuguese, native Timorese, or tribal heritage, or may be categorised by religion, education, employment, communal relationships, membership of informal groups, political affiliations or others. Similar contexts of categorisation would appear within the Australian social structure.

A dominant external definition within the Australian context is DIMIA’s initial classification of the East Timorese asylum seekers as Portuguese nationals. According to Jenkins (1994: 202), external definitions may affect internal definitions, and DIMIA’s categorisation could therefore influence the asylum seekers’ personal perception of self. He describes five possible scenarios that can lead to the internalisation of external definitions: similarity (external categorisation and internal definition reinforce each other), long-standing contact (there is an incremental cultural change), legitimate authority (the external category is produced by a person or a group of persons who, in the eyes of the individual, has legitimate authority to categorise them), use of physical force or threat of such, and, rejection of the external definition (through which it is internalised as the focus of denial) (Jenkins 1994: 216-217). However, Jenkins suggests that the possibility for effective categorisation is not just a matter of classification, asserting that:

[i]t is necessarily an intervention in that group's social world which will, to an extent and in ways that are a function of the specifics of the situation, alter the world and the experience of living in it (Jenkins 1994: 217-218).

Returning to the empirical data, it would appear that the classification of the young Timorese asylum seekers as Portuguese nationals had limited, if any, impact on their internal definition of self, despite the vast consequences of DIMIA's classification on their individual and social life and, moreover, their acknowledgement of DIMIA as a legitimate body of authority. Notwithstanding the immediate contradiction to Jenkins' theory, it can still be argued that external classification is a significant factor in the development and negotiation of identity. An explanation of the inconsistency between the data and Jenkins' hypothesis must necessarily involve an analysis of the more complex picture creating the circumstances encountered by the asylum seekers. The Timorese asylum seekers' ability to disregard DIMIA's categorisation, regardless of its legitimate authority, rested on their exposure to an additional external classification by the Australian public and the Timorese diaspora. This categorisation is founded upon an understanding and consideration of their ethnic background and corresponds with the asylum seekers' internal definition as Timorese nationals, consequently attaining legitimate authority due to its resemblance with the asylum seekers' perception of self.

The disparity between DIMIA's classification of the East Timorese asylum seekers' as Portuguese and the participants' experience of their identity, might also explain their ability to counter DIMIA's categorisation. This explanation rests on Jenkins' separation between "nominal" and "virtual" identity. Nominal identity refers to a name, and is separated from virtual identity, which reflects the meaning or

experience of the identity. Jenkins (1994: 202) argues that “[t]his distinction is important because one can change without the other doing so; similarly one can be the product of internal processes of identification, the other of categorization.” Accordingly, DIMIA’s categorisation can be perceived as nominal identity, as a ‘status’ which led to particular consequences, such as the denial of permanent residency and the participants’ inferior status within the immigration bureaucracy. However, it was differentiated from the participants’ experience of themselves; their virtual identity as East Timorese. Jenkins suggests (1994: 203) that such a pre-existing internal definition can provide a defence against imposed external definitions. The East Timorese asylum seekers’ use of language (the use of Hakka, Tetum or other Timorese languages rather than Portuguese), participation in communal events (which were labelled Timorese, not Portuguese), political activism and calls for the freedom of East Timor (which may have differed in nature from that of Portuguese nationals), and representation of self through clothes, artefacts, and cultural symbols (as Timorese not Portuguese) can be perceived as defensive strategies, which enabled the Timorese to develop, negotiate and transform their virtual identity outside the domains of DIMIA’s category.

The development, negotiation and transformation of identity are complex and intricate processes. This chapter has only briefly touched on some of the factors influencing the processes underpinning identity and belonging. These issues will be further addressed in the following chapters through an analysis of the complexities in the processes of socialisation, conceptualising self, and negotiating identity within changing social and cultural configurations.

ACCULTURATION

Socialisation into Divergent Cultural Discourses

If, as argued in the previous chapter, habitus is acquired through primary socialisation into particular structures, how will change of social and cultural environment during childhood or early adolescence influence individuals' development and reproduction of habitus? In order to answer this question, this chapter considers the process of acculturation. According to Berry (1990: 233-234), acculturation is a process of cultural change which appears following inter-cultural contact or experiences of cultural change within one's cultural or ethnic group.⁶⁰ Gibson (2001: 19) presents a similar understanding of acculturation, and argues that "[a]cculturation is the process of culture change and adaptation that occurs when individuals with different cultures come into contact." In the case of migration, the nature of the acculturation process will be strongly influenced by the structural circumstances of the host country. Different social forces will influence the patterns and the pace of acculturation, and both the process and its outcomes will reflect the personal and cultural characteristics of the individual and the nature of the cultures that come into contact.

Through an analysis of the process of acculturation, I wish to explore the impact of the young East Timorese asylum seekers' socialisation into both East

⁶⁰ Berry (1990: 233-234) describes acculturation as a phenomenon that can occur on two distinct levels: the "population" level and the "individual" level. Acculturation at the population level refers to ecological, cultural, social and institutional changes; whereas, on the individual level, it denotes change in behaviour, identity, values and attitudes. This discussion revolves around what Berry calls acculturation on the individual level, and, therefore, acculturation at the population level will not be explored further.

Timorese and Australian sociocultural structures. I will briefly outline some of the initial difficulties and feelings articulated by the participants with regard to their arrival in Australia. This is followed by an analysis of the participants' response to these experiences, focusing on three key determinants detected from the interviews. The final section of the chapter considers the dominant cultural aspects that influence the process of acculturation for the young East Timorese asylum seekers. This is analysed through the concept of discourse, to delineate the particular values and practices influencing the young people's acculturation. The discussion is founded upon the assumption that socialisation into particular sociocultural structures will lead to particular practices, codes of behaviour, values and standards of morality, an understanding derived from Bourdieu's theory of practice, outlined in the previous chapter. The chapter will initiate an analysis of the impact of such socialisation on negotiation, development and transformation of identity and sense of belonging.

EXPERIENCING CULTURAL CHANGE

Migration and, even more so, exile are complex psychosocial processes in which the individual's foundation of self and points of reference are weakened or decreased, additionally impacting identity and perception of self. In exile, an immigrant's familiar 'way of life' is confronted by new circumstances. The host country represents a new reality, removing many of the conditions that previously underpinned identity and sense of belonging (Varvin 2003: 175-176). Potential disparity between the new and the old may create lack of meaning, misunderstanding and, accordingly, feelings of alienation. Such experiences are illustrated in the following quote by Elisa, who cites multiculturalism and differences in values as

stumbling blocks between her and the social surrounding she found herself in when resettling in Australia:

...the first time I came here I feel very, very alienated. Not really belong to Australian society, because, you know, whatever it is that you see, it's very new, and you don't know any thing, and you were really, really young and you don't know what to do. And, especially Australia is a multicultural society and it has a lot of very different values that mix together and sometimes you just don't know exactly what to do, which one to follow...I don't feel belong anywhere. Even though I start to have friends at school. And I think the most hard and difficult time was when I was, the first time when I went to [school]. Even though all these people were really, really friendly, I still feel like I'm not belong with these people because they have different values and I don't, I don't have the same thing as them, and it just make me feel really, you know, not belonging.

Elisa 21

The majority of the participants articulated similar feelings of alienation and cultural difference. Such feelings were enhanced by loss of significant relationships to people, places and heritage. As Tomás explains, these feelings could create loneliness, a sense of lost identity and diminished meaning for one's existence:

First, when I was came over to Australia it's a bit hard for me to settle down in here 'cause obviously, the change, like the culture, the food, the lifestyle, everything is so different to where I come from and I can't even speak the language and that's the biggest problems that I'm facing, 'cause I can't go

anywhere, I stay at home and do nothing and it make me -- like over there I've got a lot of friends, here I'm just like a bird that inside the cage.

Tomás 28

Despite the difference in their personal life-stories, most of the participants, among them Christina, share the feelings of loneliness and difficulties articulated by Elisa and Tomás. The comparability of Tomás' and Christina's experiences illustrates that, regardless of difference in age, knowledge of flight, and political activity and consciousness, hardship in exile is still a reality of the asylum seekers' lives. Christina arrived in Australia together with her one-year-older sister in 1997, when she was 12 years old. Their mother accompanied them to Australia, however she had to return to East Timor a couple of weeks later, leaving the two young girls with their aunt. When leaving East Timor, Christina and her sister believed they were going for a holiday to visit family in Sydney. The hardships she faced are evident in the following account:

It was really bad [when arriving in Australia]. Really bad. I don't know it was really difficult for me especially. I never been apart of my family, like my parents and that. All I do was like, when we came, 'cause my mum stayed with us for few weeks, and was happy, happy, happy, 'cause we thought we just came here for holiday, you know, so everything will be good. But in then, after she left, everything seemed so bad, like different. And we had a wardrobe at home. What I do, I just stay there, I lock myself inside. I don't wanna see nobody, nothing. I don't wanna face nobody.

Christina 18

As the above quotations suggest, the participants could be exposed to initial experiences of culture shock, collapse of meaning, loneliness and alienation. Removed from their familiar environment, the majority of the participants express difficulties comprehending the new reality. Edward Said (2000: 180), known for his incisive political writings and his research in the fields of colonialism and comparative literature, contends that when starting their lives in exile, large parts of the refugees' lives will be occupied by the challenge of creating a new world of which they themselves can get command. This largely implies the recreation of meaning within the new cultural discourse, specifically the understanding and adjustment to the cultural logic of which perception within the new society is founded. How did the young East Timorese asylum seekers recreate meaning? How did they negotiate, and adapt to, cultural change?

KEY DETERMINANTS OF PARTICIPANTS' ACCULTURATION

Acculturation assumes a pervasive role in the process of resettlement, and can act as a catalyst for change in individual behavioural and psychological patterns. Various elements can influence the process of acculturation, and it can create different responses at different times and in different contexts. The interviews reveal three key determinants of the participants' acculturation: age and agency, language, and schooling.

Age and Agency

On the basis of the participants' narratives, the previous chapter argued that their arrival in Australia at an early age positively influenced their resettlement in the new country. This argument was largely founded upon the assertion that young age will generate opportunities for schooling and language acquisition, two additional elements assisting acculturation. Age alone does, however, act as a significant force in an individual's response to cultural change. This must be understood within the framework of children's cognitive development and their dynamic agency within particular sociocultural structures, as argued by the French psychologist Jean Piaget (1977).

Piaget (1977) contends that cognitive structures are developed through the individual's interaction within particular historical contexts, and future practice and acts of intelligence correspond with the individual's adaptation to their sociocultural environment. He proposes a notion of universal stages of human cognitive development, where children's perception of the world moves from motoric actions, intuition and manipulation of concrete objects to more abstract reasoning (Dasen 1994, Piaget 1977, Rapport & Overing 2000: 30). As they move into what Piaget (1977: 461) defines as the last developmental stage, "formal operations", their aptitude in abstract deduction evolves, additionally enabling the growth of a reflexive self-image. Piaget emphasises that this development is not created by passive reception of adult expectations and knowledge. This view has been criticised by various scholarly traditions, such as behaviourism and structuralism. Contrary to these academic traditions, which tend to view the individual as passively subjected to

conditioning processes and structural tendencies, Piaget emphasises children's agency in the construction of their understanding of the world (Piaget 1977).

Agency signifies the capability and power to initiate action. It relates to the relationship between individuals and social structure by representing an individual's ability to react to socio-structural prerequisites (Rapport & Overing 2000: 1-3). Children's agency is coupled with high levels of mobility and openness to modifications to life conditions and social reality, and will accordingly possess abilities to transform their habitus. Rapoport and Lomsky-Feder (2002: 245) argue that:

as a liminal life stage, adolescence has the potential to excite and energise habitus because adolescents have fewer vested interests in, and motivations to, preserve the existing social order than do adults, and thus are less anxious about change.

The importance of age and agency is further augmented by the relationship between development of cognitive structures and identity. In his book, *Identity: Youth and Crisis*, psychologist Erik Erikson (1968) employs Piaget's notion of "formal operations". According to Erikson, the development of a coherent self-identity is a central task in adolescence, its fulfilment being enabled by the cognitive stage of adolescence. Referring to the achievement of "formal operations" he suggests that:

[s]uch cognitive orientation forms not a contrast but a complement to the need of the young person to develop a sense of identity, for, from among all possible and imaginable relations, he must make a series of ever-

narrowing selections of personal, occupational, sexual, and ideological commitments (Erikson 1968: 245).

Like Piaget, Erikson emphasises the significance of context, arguing that psychosocial identities are constructed in a particular place and time. Through particular discourses, the individual's perception and definition of self evolves, additionally reinforcing their social and cultural identity (Bottomley 1992, Erikson 1968, Rice 2002). Discussing the definition of youth, Bucholtz (2002: 526) proclaims that, as a cultural stage, youth "often marks the beginning of a long-term, even lifelong, engagement in particular cultural practices, whether its practitioners continue to be included in the youth category or not." Subsequently, it is pivotal to comprehend the cultural and social context to which the young people are part, as this initiates their future practice. Not only does it provide the resources, values and relations by which the individual consciously creates their internal perception of self, it also reinforces, negotiates and transforms the unconscious underlying dispositions (*habitus*) creating meaning, practice and, ultimately, identity and sense of belonging.

The interviews reveal a degree of individual agency possessed by all the young East Timorese, leading to change in the participants' attitudes to the new culture, removing the initial feelings of difference and alienation with a gradual adjustment into the new sociocultural surroundings. Their agency enabled them to react to the new environment, additionally instigating acts of meaning making. Elisa arrived in Australia together with her family following the violence in 1999. She told me how she learned to deal with cultural change and loss of significant relatives. Her ability to overcome the difficulties was prompted by her agency, illustrated in her acceptance of change:

I still remember back then, when I first came, I keep crying every day I want to go back, I want to go back. I missed my friends, I missed my families, and -- Even though my parents are here, but I, it's just, I don't miss them. Because, you know, I miss my other families, like my extended family, my grandmother, my uncles, my cousins. And especially my friends who I socialise with, so that's obviously those people that I miss so much. But as the year pass, they pass, and everything pass. Things change, things change in your life. I mean, you can't just expect something to continue on and on, every year, or every day. It has to change.

Elisa 21

Another example of agency is presented by Tomás. When discussing his arrival in Australia, he accentuates the complexities of learning the new language and adapting to Australian culture. Tomás arrived in Australia ten years ago, and, as the quote beneath illustrates, he experienced difficulties in relation to the intricate nature of Australian society. Trying to adjust, he remained open to new experiences presented by the Australian 'way of life', learning from his mistakes and gradually finding his place within the new society through daily interaction with the community.

The most difficult [part of living in Australia], I have to say, the culture. Because it's a mixed culture and it's so hard for you to adapt to the culture because I'm from that kind of culture that I've never been outside before in my life and suddenly you go "bang!" you're here and you see so much different culture and you don't know which one is to adapt, to follow. So it's so hard for you to decided it, which one is going to suit your lifestyle, which one is not, and

it's a lot of influence out there, so I guess you just gotta go and find out which is good for you and which not. Until now, I'm still like, "this one is, yeah", I mean I still got to try things, you gotta learn from your mistakes.

Tomás 28

Following Piaget's notion of cognitive structures and their development within particular sociocultural contexts, it becomes clear that the participants' cognition would be developed within both the East Timorese and the Australian contextual framework, and they would adapt a cultural logic enabling them to create meaning within both of the communities to which they now belong. Moreover, in light of the work of Erikson and Bucholtz, the arrival in exile at a young age enabled them to develop their psychosocial identity within the framework of the host country's values, beliefs and attributes.

However, the participants' agency within the Australian context and the subsequent adjustment to the new sociocultural structure does not necessarily initiate a rejection of the original culture. According to Gibson (2001), immigrant youth may employ an additive strategy of acculturation, whereby:

the acquisition of knowledge of and skills in the new culture and language are viewed as an additional set of tools to be incorporated into the child's cultural repertoire rather than as a rejection or replacement of old traits (Gibson 2001: 21).

This aids young immigrants in navigating across cultural borders, additionally enabling them to develop hybrid identities, and negotiate their belonging to different

cultural communities. The strategy of additive acculturation is similar to what Berry and Varvin define as integration or biculturalism (Berry 1990: 244-245, Varvin 2003: 202), through which the individual “gets to know the new culture (language, social skills etc) in the sense of developing a differentiated, however basically positive, relationship to the new culture while simultaneously retaining one’s cultural roots” (Varvin 2003: 202, my translation).⁶¹ Consideration of the young East Timorese asylum seekers’ acculturation into the Australian society reveals an additive strategy, reflecting sentiments of belonging to and identification with both the Australian community and the East Timorese community. Various examples of this will be forwarded throughout this chapter.

Language

Language appears as another principal element of the participants’ acculturation. Through increased fluency in the new language, their understanding of the new environment and the new culture was improved. The interviews suggest, in accordance with Hyman, Vu and Beiser (2000), that enhanced language proficiency would inaugurate social fields for interaction and, moreover, contribute to increased

⁶¹ Berry (1990) and Varvin (2003) sketch four main responses to cultural change: assimilation, withdrawal, marginalisation and integration or biculturalism. The focus of these responses is the individual’s relationship to the new and the old culture. These patterns of acculturation, which can convey a dynamic continuum, shift over time and according to circumstances (Wong 2000: 87). Assimilation implies an idealisation of the new culture at the expense of the original culture. Its antithesis, withdrawal, refers to the rejection of the new culture and preservation, or even exaggeration, of the original culture’s traditions and habits. Marginalisation, on the other hand, implies double negative responses in which the individuals’ relationship to both their original culture and the new culture is characterised by abandonment and rejection. Lastly, integration, denotes a double positive reaction, where the individuals are able to benefit and function within both cultural contexts, maintaining the most important parts of the old culture in combination with the best parts adopted from the new culture (Berry 1990: 244-246, Varvin 2003: 201-208, Wong 2000: 87).

self-confidence and security, positively affecting new friendships, performance at school, general interaction with the community, and feelings of belonging.

The participants' linguistic adjustment followed the pattern established by Gibson's additive strategy of acculturation. Hoffman (1989), a Polish academic living in an English-speaking country and writing about her own migration experience, suggests that living with and within two cultures is a movement from one linguistic dwelling to another, where the languages correspond with one another through "communicating", not identical, words and expressions. Living within two linguistic worlds can include a separation, where nuances within the languages represent different experiences of identity. Intimate identifying experiences might best be represented through the mother tongue, while experiences related to work and social relations can be expressed through an inferior language (Hoffman 1989, Varvin 2003: 202-203). Wise (2002) recognises the divisive nature of living within two languages for young East Timorese, yet emphasises a more practical quality of language acquisition. She argues that:

growing up in Australia has meant that young East Timorese are fluent and very comfortable in English, using it to communicate with friends outside the family. But this can mean for some, a feeling of living 'two lives', or being 'two people' at once; the modern, English speaking person in the outside world, and then making the huge transition to the Tetum or Hakka-speaking world at home. For many young people, this is very difficult. They feel that they are living in two worlds, split apart, and that their parents don't understand their lives (Wise 2002: 86).

The participants identify their lives within a complex linguistic reality. However, the difficulties described by Wise are not evident in their narratives, and the complexity is not a unique characteristic of their life in Australia. In East Timor, while speaking Indonesian at school, the majority spoke Hakka or Tetum at home. This could be further complicated by the use of other Indigenous Timorese languages or Portuguese. As Josef explains:

[The language] depends on the conversation. You know, happen [in] the family, our father would speak to us [in] Portuguese. When we speak Portuguese, Portuguese, Portuguese, when feeling tired, join Tetum. When Tetum, Tetum, Tetum, when lost a word, Portuguese again. And when we spoke to our family sometimes we spoke Portuguese or we mix Portuguese, Indonesian, Tetum... We mix every language.

Josef 30

This complex linguistic reality and the use of multiple languages are continued in Australia. Whereas the participants acknowledge their belonging to both an English speaking environment and a Hakka or Tetum speaking world, they do not reveal a major chasm between their linguistic worlds. At community events and other social settings in which I participated, the young East Timorese seemed to interact by means of both English and Timorese languages. The younger Timorese appear to socialise more across the ethnic boundaries of the diaspora than the older generations. As Hakka and Tetum are two vastly different languages, English would in these circumstances be their means of communication. Accordingly, English is a language not only associated with ‘the outside world’, but also a communal language

shared by the young East Timorese. In contrast to Wise's contention, it appears that the participants utilise their belonging to different linguistic scenes to create a positive integration; enabling them to move between the diverse cultural areas, simultaneously being influenced by, and acknowledging, both languages and both cultures.

School

School represents the last primary determinant of acculturation evident in the participants' accounts.⁶² The influence of school on one's adaptation to cultural change is closely related to that of language and age/ agency. Attending school might decrease frustration related to language difficulties and, in turn, improved language skills might reduce academic aggravation. Joana emphasises the importance of school in providing a facility for language acquisition. When I asked her what had been the most difficult part of living in Australia, she told me about the initial feelings of loneliness due to a lack of friends and no means of communication. However, as the quote below suggests, through school, and ensuing English proficiency, she dealt with these issues of loneliness:

Joana [It was difficult] because like, you have no friends. You have to make friends. Like you're so lonely. That's what makes you feel lonely.

HA How, how did you deal with that; feeling lonely?

⁶² This is, however, restricted to the participants who arrived in Australia at school age.

Joana Well, just think of go to school. Think I'll meet some friends I can play [with], and I just wanna go and learn English so that I can communicate with people. Which I did.

Joana 26

The importance of school as a place to meet people was also emphasised by the other participants. As Christina narrates, school represented a social field within which the young immigrants could actively participate and get to know the new culture. It provided the young asylum seekers with a stage in which they could meet people and overcome difficulties and loneliness:

...it was really difficult before I start school. So, when I start school everything changes, like, like when I just came everything just seemed so weird, like I don't wanna talk to nobody, I don't wanna know anybody, all I do is just lock myself in the room, like I don't wanna see nobody. But, and, yeah, everything changes when I start involving with school, making friends, you know, so it's pretty awesome.

Christina 18

The majority of the participants who attended school in Australia sketch a similar picture to Christina and Joana, where school represents a critical institution for support, and a place where they could meet people, both students and teachers. These people would be of vital importance to their resettlement and integration, and as Sebastião explains, the friendships established during their school years are still important:

Yeah, basically I still hang around with friends that I've met since I've actually gone to the school. I mean, I've met him [referring to his friend sitting in the background] since the day I've been at the school.

Sebastião 18

The importance of school is also portrayed in Amelia's story. Due to the uncertainties of her situation and her knowledge of asylum seekers' exclusion from universities, she lost motivation and interest in school. However, as the following statement illustrates, she did not leave school, as this would exclude her from participation in a social field of great importance to her everyday life:

Yeah, I still went to school and I just went to school because, you know, you've got friends there, and school is fun! Yeah, well that's, that's all it was to me. Like all your friends. Like what are you gonna do if you don't go to school?

Amelia 25

There is, however, one significant exception to the generally positive picture of school as a determinant of acculturation. Abelio, who arrived when he was 12 (ten years ago), recounts incidents of intimidation and exclusion. Due to language difficulties and lack of support from significant others, he experienced severe hardship at school, resulting in him leaving school in year 11. He felt different and found it hard to socialise with Australian kids, not knowing their games and language. Moreover, Abelio appears to be very shy, a personal trait that would most likely enhance the obstacles he needed to overcome. In the following quote he articulates some of the difficulties he faced:

... 'cause I'd given up school I got no, not much friend. Got more different people than my own sort of East Timorese, there's only a few [at his school], and the, you can't, you can't really sort of binding with some people. So it's a bit hard. And, yeah, you got some people, some Australian people, they like playing football and cricket, and then us [East Timorese] with soccer, but then there's, I can't really play soccer at the moment 'cause too young, too small, so I sort of bullied out, so sort of feel a bit bullied...and English is not really good, so I cannot really start conversation with other people as well, so all I did was hang around with one friend [East Timorese] the whole day, and then you know, the two of yous are different, so you sort of get picked on.

Abelio 22

Despite the difficulties, Abelio slowly learned the language and is today strongly integrated in the Australian community through his work, family and friends. This re-emphasises the importance of agency. In contrast to the other participants who arrived during school age, school did not represent a major determinant for his acculturation. Nevertheless, through his active participation within other social contexts of the community, such as work, he adjusted to the new environment and created his place within it.

NAVIGATING ACROSS DIVERGENT DISCURSIVE FIELDS

The previous section outlined the key determinants that enabled the participants' to conceptualise their new world and adjust to the new culture. However, this discussion did not provide insight into some of the cultural aspects influencing the

process of acculturation, namely the nature of the cultures that come into contact. In consideration of these cultural aspects, I employ the concept of ‘discourse’. The anthropological approach to discourse has been marked by a focus on communication and power, an approach predominantly shaped by the ideas of the French philosopher Michel Foucault (1972). According to Foucault, discourse is characterised by links between forms of power, language and knowledge, and it entrenches particular regulations, in terms of conditions and procedures, conventional ways of knowing the world, and networks initiated by power relations. It is simultaneously verbal and behavioural, collective and coercive, and it determines social life and exchange (Foucault 1972, Rapport & Overing 2000: 119-123).

Foucault contends that the individual is socialised through particular discursive constructions of the world. Discourse will, due to its habituating of the mind, form the individual’s perception and understanding of the world; habitus (Foucault 1972). In accordance with this, discourse may be perceived as a “shared way of apprehending the world” (Dryzek 1997: 8), a framework within which social action and understanding of the world are constructed (Askew 1999: 9). It guides practice, produces relations of power, and configures, classifies and normalises the social world, embracing particular combinations of narratives, concepts, ideologies and signifying practices (Barnes & Duncan 1992: 8).

The East Timorese young people’s acculturation illustrates a recreation of meaning within the new cultural discourse and an improved understanding and adjustment to the cultural logic of which perception within the Australian society is founded. This refers to the largely cultural aspect of acculturation, suggested by Marjorie Muecke (1987). She contends that:

the experience of the political refugee is profoundly cultural because it compels refugees as individuals and as collective victims/ survivors of massive chaos to resolve what Max Weber (1958 [1915]) identified as the problem of meaning, the need to affirm “the ultimate explicableness of experience” (Muecke 1987, cited in Daniel & Knudsen 1995: 2).

In this context, culture does not refer to something essential and fixed, but rather, as Daniel and Knudsen (1995: 2) suggest, “to a creative activity of symbol making and symbol sharing.” They define culture as “a logic that bridges the gap of understanding that exists between individuals or groups” (1995: 2). This logic can be compared to what I have called discourse, and experiences in exile can be perceived as consequences of a disparity between the discourses of ‘home’ and ‘exile’.

In order to understand the young East Timorese people’s acculturation it is important to consider the discursive realities within which they have been socialised. When describing their experiences of cultural difference between East Timor and Australia, the participants frame this within the contrasting discourses of collectivism and individualism; the former referring to the collective nature of social obligation characterising East Timorese society, and the latter to the primacy of the individual within Australian society. This distinction has been used by comparative academic disciplines, such as anthropology, sociology and cross-cultural psychology, as a means of comparison between largely non-Western societies and industrialised Western societies (Kim et al. 1994), and it can be traced back to the classical sociological separation between pre-modern and modern societies (e.g. Durkheim 1964 [1893], Tönnies 1955 [1887], Weber 1968). This section will explore the divergent discursive frameworks of individualism and collectivism, and it will

consider the impact of this discord on the participants' acculturative patterns, their identity and sense of belonging. However, prior to an exploration of the participants' words and experiences regarding this issue, I will explore the East Timorese social organisation and place individualism and collectivism within the academic tradition. An exploration of East Timorese social organisation will assist our understanding of the young East Timorese people's discursive background, which again will further our comprehension of their acculturative experiences. Moreover, an outline of the classical sociological distinction and its contemporary form of individualism and collectivism will assist our understanding of the discursive frameworks within which the participants have been socialised, accordingly promoting an enhanced understanding of their navigation across divergent discursive fields.

East Timorese Social Organisation

Kinship and church affiliations are the dominant principles of social organisation in East Timor, and they define the rhythms of communal life.⁶³ The children born during the Indonesian occupation were socialised into a society categorised by a strong association with the Catholic Church. Prior to 1975, the majority of the Timorese population practiced local ancestral and animist religions, and less than 30 per cent of the population subscribed to the Catholic faith introduced by the Portuguese (Gunn 1999: 37-40). During the Indonesian occupation this number increased rapidly, and today about 90 per cent of East Timor's population claim to be Catholic.⁶⁴

⁶³ For further information on aspects of East Timorese social organisation see: Forman (1976), Francillon (1967), Hicks (1976), and Traube (1986).

⁶⁴ See Chapter Three for further information on the spread of Catholicism.

In conjunction with the Church, the family, both 'nuclear' and 'extended', represents the primary focus for social connections. The East Timorese people have an extended understanding of the family, and uncles, aunts, cousins, and their in-laws' in-laws are regarded as close kin. The kinship system traditionally follows a predominant patrilineal lineage pattern, and individuals are affiliated at birth to descent groups (de Sousa 2001: 187). Social and political organisation was, historically, highly structured by kinship and locality, creating varying scales of inclusiveness from descent group to village to ethno-linguistic group to region (Carey 1995: 3, Traube 1995: 44). Still today, kinship is marked by a pattern of geographical location and language.

Central factors underpinning the socialisation of East Timorese children include the values of devotion and respect for the family and family allegiances. Intergenerational relations are characterised by formality and respect, and community values encourage children's subordination to their parents' wishes and decisions. Thatcher (1992: 88) argues that "Timor-born parents (like most parents) believe their children are their greatest wealth and they are usually willing to undergo severe hardship and make great sacrifice for them." In return for this sacrifice, children are expected to show unqualified devotion and obedience. They are expected to please their parents at all times, and it is paramount to sustain the family honour through model behaviour and conformity to the group. Children are reciprocally responsible for their parents' physical and emotional wellbeing. It is important to note that family allegiances and codes of conduct in intergenerational relations extend to the wider circle of relatives. Children must honour and respect their relatives as highly as their immediate family (Thatcher 1992: 84-97). These values of devotion, obedience and respect are reflected in the statements of young people interviewed for this study:

In East Timor, even you live with your parents, but you don't have that freedom. You don't have freedom like, you can't swear, you can't go out, you have to follow the rules that your parents maintain in the house. So, yeah. That's, they're the leader, so you have to follow.

Fatima 28

[In Timor] there's so many restrictions that, you have to think before [acting] what the society think of you...So they just kind of perspective you have in the community, so there's restrictions for yourself. When you're doing something you have to consider not to break these values. As well as for your own, the, you are judged in the community.

Emanuel 25

These two accounts embrace the experience of community restrictions and constraints on individual choice and practice; experiences articulated by all the participants. The values and codes of behaviour embedded within the Timorese society delineate these restrictions, which become naturalised through the individual's socialisation into this particular social organisation, as Emanuel explains:

...because of the way these things work, they don't, sometimes they have concern about, sometimes you do things without you realise that, oh this actually a kind of restriction. So it's actually, it's just doing what the community requires you.

Emanuel 25

Consequently, when living in East Timor, the participants did not have such a critical view of their sociocultural environment. The values, attitudes and practices of the community were part of their habitus, and remained unquestioned. However, in exile, they were faced with a radically different social context, encouraging them to question former realities.

Divergent Social Orders

East Timor's social organisation resembles characteristics described by the German scholar Tönnies (1955 [1887]) as *Gemeinschaft*-like attributes of social entities, norms and values. *Gemeinschaft* ("community") is part of Tönnies' conceptual dichotomy, and is countered by *Gesellschaft* ("society" or "association"). The concepts represent 'ideal types' and are used by Tönnies to explain the historic move towards capitalism (Loomis 1955: xii-xiv).⁶⁵ *Gemeinschaft* produces a relatively homogeneous, unified and traditional social order. It represents, according to Tönnies' evolutionary framework, the "youth" of society, and is dominated by kinship and moral bonds. By contrast, the social order of *Gesellschaft* is dominated by impersonal contractual relationships seen in urban industrial societies (Tönnies 1955 [1887]). Tönnies' theoretical assumptions correlate with the distinction between individualism and collectivism as societal organisational logics. What have been called "collectivistic societies" tend to reveal a greater focus on family and morality, with social relationship and practice resulting from necessity or authority. "Individualistic

⁶⁵ An 'ideal type' refers to an abstraction or exaggeration of certain concrete features. According to Weber (1949), not all features of an ideal type will be equally developed, and their presence within concrete situations will be disproportional.

societies”, on the other hand, expose a social order characterised by personal agreement or contractual authority.

This distinction is also reflected in the work of two of Tönnies’ contemporaries, Emile Durkheim (1964 [1893]) and Max Weber (1968). During the late eighteenth hundreds, industrialisation and capitalism created an environment in which various scholars devoted themselves to the conceptualisation of society and its development. In his thesis *The Division of Labour in Society*, Durkheim develops a distinction between “mechanical solidarity” and “organic solidarity”. “Mechanical solidarity” depends on the similarity of its members and is characterised by tight communal control and shared beliefs and values. Declining authority of traditional moral beliefs will, according to Durkheim, lead to “organic solidarity”; a social order distinguished by mutually independent and relatively autonomous individuals. It is produced by the division of labour and, in contrast to “mechanic solidarity”, it relies on individual difference and occupational specialisation (Durkheim 1964 [1893], Langer 1991). A similar differentiation between pre-modern and modern societies is found in Weber’s distinction between traditional and legal authority (Weber 1968). Traditional authority will be found in pre-modern societies and is based on a fixed and sacred set of norms. Legal authority on the other hand is found in modern societies. It is impersonal by nature and authority rests on office rather than person or tradition. Weber also introduces a third authority, charismatic, in which leaders can claim allegiance due to their personal characteristics.

These classic sociological conceptualisations of social types are useful for understanding the clashing worlds of East Timorese in exile. Although the majority of participants lived in Dili, East Timor’s commercial centre characterised by division of labour, specialisation and legal authority, they portray a picture of a social order

with resemblance to that of collectivistic societies. Within the framework of the above, this can be perceived as a consequence of Dili being a small town in an underdeveloped country where the impact of industrialisation remains limited. However, it can also be seen as an effect of the participants' socialisation into a discourse of collectivism. This discourse, which dominates the social organisation of East Timor, is distinguished by cultural values of respect, obedience, inclusion and togetherness, accentuated by the importance of the family and the church. Being socialised into this discourse, the participants have developed a habitus that exhibits traits of traditional moral beliefs regardless of the context they find themselves in.

Individualism and Collectivism

Geert Hofstede, Extramural Fellow at the Centre for Economic Research, University of Tilburg, argues in his book *Culture's Consequences* (1980: 11) that:

people carry "mental programs" which are developed in the family in early childhood and reinforced in schools and organizations, and that these mental programs contain a component of national culture. They are most clearly expressed in the different values that pre-dominate among people from different countries.

Through a comparative study based on survey data of respondents from 40 different countries, he found that four dimensions (large versus small power distance, strong versus weak uncertainty avoidance, individualism versus collectivism, and masculinity versus femininity) could explain differences between countries (Hofstede 1980, 1994:

x).⁶⁶ He proposes a perception of non-Western societies as communitarian in nature, emphasising the collective good, in opposition to Western societies stressing individualistic values. According to Hofstede (1991: 51), individualism “pertains to societies in which the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after himself or herself and his or her immediate family”, while collectivism, as its opposite, “pertains to societies in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive ingroups, which throughout people’s lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty” (Hofstede 1991: 51).

This understanding corresponds with the traditional anthropological treatment of culture as *sui genesis* and the relativistic view commonly employed (Ong 1999: 48). This image of culture and society as closed, integrated wholes, on which the perception of individualism and collectivism rests, has been strongly criticised over the last decade (e.g. Barth 1989: 120). The criticism has been founded in the emergent consideration of the world as transitory, deterritorialised, unfixed and processual (Malkki 1997b: 86), characterised by global networks of human relations, and the lack of a one-to-one relationship between place and cultural production (Hastrup & Olwig 1997). The perception of globalisation and transnational flows (Eriksen 2003), which is part of post-modern anthropological critique, entails this move from “two-dimensional Euclidian space with its centres and peripheries and sharp boundaries, to a multidimensional global space with unbounded, often discontinuous and interpenetrating sub-spaces” (Kearney 1995: 549). Consequently, the increased perception of culture and society as differentiated and dynamic creates uncertainty as to the feasibility of the distinction of collectivistic and individualistic societies.

⁶⁶ The survey was conducted twice, in 1968 and 1972.

However, the usefulness of Hofstede's distinction is tangible if it is perceived as one of many cultural influences creating cultural difference. Hofstede expresses reservations in relation to various academic disciplines' confined and isolated focus on particular dimensions, proclaiming that:

some cultural differences can be expected to relate to the I/C [individualism/communalism] dimension, some to one or more of the other dimensions, and some will probably be idiosyncratic to a given country or society and not relate to any known dimensions at all (Hofstede 1994: xiii).

Viewed as such, the distinction between individualism and collectivism can help explain the existence or the extinction of cultural differences within the contemporary world.

In his work, Hofstede upholds individualism and collectivism as sociological dimensions generating social fields of interaction within which children grow up and develop their personalities (Hofstede 1994: x). This can be paralleled with discursive theory and the perception of a collective framework within societies, to which children are socialised. Accordingly, socialisation into sociological dimensions of individualism or collectivism, that is individualistic or collectivistic discourses, will provide individuals with particular values, attitudes and standards of morality. The importance of these ideas in this thesis relates to the frequent articulation of the contrast between East Timor and Australia, expressed most clearly in the participants' ideas about freedom and communal obligations.

Experiencing Collectivism and Individualism

The contrasting experiences of collectivism and individualism are reflected in the participants' accentuation of freedom. When asked what they appreciate the most about their life in Australia and Australian culture, all the participants articulated an experience of freedom. The freedom they refer to is not solely freedom from political oppression; it also involves lack of community surveillance and opportunities to pursue individual aspirations and dreams.⁶⁷ For Tomás, freedom of speech in Australia is important:

I can see how lifestyle in Timor compared to Australia is so different 'cause here you've got more freedom, totally freedom speech, like whatever you want to say, you say, nobody can stop you. But back in my country [pre-independence] you cannot say what you think is right, what the government thinks is wrong, that's the problem there, but now here everything is open to you as long as you want to do it, then you put your mind into it, then you do it, whatever you want to do.

Tomás 28

Emanuel, by contrast, highlights freedom to live the lifestyle one desires:

[In Australia you] have freedom which is, you have, you can do whatever you want as long as it's not, it's not, as long as it's not, [as long as] you don't

⁶⁷ This focus on individual freedom is quite paradoxical, as the participants were experiencing constraints and limitations due to their legal status as asylum seekers. It emphasises the importance of perceiving their experiences within the context of their socialisation into the East Timorese discourse of communality.

destruct other people, as long as it's not against the law, as long as it is good for the community, so it's good in having here. That's I can go anywhere I want. I can do whatever I want. I can go to, lets say for example go for clubbing if I want. Like in Timor I have to, it is, have to day that, like lets say go for clubbing, there's so many restrictions that, you have to think before what the society think of you.

Emanuel 25

The appreciation of individual freedoms does not suggest that the participants rejected the ongoing struggle for freedom in East Timor. They had remained emotionally involved in the fight for the independence of Timor and they express a continued engagement in the situation in their now independent home country. However, as Esmeralda elucidates, this commitment is combined with a realisation and appreciation of individual freedoms as part of their life:

I know we had a fight for freedom that, for our country, but also [we need to fight for] the few freedoms for, you know, family and things like the small thing. Like [in East Timor] you do things because somebody force that, we need to be changed as well. The fight for freedom generally for our country, but we also have to, you know, in our family, in our own background, we have to learn how to teach or give each other, offer each other freedom of, you know, freedom and understanding of each other, that's the main thing.

Esmeralda 32

Esmeralda's words articulate a picture of inequality and constraint within Timorese families. She calls for increased equality between men and women, and between generations, stating:

...they [the East Timorese] don't really value woman's freedom so much.

Esmeralda 32

The participants' experiences and accentuation of freedom in Australia did not originate within a vacuum. Their appreciation of freedom is enhanced by their previous experiences in East Timor, and their parallel experiences within the Timorese community in exile. All the participants make strong comparisons between East Timorese and the Australian community life, accentuating the intense cultural relativism that by necessity informs their recognition, appreciation and rejection of particular cultural traits.

The participants perceive the experience of individual freedom in exile as part of an Australian egalitarian and individualistic ethos. Amelia expresses it as follows:

I think it's the freedom [that I appreciate the most]. You know, [the freedom] that you have. And the way this country is. They [the Australians] are open minded to some things that wouldn't be acceptable if you were in East Timor. Things like, 'cause you're a girl you can't go to pub with boys or you can't go nightclubbing, 'cause they'll think you're a bad girl. I don't know -- You kind of discover things. Like, oh, I can do this, you know. It's ok. And then, you

know, I guess, yeah, you know you're not relying on people and you're just, do whatever you want.

Amelia 25

Paradoxically, what the participants express as the greatest cultural difference between East Timor and Australia also constitutes a major part of their identification with the two communities. The paradox lies in the young Timorese people's continuous association with the Timorese discourse of communality, which they perceive to be directly opposed to the Australian discourse of individuality. Whilst appreciating the individual freedoms and the opportunities this entails, they still miss the Timorese sense of community and togetherness. Although the majority of the participants still remain strongly connected to their families and the Church, these communities become displaced by other opportunities. This can create feelings of nostalgia and images of a lost social world.

The complexity of their experience is evident when contrasting two quotes by Amelia. In the statement above, she articulates a positive view of the freedom in Australia. However, in the statement below, she denounces the absence of community in Australia, revealing her appreciation of the Timorese sense of community:

I don't think that there's much sense of community in Australia. Not like in Timor. In Timor everyone's house is open. Everyone is out in the street, your neighbours, everyone. You know all your neighbours. You walk on the street and there's always people, always all. You'll find out when you go to Timor. All the dogs, pigs, goats, they're all out on the street. Kids, lots and lots of kids. Just

people. I like that. That's what I don't like about Australia, like you walk in your neighbourhood and there's no one. All these houses and there's no one. And, I don't know I guess a little bit more, what do you call it, civilised countries become. Everyone cares more about going to work and, you know, doing their own things.

Amelia 25

These accounts illustrate the ambivalent position within which all the participants find themselves. They experience tension in relation to the discourse of communality and respect, which in East Timor constrained their actions, while simultaneously articulating a longing for the values of community and togetherness embedded in this particular form of social life. Concurrently, they express an attachment to the Australian discourse of individuality through their appreciation of the freedom and opportunities encompassed within this discourse. However, at the same time, they are deeply critical of the discourse of individualism, proclaiming stress and loneliness as some of its consequences. This ambivalence is evident in the following quote by Esmeralda:

I like the, one thing about Timorese culture is the togetherness, [the Timorese] work together...They are very together. They support each other no matter what. Like in here [in Australia] it's hard, we have a family, all the family here, but it's so different to the families over there...Like over there they know everything you ask. Who's where, who's not. It's so good. Being together. That's the one thing I like about them. Always together. In here probably because the lifestyle, the lifestyle may be, and everything is about time -- You do your own thing. It's

a bit lonely too...In here everybody busy with their life, working, no one [to] talk with -- My dad when he came [after the Santa Cruz massacre], he wanna go back. Everybody do their own things, going to work, and he was alone. I was [also like that] first when we came here...But there's some good things about the culture in here too, you know. You have more freedom to do your own things, and, there's good, so many good points about the culture, to live in this country.

Esmeralda 32

Moreover, when illustrating the difference between the two societies, Esmeralda refers to how the Church and the elders act as moral guardians in East Timor. Esmeralda is a devoted Catholic, and she strongly affirms the value of respect in Timorese culture. However, as evident in the following quote, she questions if age and piety necessarily should lead to authority, again portraying the tension between the values of the different social contexts:

...what is it, people [in Australia are] not really, like in the religion sense, it's not very conservative, they think positive, be like more like a human. But over there [in East Timor] they try the best to be hundred percent perfect, but sometimes [you are] only human. You can't push yourself too much...But here [in Australia] it's so easy going. Easy going and also, I know that in our culture the one thing with respect that is a good thing, but sometimes we, they [the Timorese] don't differentiate, like for example we respect the elder over there, very much over there, but one thing is that sometimes [it does not matter] whether they wrong or right, whether they wrong they [are] always right. But in here, no matter how old you are, how high your position is, everybody [is] equal.

That's the one thing I like. And then, [in Australia] we respect each other according to who's right. If you judge somebody, you, you don't judge because he's older than you or he's more, got more privilege in the world, that [in East Timor] if who ever got more privilege they got more respect, but in here everybody [is] equal. You focus on the right thing, not the, just the position or what's level, what level you are in.

Esmeralda 32

The tensions articulated by Esmeralda are evident in all the interviews. However, in some cases, the participants had reasons to emphatically affirm one set of values over the other. Fatima, aged 28, declares the freedoms within Australian society as predominantly negative, despite some positive personal experiences. She is the only parent in the participant group, and she feels as if the freedoms in Australia constrain her ability to achieve respect and to raise her son. Conversely, 26-year-old Maria treasures the freedom and privacy typified by the discourse of individualism. While appreciating aspects of the Timorese culture rarely expressed by the other participants, such as music, dancing and poetry, she has always felt strangled by the characteristics of social interaction in East Timor, and does not express similar feelings of loss of communal support as the other participants. In her own words:

[In East Timor] Everybody knows each other and I don't like everyone to know my business.

Maria 26

These views have developed from the young Timorese asylum seekers' socialisation into disparate discourses during childhood or early adolescence. As indicated previously, human beings are influenced by particular social and cultural norms throughout their lives. The community becomes the individual's anchor and point of reference. In the case of refugees, asylum seekers and displaced persons, a radical disjunction occurs in the conditions leading up to, during, and subsequent to flight from their home, removing them from the relatively stable foundations through which they create meaning and perceive the world (Varvin 2003: 89). However, through the acculturation process, the disparity between one's social surroundings and one's personal life-world might be overcome. As this section has shown, socialisation into the new discursive reality can create new frameworks within which social action and meaning can be reconstructed.

The participants in this study reveal a largely coherent picture of their acculturative process focusing upon aspects of age and agency, school, and language as assisting their acculturation. As exemplified through linguistic complexity and association with both collectivistic and individualistic values, they all illustrate an additive strategy of acculturation, negotiating their belonging to both the East Timorese and Australian community. Their socialisation into both East Timorese and Australian discourses at a young age has influenced their identity, and created a sense of belonging to both communities. Their perception and definition of self have evolved, and continue to develop, within the context of both Australian and East Timorese discursive realities, creating hybrid identities founded within complex patterns of self-ascription. This has, however, led to experiences of tension and ambivalence, which will be further explored in the following chapter.

**THE EROSION OF BORDERS
AND CROSSING OF BOUNDARIES
Negotiating Hybridity and Reconciling Ambiguity**

According to the British anthropologist Epstein (1978: 101), identity can be perceived as a concept of synthesis through which people attempt to integrate their various roles and statuses, as well as their diverse experiences, into a coherent self-image. This notion of identity as a synthesis is reflected in the young East Timorese asylum seekers' complex patterns of identification and belonging. Through their socialisation into both the East Timorese and the Australian community they have attained various roles and statuses, practices and experiences, and their identity is founded within their complex personal life-stories. However, within these divergent cultural discourses, some of their roles and statuses may be experienced as contradictory, creating conflicting images of self as well as new explorations of identity.

In his discussion about ethnic groups and boundaries, social anthropologist Fredrik Barth (1969: 29) argues that “[p]articularly where people change their identity, this creates ambiguity since ethnic membership is at once a question of source of origin as well as of current identity.” A sense of change due to their resettlement in Australia is rooted within the narratives of the young East Timorese people, and the subsequent ambiguity is evident in their negotiation between the East Timorese and Australian discourses to which they belong. The participants of the study engage in a dialectical process, through which they synthesise the opposing

cultural discourses of East Timor and Australia and negotiate ambiguous feelings of belonging. This chapter considers this process of synthesis through the concept of hybridity and hybrid identity, and analyses some of the difficulties facing the young East Timorese asylum seekers due to the hybrid nature of their identity. In order to understand both hybridity and ambiguity, I will outline some of the factors that generate and sustain identification with, and sense of belonging to, particular communities. The chapter examines the process of reconciling identity and sense of belonging, pursuing an understanding of the management of ambiguity and conflict through a perception of narrative, presentation of self and negotiation of boundaries. Lastly, the chapter will explore the impact of the realisation of independence in East Timor upon the participants' identity and sense of belonging.

HYBRIDITY

Through their socialisation into both East Timorese and Australian cultural discourses, the young East Timorese have developed feelings of belonging to both communities. As shown in the previous chapter, their acculturation led to a pattern of biculturalism through which they retained their cultural roots while simultaneously developing a positive relationship to the new culture. Through a strategy of additive acculturation, they developed a mosaic of icons of self-ascription, further leading to a hybrid identity.

The term 'hybridity' is elusive, maintaining a multitude of meanings across myriad fields of study. It is related to the words mixing, melding, merging and blending, and is commonly compared to the French 'bricolage'. In this thesis it is used to exemplify the consequence of the erosion of borders and cultural contact;

namely, the simultaneous existence of various attributes and icons within both material and non-material spheres.

Hybridity is often associated with globalisation and post-modernity. The concept, however, pre-dates modern times. It emerged as a word during the 1800s, and the study of hybridity was closely related to 18th and 19th century problematics, such as the study of biological and ‘racial’ differences. It was first introduced to the social sciences through anthropology of religion and the study of syncretism, and later continued through linguistics and the study of Creole languages and creolisation (Nederveen Pieterse 2001: 237). Today the concept of hybridity is used within a variety of areas ranging from biology to agriculture, economics to consumer behaviour. Within the social sciences we talk about phenomena such as cultural hybridity (e.g. Harvey 1996), structural and institutional hybridisation (e.g. de Ruijter 1996), and organisational hybridity (e.g. Oliver & Montgomery 2000).

The contemporary notion of hybridity dominating the social sciences is often associated with a world characterised by transnational flows and global relations. As sociologist Nederveen Pieterse (2001: 221) argues, “[n]ew hybrid forms are significant indicators of profound changes that are taking place as a consequence of mobility, migration and multiculturalism.” Hybridity has developed through layers of history, with each layer of history carrying its own distinct hybridity as a result of its prominent boundaries and structuring characteristics (Nederveen Pieterse 2001: 231). While the process of hybridisation is evident throughout human history, Nederveen Pieterse (2001: 222) argues that:

the pace of mixing accelerates and its scope widens in the wake of major structural changes, such as new technologies that enable new phases of

intercultural contact. Contemporary accelerated globalization is such a new phase.

Contemporary globalisation fuels the postmodernist discussion about hybridisation and hybrid identities. The increased transnational character of production, marketing and transactions, the global character of modern media, and individuals' increased cultural contact through migration, tourism and interpersonal relations expose human beings to the erosion of borders and crossing of boundaries, leading to what Nederveen Pieterse (2001: 223) calls "everyday hybridity". This hybridity is visible in identities, consumer behaviour and lifestyle; representing itself in so-called 'hybrid identities'. The concept 'hybrid identity' is often related to the postmodernist notion of a fractured self: where identity is perceived as developed through the negotiation of culture by intervention and interactivity, and is understood as fragmented, contextual and constantly reformulated (Leonard 1997: 120). In relation to post-modernism's notion of identity as processual, I perceive identity as being part of a continuous process of development. However, I believe there is a sense of constancy within its fluid nature. Despite the processual nature of identity, human beings are inclined to maintain a sense of self. If not, why would identity matter?

Hybrid identity does not necessarily imply a fractured sense of self. I employ the term as a descriptive tool reflecting the empirical existence of complex identities founded upon divergent patterns of identification. The concept of hybridity as used in this thesis can be clarified by looking at some of the literature on diaspora. Hall (1993) explains how displaced people, dislocated cultures and fractured communities are products of the diasporas appearing around the world. He explains how they are "obliged to inhabit at least two identities, to speak at least two cultural languages, to

negotiate and ‘translate’ between them” (Hall 1993: 362-363). He encapsulates the essence of hybridity when describing diasporas as communities that:

bear the traces of particular cultures, traditions, languages, systems of belief, texts and histories which have shaped them. But they are also obliged to come to terms with and make something new of the cultures they inhabit, without simply assimilating to them. They are not and will never be unified culturally in the old sense, because they are inevitably the products of several interlocking histories and cultures, belonging at the same time to several “homes” – thus to no particular home (Hall 1993: 362).⁶⁸

The term diaspora refers to the transnational relations between groups who share a commonality derived from their association to an original homeland (Anthias 1998). Post-modernism, represented by writers such as Hall (1990), Gilroy (1993), Clifford (1994) and Brah (1996), characterises diaspora as a social condition, separating itself from the view of diaspora as a homogeneous community. In accordance with this, Anthias (1998: 565) argues that diaspora arises from the “experience of being *from* one place and *of* another, and it is identified with the idea of particular sentiments toward the homeland, whilst being formed by those of the place of settlement.” It should be noted that hybridity is not an exceptional characteristic of diasporas or of other migrant relations. Hybridisation is part of all cultures, and manifests itself in identities, consumer behaviour and lifestyle. Migrants do, however, separate themselves from others. People living as migrants and exiles are placed in-between divergent, sometimes mutually exclusive, cultural discourses. Moreover, due to

⁶⁸ These quotations from Hall were located through a citation in Wise (2002).

experiences of dislocation, fear, loss and anxiety, hybridity and multiple belongings become acute. This may enhance feelings of being in-between, leading to tension and ambiguity.⁶⁹

Despite the potential consequences of conflict and ambiguity, hybridity is not in itself a negative phenomenon. As Nederveen Pieterse (2001: 220) suggests, “[h]ybridity is unremarkable and is noteworthy only from the point of view of boundaries that have been essentialized...The importance of hybridity is that it problematizes boundaries.” The potential conflict of hybridity may be seen as a consequence of crossing or overlapping boundaries, questioning pre-conditions of belonging and identification. Through engagement of particular cultural traits and selective aspects of identification, human beings develop a sense of belonging and identification with a particular community (Preis 1997: 97); that is, to “a social phenomena that unifies people in their ability to speak together even while being located in many positions and holding a variety of contrasting identities” (Liepins 2000: 27).

According to human geographer Ruth Liepins, community is a social construct, involving cultural, material and political dimensions. It has a discursive meaning created and sustained by people within a particular historical context, additionally adopting a social function through the forming of intentional groupings and the negotiation of contemporary society. People participate in the community through meanings, practices, spaces and structures. Feelings of shared identity and belonging are perceived through the imagination and practice of a communal set of understandings and relations, in spite of actual diversity and differentiation in perception and status (Liepins 2000: 28-32). However, through cultural contact and

⁶⁹ Indeed, hybridity has been described as “in-betweenness” (Nederveen Pieterse 2001: 238).

change, individuals may develop a sense of belonging to various communities. Shared values and common practice with differentiated communities may evolve, dissolving the borders of identification and differentiation, and leaving the individual in-between their communities of belonging; simultaneously inside and outside their boundaries of identification.

All the participants of this study exhibited and expressed signs of hybridisation, integrating their history as Timorese and their lives as Australians. Amelia is a striking example. When I first met her, I was astonished by her fashionable appearance, her broad Australian accent, and her upfront and direct way of being. She expressed an intimate association with the Australian lifestyle and mode of interaction, while simultaneously articulating a perception of herself as Timorese. During the discussion about visa situation and repatriation, I asked Amelia if she felt “more Australian than Timorese”, to which she answered:

Yeah, I guess so. But I, I mean I still, I still keep, I still speak Timorese, I eat Timorese food. I still follow some of those traditions. I, I do not wanna forget it. But you know, then I've quite or learnt all this Australian ways which can be a bit more problem in the family. Some of those things [that I have learnt] are not acceptable. Saying what you want. Like, for us [Timorese] you don't...when you're at home you just listen to what your parents, for example, you parents, you just listen to what they say and they kind of like always right, and that's it.

Amelia 25

This quote highlights a major issue related to the question of hybridity: the individuals' positioning in-between different cultural values, morals and codes of

conduct. The experience of living in-between two cultures is paralleled by experiences of loyalty and sense of belonging to both the homeland and the country of settlement. This dual sense of belonging creates a feeling of having several 'homes', as Esmeralda conveys:

*I know that Australia is my home now, and Timor, Australia second home,
Timor is, East Timor is like a mother to me and also my first home; of course,
I can't forget about that.*

Esmeralda 32

Esmeralda's two homes are created by her life within two dominating cultural traditions. Similar sentiments are described by the writer Maalouf (1999), who, when describing his personal experience of the fusion of identities and sentiments of belonging, contends that:

[a]fter I left Lebanon in 1976 to settle in France, many, with the most honest intentions, asked if I feel "most French" or "most Lebanese". I always answered: "Both!". Not because of a principle of equality or fairness, but because I would be lying if I answered differently. Given that I live on the edge of both countries, of one or two languages and of many cultural traditions, I become myself and not anybody else. This is what determines my identity (Maalouf 1999: 7, my translation).⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Amin Maalouf is a Lebanese author living in France. His literary work is characterised by the tension between different cultures and historical periods. *Identitet som Dreper* is a personal elaboration of the essence of identity (Maalouf 1999).

Like Maalouf, the participants live within and between two countries, numerous languages, and various cultural traditions, and their identity is determined by their socialisation into both of these communities. However, the experience of identifying with, while simultaneously differentiating themselves from, both communities generates feelings of ambiguity; they are simultaneously inside and outside their communities of belonging. The multitude of practices and engagements produces complex patterns of belonging, which, in turn, create the hybrid character of their identity. This may generate ambivalence with regards to preferences and engagement of cultural and social meanings, values and behaviour, as illustrated in the following dialogue between Tomás and myself:

Tomás *I still feel that I'm more like East Timorese because that's the way I brought up so you can't really separate me with what I really have, but I also feel like I'm half, half like –*

HA *A bit Australian?*

Tomás *Yeah. A little bit.*

HA *What is it that you feel...what is it that makes you East Timorese and what is it that makes you more Australian?*

Tomás *I think that, that's really hard [to answer], but I think East Timorese is like the way I do things or I always respect oldest people or...But the other thing that I don't like about East Timorese to practise thing that I think is not right. Because now I'm more influenced by western culture I think, okay, that's why I do that thing. I still think that at some*

point culture value, I think are more strong...But lifestyle, I'm more into Australian.

Tomás 28

The ambivalence becomes evident when comparing the above citation with a quote from earlier in the same interview. The two quotes illustrate how Tomás is placed within two cultural communities, and, moreover, how this creates discrepancy with regards to his identity. While he claims, in the above quote, to be “more like Timorese”, he identifies himself as Australian in the passage beneath:

I think I kind of get more settled down in this life now rather than go back there. Everything I do [is] here, like I've been here now six or seven years now, so I'm pretty much, like how can I say it, like Australian people, Aussie or whatever, yeah.

Tomás 28

These extracts lead us to an image of the simultaneous existence of two conflicting sentiments and desires. While Tomás and the other participants feel connected to and desire recognition of their belonging to the East Timorese community, they exhibit similar feelings and desires with regards to the Australian community.

The following comments by Mariana exemplify another aspect of ambiguity caused by the process of hybridisation. Whereas the above citations illustrate a sense of belonging to both the East Timorese and Australian community, the following accounts exemplify how the participants may feel as both insiders and outsiders to the same community. Mariana employs language as an explanation of her self-

perception as both an insider and an outsider to the Timorese community and Timorese identity. Mariana is of Chinese Timorese heritage. When living in East Timor she spoke both Hakka and Tetum. However, after arriving in Australia at the age of 12, she has not spoken Tetum and believes she can no longer speak it. While speaking Hakka makes her feel Timorese, lack of Tetum creates an alternative association and a feeling of being different from the Timorese:

Just speaking our language [Hakka] and everything, yeah, so yeah. Yeah, that's basically, just make you feel like Timorese, kind of Timorese and stuff, yeah. Yeah, you can say stuff that other people don't really understand at the time and stuff.

Mariana 22

I don't know, maybe because I feel kind of different now if I go back [to East Timor]. Yeah and everybody probably start speaking Tetum or something and then I can't say back, they probably think I'm a foreigner or something like that.

Mariana 22

In order to understand the feelings of ambiguity expressed by the participants, we must further explore the processes behind belonging and identity. Communities are simultaneously practical (set in actual social interaction and social exchange), contextual (determined by structures, environment, and time, space and place), and imaginative (based upon an imagination of shared meanings and beliefs). Accordingly, feelings of shared identity and belonging can be founded upon shared

practices, positioning within the same context, and the imagination of common values, beliefs and codes of conduct. As both geographically and contextually distant to the Timorese society, the young East Timorese people's identification with the community must be perceived in relation to their imaginative resources; that is, the factors which facilitate a sense of communality and belonging. This is further explored in the following section.

IMAGINED COMMUNALITY

The notion of 'imaginative resources' is derived from Benedict Anderson's (1983) concept of "imagined communities". In his thesis, Anderson examines what he calls the "imagined communities" of nationalism, tracing their historical origin and global spread. According to Anderson, despite the inability of people to confirm their shared identity and meaning, national communities continue to exist. Hence, he argues:

[a community] is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion (Anderson 1991: 6).

Imagination is in itself constitutive of practices, institutions and processes of inclusion and exclusion (Wise 2002: 28). It can therefore be argued that the East Timorese people's continued sense of belonging to the Timorese community and national identity is conditional on their ability to imagine themselves as part of this.

In order to understand the ambiguity articulated by the participants, it is therefore necessary to unpack the processes through which they imagine themselves as part of the Timorese community.

Many of the participants highlight cultural practices as factors determining their Timorese identity. These practices are defined as the consumption and implementation of cultural features such as language, food, music and dance. Even the passion for soccer is utilised by one of the participants in the recognition of his Timorese identity. I asked Amelia and Sebastião if they feel part of the East Timorese culture, to which they both replied yes, referring to cultural features such as those discussed above.

I eat Timorese food, cook Timorese food. I speak Timorese. Yeah. And I drink, I drink coffee, Timorese coffee. That makes me very Timorese (laughs).

Amelia 25

[I feel East Timorese because] Just like that, I still eat the food and things like that, and listen to the music, and, well, sometimes my mum do try to teach me a dance.

Sebastião 18

Perceiving this within Anderson's concept of imagined communities, the employment of cultural practices generates a sense of association with the Timorese community. Combined with the individual's memories of community life in East Timor, such practices envisage a notion of shared actions and experiences. This imagining of unity produces an experience of belonging to the Timorese community.

This sense of belonging is further underpinned by a sentiment of shared values and standards of morality. These are values such as communality, respect, sharing, appreciation and honesty. Amelia articulated a strong appreciation of the East Timorese culture, explaining it as follows:

...[in East Timor] the people are friendly. Like when you see someone you don't think anything bad about them, that's Timorese. They'll just accept anyone in their home. That's, and, give them food, [access to] the house, and it's ok. It depends on, I like the [Timorese] culture, this warmth about the culture. People are open and, I don't know, I just feel like, as a person, I'm not, well I try not to be too judgemental, and maybe being Timorese background person make me that.

Amelia 25

Timorese values and morality are often emphasised in relation to religion. When portraying the Timorese community, all the participants accentuate the strong relationship between the Timorese people and the Church. All but one describe themselves as Catholics, and personal faith is portrayed as a characteristic of what it is to be Timorese. Sebastião explains:

Basically, East Timorese people are really religious. Most of them are Catholic and things like that, and they sort of carry that sort of commitment here [in Australia] as well. Especially, like my parents will also, like the family will be in Church every Sunday...I'm religious as well...[I'm] Catholic, yeah. And,

basically, we're as close to the Church community and the Church the same as we were in East Timor.

Sebastião 18

Sentiments of shared values and standards of morality with the Timorese community as a whole, regardless of actuality, will allow the imagining of a shared perception through which practice is arbitrated and meaning evolves.

Both the imagining of a common practice and of mutual values and morality transpire from the idea of a fellowship founded upon place of birth, early childhood socialisation and cultural heritage. This appears as a fundamental imaginative resource, representing the participants' explanation of their enduring association with Timorese values and cultural practice, and their continued sense of belonging to the Timorese community. As obvious as it might seem, this focus on birthplace and childhood environment has to be acknowledged. It illustrates the argument that primary socialisation has a formative influence on individual habitus, further demonstrating the perception of habitus as determining practice and cognitive models of knowledge. As Amelia explains, being born and growing up in East Timor creates memories to which she still relates. These memories, some of them unambiguous and refined, others vague and undistinguished, are the mirror of their socialisation, creating their habituated cognition and practice.

Well, [I am Timorese because] I was born there. I have memories, you know, there. Growing up there.

Amelia 25

Fatima corroborates Amelia's perception of belonging to the Timorese community as a birthright. The quote beneath reflects the idea of having Timorese blood. This notion of 'shared blood' distinguishes her as part of an original, unified and ascribed community to which she holds particular entitlements and obligations. Throughout the interview, she uses the term 'we' when talking about the East Timorese people and culture, reflecting an image of communion. When I asked her if she still feels part of the East Timorese culture, she replied; "Oh, yes. 100% Timorese", and continued:

What makes me Timorese, because, because I am Timorese. I, I [was] born there and my blood is like Timorese. In, because not, not being ra-- I don't want to be like racist, I don't want to say that you white and I'm black or whatever, no, but because I'm from that [place] and God put that I was born there, so I, I'm very happy to be East Timorese. Even though it is a poor country. No matter how bad it is, but I, I am proud.

Fatima 28

Fatima articulates great pride in and appreciation of her Timorese background. These sentiments were evident in most of the interviews. Josef puts it as follows:

...[as] individual people we are different, but we are Timorese. I'm happy [to be] born like Timorese, and I'm happy, and I wanna die like a Timorese.

Josef 30

Like Fatima, Josef articulates an understanding of a unified and delimited community founded on an elemental quality. However, contrary to the perception of ‘shared blood’, Josef perceives his communion with the Timorese nation through his commitment to his ancestors, the Timorese people and the land. He correlates the existence of the Timorese culture with the identification of heritage, and believes that the people are given their identity from their ancestors. In his words:

What makes me Timorese because I believe, I worship my ancestor and I worship my people, and I worship my land wherever I go. I always, I'm Timorese... We don't wanna lose [the knowledge] about our ancestor. If we lose our culture it means we lose our ancestor, we lose our identity. Because that's the original, where we come from. The culture can identify us. The culture can show to the people this is us, East Timorese. If we didn't use our culture, we can't describe what we are [as] Timorese.

Josef 30

Accordingly, by means of these imaginative resources, the participants imagine the East Timorese community and their place within it. As they were born and raised within the boundaries of the Timorese community they received a particular cultural heritage of entitlements, commitments, practices, values and standards of morality. The imagining of a shared legacy generates a differentiation between *them* and *us*. It represents something they have in common with all Timorese; however, it remains imagined, as the actuality of such a unity will never be confirmed.

This raises an important question: which processes give rise to the young East Timorese people's continued imagining of communality with the East Timorese

people? Anderson argues that the convergence of capitalism and spread of technologies of print production created, through their subsequent unified fields of exchange and communication, the possibility for imagined national communities (Anderson 1991: 44-46). He has argued elsewhere (Anderson 1993), in relation to East Timorese nationalism, that the Catholic communality pervading the Timorese community substitutes the kind of nationalism that comes from print-capitalism (Anderson 1993: 27). The Catholic Church represents an institution of unity and routine, enabling its members to imagine their simultaneous and similar experiences. Moreover, the Timorese Church acquires nationalising power through its choice of Tetum as its official language. It obtains similar characteristics to those of the print-language, which provides a foundation for a national conscience through creating integrated fields of communication, fixity to language, and languages of power (Anderson 1991: 22-46, 1993: 27).

Seen within this context, the young East Timorese asylum seekers' 'long-distance nationalism' is produced by a combination of the Catholic communality and capitalist print production (including its contemporary forms of internet, phone, and the global media). Following the transnational flows of information and artefacts, as well as growing global communication networks, the young East Timorese receive continued news upon which their imagining of shared practices, values and heritage can be founded. In the words of Leonard (1997: 120):

people can be dispersed but not alienated from their homes, and space and the "otherness" of the host society can be bridged by a continuing connection with and sense of one's own society.

The flow of information through books, letters, pictures, media-reports, articles, phone calls, Internet resources, and people's personal stories, generates a mirror which reflects the participants' personal experiences and memories, additionally developing and reinforcing their imagining of the community and their place within it.

Furthermore, the young East Timorese asylum seekers' imagining of communality develops within the comparative context of everyday Australian life. Living in exile enables them to perceive the Timorese culture and community from a distance, producing a process through which cultural practices and value orientations are distinguished by means of their Australian contrasts.

In the same way as they imagine themselves as part of the Timorese community, they perceive a fellowship with the Australian community through their practices, values and morality. Moreover, while the participants exhibit a sense of belonging to the Timorese community based on the principles of birthplace and shared heritage, the majority of them, particularly those who arrived at an early age, simultaneously articulate an analogous idea of a fundamental attachment to the Australian society based on socialisation in childhood and early adolescence. Amelia, who arrived at the age of 15, explains:

You...turned eighteen in Australia and spent your formative years in Australia. Like your important years. Like, things like how you, what, like, what makes you what you are today. That, you know, you, you're more Australian than you are Timorese.

Amelia 25

This was further emphasised by Joana, who arrived when she was 16. At the start of the interview I asked her if she could tell me something about her day-to-day life in Australia, to which she replied:

How it is now. Like, I'm more, like I feel like I'm part of Australian community. 'Cause like I develop, like [I spent] my teenagers here, so I learn a lot in Australia and being part of it.

Joana 26

It should be acknowledged that the participants of this study develop their identity not only in relation to their belonging to East Timor and Australia. The prominence of these aspects must be understood within the context of the interviews and in relation to the questions asked. My interests in the participants' social and cultural background, and my questions about their affiliation with particular cultural signs, values and practices, as well as their experiences of cultural difference, influenced their narratives. Nevertheless, I choose to pursue this particular analytical focus, as the participants' Australian and East Timorese socialisation represents a pivotal factor in the development of their habitus. Moreover, as seen in Chapter Five, through the discourses of individualism and collectivism, the two communities represent a major influence on the participants' practice and meaning making. They represent particular values, practices and morals through which the participants develop a perception of self and an understanding of the world and their place within it.

NEGOTIATING HYBRIDITY

Hybridity and ambiguity evolve from the East Timorese young people's imagining of themselves as members of both the East Timorese and the Australian communities. They feel a sense of belonging to both communities and obtain values, morals and practices embedded in both Australian and East Timorese discourses. Through their interaction within the social world, a dialectic relationship between self and other, individual and context, emerges. The individuals' perception of self develops within the context of their interpersonal relationships and sociocultural surroundings. Consideration of negotiation of hybridity and ambiguity necessitates an understanding of this dialectic relationship between self and others.

According to a dialectical perception of relations forwarded by Norwegian psychotherapist Anne-Lise Schibbye (2002), an understanding of individuals necessitates, due to the interactional character of socialisation, a focus on associations and relations. This enables an analysis of the individual as both a subject and an object of action, united in a reciprocal process, and gives rise to a focus upon the complexities within social relations. Schibbye's perspective encapsulates the versatile character of social interaction through a cognitive strategy centred on *both-and*, rather than *either-or*, and, therefore, recognises the mutuality of social interaction (Schibbye 2002).

This dialectic perception of relations may enhance understanding of how the young East Timorese negotiate hybrid identities and ambiguous feelings of belonging. It highlights the contextual character of identity presentation and provides an understanding of the concurrent existence of belonging to what might be perceived as contrasting discourses. When theorising the empirical material, two

strategies, both of which mirror the dialectic relationship between the individuals and their social surroundings, appear significant in the participants' negotiation of hybridity and ambiguity: the presentation of self through narrative practice and the negotiation of boundaries.

Narrative Practice and the Presentation of Self

Narratives are, according to Bruner (1997: 141), the articulation of human experience. They are connected to our understanding of the world, creating meaning, order and coherence through the organisation of experience according to the past, the present and the future. The present gains meaning in terms of the experienced past and anticipated future, rendering narration a meaning-making activity (Bruner 1986: 142, Bruner 1990, 1997, Rapport & Overing 2000: 283-285). Kerby (1991: 3ff.) states that, "in and through various forms of narrative employment...our lives...our very selves...attain meaning." Accordingly, narrative and self are intimately linked. As Ochs and Capps (1996: 19) argue, "[n]arrative and self are inseparable in that narrative is simultaneously born out of experience and gives shape to experience." Through narratives, the self takes hold of experiences, navigates social relationships, and develops a perception of ego (Ochs & Capps 1996: 20).

Narrative practice is an example of the dialectic process of social relations. Narratives are located within a specific time and place, and will employ particular characteristics in accordance with their context. What you reveal and how you convey the narrative will change according to person, time and place (Knudsen 1990). The process of narration can be compared with Healey's (1997) perception of the social construction of knowledge. She suggests that knowledge does not merely

have objective existence, and that “seeing and knowing the world, and ways of acting in it, are understood as constituted in social relations with others, and through these relations, are embedded in particular social contexts” (Healey 1997: 55-56). Similarly, narratives are not objective universal truths. Ochs and Capps (1996: 22) contend that:

[e]very telling provides narrators and listener/readers with an opportunity for fragmented self-understanding. Each telling of a narrative situated in time and space engages only facets of a narrator’s or listener/reader’s selfhood in that it evokes only certain memories, concerns, and expectations.

Hence, the relations dominating the interaction, and the individual’s awareness of self and of significant others, produce the premise for narration.

Narrative theory inaugurates individual agency, whether or not this is limited to meaning-making in terms of pre-existing and prescriptive categories, or extends to the recognition of “the uniqueness of individual experience, the complexities of subjectivity and the rich subtleties of the relationship between form and meaning” (Rapport & Overing 2000: 288). Narratives constitute a forum of self-presentation.⁷¹

As Weeks (1990: 89) contends, “[b]y saying who we are, we are also striving to

⁷¹ The notion of the presentation of self through narrative practice can be compared with Goffman’s (1959) theory of “the presentation of self in everyday life”. Like narrative theory, he acknowledges the dialectic character of individual’s presentation of self; we create ourselves through relations towards others. He argues that we, through impression management, over-communicate and under-communicate status and information about ourselves. In social interaction, individuals will show a selection of information about self, regardless of their multitude of capacities, ideas, interests and wishes. What you present and how you present it is determined by the definition of the situation. Situational definition is a process of negotiation about what one should consider relevant. This negotiation and renegotiation is the process of defining the context in which practice is situated and where presentation of self finds place. Drama, self-representation and manipulation of impressions are not just surface phenomena, but also basic features that create the society. Goffman’s theory seeks to demonstrate how social life presents itself and how to understand it. His thesis illustrates the constant construction and reconstruction of identity and relations, and, subsequently, how social life and social worlds are continuously evolving.

express what we are, what we believe and what we desire.” Furthermore, he suggests that “[t]he problem is that these beliefs, needs and desires are often patently in conflict, not only between different communities but within the individuals themselves” (Weeks 1990: 89).

Weeks’ assertion underpins the difficulties facing the young East Timorese asylum seekers. Through their socialisation into the East Timorese and the Australian community, their beliefs, needs and desires rest on various narratives, developed through their experiences within the particular societies. The recollection of the past provides a crucial terrain for their representation of themselves, both to themselves and to significant others (Ganguly 1992). The conflict described by Weeks appears as their experiences of the past, their present life, and the anticipated future are founded within different historical narratives and cultural discourses, subsequently producing ambivalent experiences of belonging and identity. Whereas the narratives of the past are located within the discourse of communality and national obligation, the narratives of the future reveal a focus on individual aspirations, supported by the Australian discourse of individuality and freedom. Consequently, the narrative of the present is drawn between these differentiated positions, producing a personal narrative that may lack consistency and generate ambiguity.

Narrative theory not only reveals reasons for the articulation of ambiguity. It also represents a way of analysing how the participants may develop a sense of self that allows the simultaneous existence of belonging to both East Timor and Australia. This refers to the strategic presentation of self. Despite its connotations, the term ‘strategy’ does not necessarily involve a conscious act. However, it should be perceived as a process through which the participants create and negotiate

meaning when positioned between disparate maps of perception. This can be seen in the adoption of various narrative strategies by the young Timorese.

The participants of this study exhibit different narrative strategies. Some, such as Sebastião and Abelio, escape the dilemma of ambiguity by proclaiming a poor memory of their life in East Timor, regardless of the telling of stories that reflect aspects of their background. Sebastião said:

...I can't remember too much [about my life in East Timor], I don't think I remember anything from my background, so yeah.

Sebastião 18

Saying that they have a poor memory does not imply a rejection of their Timorese heritage. Both identify and imagine themselves as Timorese. However, declaring a poor memory may be a way to avoid being trapped within the conflict between past experiences and future aspirations.

Others, such as Josef, employ a strategy of self-representation which divides their 'inner' and 'outer' selves. Josef creates meaning within the conflict of ambiguous desires and beliefs by portraying himself as both East Timorese and Australian. However, his two identities are not represented as an amalgamation, but rather as two mutually exclusive parts of himself. He explains it as follows:

I feel everything has changed [after I came to Australia], but I [will] still be most strong about my culture. And it changes because you meet the people, changes because the society, changes because the lifestyle, changes because your societies and your education and your living. Of course everything change. But

*your spirit never change...The culture on the outside you can see, oh I'm
Australian, but inside I'm still Timorese.*

Josef 30

Although this dual sense of self implies a conflict in itself, it would appear that Josef's narrative strategy enables him to move between the two discursive terrains and negotiate between his conflicting desires. His narrative as both Australian and East Timorese gives meaning to his experiences. When classified as East Timorese, by himself or by others, he refers to his narrative as Timorese. Similarly, when identified as Australian, he refers to his narrative as Australian. Consequently, through the representation of self, he negotiates his conflicting sense of belonging.

Amelia employs yet another strategy through linguistic practice, portraying an image of herself as being outside the Timorese community. This notion of being an outsider evolves despite her identification with Timorese practices and, to some extent, Timorese values. When referring to East Timor, East Timorese culture and East Timorese people she generally uses the terms 'it', 'their culture', and 'them'. This differs from the majority of the participants who refer to their home country, its culture, and its people as 'my country', 'our culture' and 'us'. Such linguistic practice can create 'distance', facilitating a unified narrative, additionally avoiding the conflict of ambiguity. Again, it must be emphasised that narrative strategies of self-representation are not a rejection of Timorese or Australian identity; but rather a strategy of creating meaning when positioned between differentiated cultural discourses and historical narratives.

Negotiating Boundaries

As with narrative practice, the dialectics of relations influence individuals' negotiation of boundaries. A dialectic process exists between the various contexts within which identity appears, and between self-awareness and external classification of the self. 'Identity' appears when interaction makes cultural difference significant. This stance is strongly inspired by Barth and his theory of the process of identity as it is presented in the introduction to the highly influential book *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* (Barth 1969). Barth criticises the predisposition of social scientists at that time to define ethnicity as a static, virtually biologically given element of personal identity, or as particular cultural characteristics or rules. In contrast, he suggests an alternative focus on the socially effective means through which imagining of ethnic groups and boundaries are produced and sustained. Classical anthropological reasoning portrayed cultural variation as discontinuous, depending on social and geographical isolation. However, as Barth (1969: 9-10) argues:

it is clear that boundaries persist despite a flow of personnel across them.

In other words, categorical ethnic distinctions do not depend on an absence of mobility, contact and information, but do entail social processes of exclusion and incorporation whereby discrete categories are maintained *despite* changing participation and membership in the course of individual life histories.

Moreover, "stable, persisting, and often vitally important social relations are maintained across such boundaries, and are frequently based precisely on the

dichotomized ethnic statuses” (Barth 1969: 10). Rather than being a product of cultural traits, ethnic identity is, according to Barth, a product of the negotiation of boundaries. He proposes an image of interethnic relations characterised by dynamic qualities, which are subject to negotiation and contextually restricted choice. “Ethnicity” is not a trait of a person or a group; conversely, it is an aspect of a relation. Ethnic groups are ideologically and socially constituted through the actors of the community, the members of the group and a differentiated ethnic group acknowledged as culturally distinct, and through the identified practical consequences of cultural difference (Barth 1969).

Barth transformed the study of cultures and cultural difference into a study of interaction, arguing that social forms are developed by inter-personal transactions (Barth 1966). In his later work, Barth (1989) modified his image of ethnicity to some degree, emphasising the importance of history, accordingly acknowledging the unintended consequences of action. His focus on boundaries and the active participation and purposive decision-making of social agents has, however, remained largely unchanged. It is mirrored in contemporary social theory, and his approach is principally representative of the way anthropology and the social sciences have developed. A number of contemporary writers such as Hagendoorn (1993), Benhabib (2002), Kapferer (1988) and Bisharat (1997) propose related ideas portraying culture and identity as shifting, provisional, developed, sustained and transformed through contextually determined processes. As Benhabib (2002: 8) contends, “[w]e should view human cultures as constant creations, re-creations, and negotiations of imaginary boundaries between “we” and “other(s)”.”

Although contemporary anthropology is dominated by a transactional and processual understanding of phenomena such as ethnicity, culture and social

organisation reflected within Barth's work, his thesis has not gone unchallenged.

Social anthropologist Anthony Cohen (1994: 120) argues that:

[Barth's] view must be unsatisfactory, since it rests on the assumption that ethnicity is simply generalised to the members of a group, and is not implicated in their self-perceptions other than as bearers of a given ethnic identity. In treating ethnicity only as a tactical posture, it ignored both self-consciousness and the symbolic expression of ethnic identity.

Cohen suggests that self-consciousness and symbolic forms of ethnicity should be attended to in the consideration of ethnic identity. This will facilitate an enhanced understanding of individuals' continual reconstruction of ethnicity and its distinctive characters, differentiated from the apparently monolithic or generalised quality of ethnicity on the collective level (Cohen 1994: 120). Regardless of his criticism, Cohen retains a notion of the transactional nature of ethnicity and the importance of borders, arguing that:

the concept of boundary must be regarded as central to anthropology, precisely because it addresses the essence of our task: to extend our own limited consciousness in order to comprehend another's...The terms 'frontier' and 'border' (and boundary, if it is not distinguished from them) alert us to lines which mark the extent of contiguous societies, or to meeting points between supposedly discrete social groups (Cohen 1994: 125).

Cohen's view can be compared to Jenkins' (1994) who, through his reconsideration of ethnicity in relation to categorisation and power, considers the importance of internal and external definitions of self (see Chapter Four), embracing issues of self-consciousness and the dialectics of classification within Barth's framework of the social organisation of cultural difference.

Whereas Barth explores ethnicity and ethnic groups, I will argue that his perception of the development and negotiation of ethnic identity can be incorporated into a discussion about personal identity. Identification with an ethnic group is just one of the modes of belonging that constitute individual identity. The social processes of exclusion and incorporation are found within all identification, whether this is association based on ethnicity, nationality, gender, class, age or other characteristics. Moreover, the phenomena of exclusion and incorporation are located on both individual and communal levels. As Kapferer (1988: 114) explains:

[t]he bounds of identity are defined in relations of contrast or opposition...Identity as an associating principle, therefore, is highly situational; that is, the significance of identity as a principle of association is relevant or irrelevant in social situations according to the presence of other contrasting identities.

Through an understanding of identity as processual, situational, and relational, we can further elaborate our understanding of the young East Timorese asylum seekers' negotiation of identity and ambiguity. Firstly, perceiving identity as processual yields an understanding of the development and transformation of identity. This has already been discussed in relation to socialisation and acculturation in Chapter Five,

and I have argued previously that identity will continuously change throughout the individuals' lifespan following their socialisation and practice within particular sociocultural structures. However, when analysing identity as a continuing production within the framework of Barth's theoretical assumptions, our attention is drawn to an additional order of change; namely, the contextual quality of identity presentation. This quality emerges through the relational and situational characteristics of identity, and emphasises the individual's agency. As argued in relation to narratives and personal representation, individuals will, through their various practices, define themselves and present themselves in relation to significant others. Who these significant others are will change according to the situation within which the interaction takes place.

Given the transactional nature of interaction, there ought to be a disparity within the participants' narratives according to the social situation they find themselves in. Indeed, a pattern of negotiating and transforming boundaries of identification appears throughout the interviews for this study. It can be illustrated by comparing the participants' elaboration about their lives in East Timor and Australia.

When talking about their life in East Timor, the participants of the study portray a notion of communality with other East Timorese, thereby identifying with their particular sociocultural background. They confirm their identity and their belonging to the Timorese community through an identification of what they have in common with other East Timorese and, accordingly, what separates them from others. However, when discussing their lives in Australia, the boundary of identification is moved. Their presentation of self is now founded upon a sense of cultural communality between them and other Australians and a feeling of differentiation from those who do not belong to this community.

When talking about their every-day life in Australia, most of the participants, such as Sebastião quoted beneath, portray a picture of themselves as ‘normal’ Australians:

Basically, I'm just sort of living a normal Australian, ordinary teenage life, sort of thing.

Sebastião 18

Describing their everyday life, they highlight perceived ‘normal’ practices that they share with so-called ‘ordinary’ Australians. These practices are most commonly related to school, work, shopping, sports and entertainment. Both the individualistic ethos and the opportunities which it affords distinguish the participants’ lives in Australia from those in East Timor. Their experience of belonging and the boundary of differentiation are defined in accordance with cultural and social characteristics achieved through their socialisation into this particular context. This identification does, however, entail a paradox, as the young East Timorese retain experiences, such as those of war, dislocation and resettlement, which separate them from those whom they identify with. These experiences not only imply different life-stories, they also lead to different social and cultural practices. Still, a sense of belonging follows a notion of communality, of sharing something with other Australians that separates them from others, thus enabling their identification as ‘normal’ Australians.

I have previously argued, in accordance with Maalouf (1999), that through our multiple belongings we become who we are. A complex configuration of belongings, developed through socialisation and practice within particular sociocultural structures, constitutes our identity. According to Maalouf (1999: 26), we

will identify with the one of our multiple belongings we feel is most threatened. This is manifested in the participants' negotiation of boundaries in relation to their visa situation. When confronted with the threat of deportation, the boundaries of the participants' identity were delimited to their Australian belonging in their interaction with DIMIA. At the time of the interviews, the participants were still waiting for the Minister's decision on the question of their return or had just recently received permanent residency, and the fear of repatriation may have led to an under-communication of their Timorese connection and a focus on their belonging to the Australian community. However, in light of Barth, it becomes apparent that such a presentation of self does not necessarily involve a rejection of their Timorese identity. Conversely, this part of their identity is sustained through other relations and processes of social interaction, such as those within the diaspora or with family still living in East Timor. This could be observed at various community events and parties, as well as in parts of the participants' narratives, where they, through their involvement, demonstrate pride in their heritage and belonging to the Timorese community. Through community events and interaction with family and friends, they sustain an awareness of their national heritage and create boundaries that place them within the ethnic community of East Timorese.

THE REALISATION OF INDEPENDENCE

Wise (2002: vii) posits that the 1999 referendum and the formal independence of East Timor in May 2002:

created enormous upheaval and confusion amongst the East Timorese refugee diaspora living in Australia. With so much invested in pursuing East Timor's independence and many identifying so strongly as 'exiles', the 'return of the homeland' challenges the very basis on which many have 'imagined' themselves since fleeing to Australia.

She argues that there has been a change in the perception of 'home', moving from the reified nostalgic version of 'home' surrounding the desire for return, to an understanding of 'home' within "the phenomenological realm of translocalised relationships and exchanges centred on the everyday" (Wise 2002: 239). Using Appadurai's (1995) term "translocality", she suggests a perception of home as "translocal".⁷² The East Timorese created an extended space of belonging, locating home "at the intersection of" various symbols and material spaces. Wise says that:

locality for East Timorese returnees and those who remain in Australia is produced in the imagination of a neighbourhood by way of a set of social

⁷² In his book *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalisation* (1996), Appadurai suggests a theory of the production of locality. He suggests an understanding of locality as primarily relational and contextual as opposed to scalar or spatial. Locality is, according to Appadurai, "a complex phenomenological quality, constituted by a series of links between the sense of social immediacy, the technologies of interactivity, and the relativity of context" (Appadurai 1996: 178). The concept of 'translocal' refers to the processes of actual everyday relations. It is separated from the notion of 'transnational', which refers to relations at the more abstract level of ideas and imagination.

interactions that connect both Australia and East Timor in very direct and practical ways (Wise 2002: 238).

By living “translocal lives”, Timorese individuals and families who have attached their lives to both East Timor and Australia, create a connection to both countries, additionally negotiating fundamental difficulties of belonging (Wise 2002: 246).⁷³

According to Wise, the group of asylum seekers arriving in the 1990s would, due to their insecure financial and residential status, have little hope for return visits, additionally excluding them from the cosmopolitan zone of the translocal (Wise 2002: 267). Wise’s conclusion must, however, be understood in light of the situation of the asylum seekers during the time of her research, when their fight for the right to stay was at its peak and deportation appeared inevitable. Moreover, it should be noted that her focus is on the whole diaspora, not only the group of asylum seekers who arrived during the 1990s. This group would, in contrast to the participants of this study, be able to keep a stake in both places due to their more stable and secure circumstances and often greater financial security.

Some of the difficulties facing the young asylum seekers after the independence of East Timor appear to be connected to their immobility, and subsequent exclusion from the translocal space. When discussing her visa situation, Esmeralda articulates an immense wish for permanent residency. Paradoxically, as the quote beneath illustrates, the urgency embedded within her wish for residency is largely spawned by her need and desire to return home:

⁷³ The majority of the returnees were generally the more empowered individuals of the diaspora. The majority are educated and financially established in Australia, hence enabling their successful resettlement in East Timor and their entrance into the translocal space (Wise 2000: 240,267).

Yeab, that's [permanent residency] what I hope for. See I wanna be to, if I, once I get my permanent residency I can go to Timor. After one year...I really wanna visit my country for a while. I just been miss[ing] my country so badly, every time I talk about it, [therefore] I've not talk[ed] about it for a while.

Esmeralda 32

When she receives permanent residency, Esmeralda will be able to move between the two counties and intensify her level of contact with East Timor, family and friends. Joana had already received permanent residency when the interview was conducted. She would like to apply for citizenship once her legal status allows her to do so. In the following quote, Joana articulates a similar urgency for intensified interaction with East Timor. As a permanent resident she is able to move between the countries. However, in order to be successful in her application for citizenship, she states that she cannot leave Australia until two years after receiving permanent residency.⁷⁴ Hence, she finds herself in a dilemma, drawn between her wish for Australian citizenship and her desire to visit East Timor.

I'm excited [about going back]! To go back and visit, so I can have like all my favourite food (laughs)...But to get my citizenship I have to remain in Australia for two whole years without travelling, I think. If I'm not going this year [2004], if I go next year [2005], next December [then I can apply for citizenship], 'cause I got my residency in November [2003], so I can apply for citizenship by the next December. Always thinking if I go this December I've

⁷⁴ To be eligible to apply for citizenship you have to be “present in Australia as a permanent resident for two years in the previous five years, including for twelve months in the past two years” (DIMIA 2005b).

lost a whole year, [but] I've been waiting [for so long to go back]. But doesn't really matter [if I lose a year]. I just wanna go there...

Joana 26

An interesting aspect of the above statements is the temporariness of the prospective visit to East Timor. Both Joana and Esmerada convey an immense wish to return, however only for a limited period. This sentiment is also reflected in the narratives of Amelia and Fatima, the only two participants to have visited East Timor post-independence. Their experiences upon return are described in emotional, but positive terms, and their narratives reflect feelings of 'coming home'. Fatima's story started as follows:

It was really good [to go back]. Before we landed, I was crying in the airplane (laughs). Like someone's dead over there. Yeah. No, I was crying. [I was] Really, really [emotional]...Yes. Because [it was] the first time ever that I've been, I've been back in there. Like after -- so yeah. Wonderful and how sad and how upset and how happy! All mixed!...I'm finally home, like, I'm home!

Fatima 28

When asked how she felt upon returning to East Timor, Amelia expressed a similar experience of contentment:

Oh, it was beautiful! It was, I loved it! It was, I don't know, it was such a nice experience. Like, I kind of forgot, well not forgot totally but I forgot what the

country looks like and how things work. Going back and seeing all those mountains and greenery – it's just so beautiful!

Amelia 25

Regardless of their positive experiences, when asked if they would go back to live on a permanent basis, both Fatima and Amelia expressed doubt, as illustrated in the excerpt beneath:

[If I will go back to East Timor] To live again, to live again? Maybe, one day.

Who knows, who knows.

Fatima 28

We must, in an attempt to understand this doubt, consider the processes that were triggered in the lives of the young East Timorese asylum seekers following the realisation of independence. How did the independence influence the lives of the young participants? How did it influence their identity and sense of belonging?

The Question of Return

Following the realisation of independence in East Timor, the young asylum seekers were faced with questions regarding their identity and sense of belonging. Their identities were challenged by DIMIA's demand for their deportation. In relation to the question of repatriation, the UNHCR advises that mechanisms of extradition should only be invoked when political change in the refugees' country of origin can be shown to be significant, stable and durable (UNHCR 1992). As Leach and

Mansouri (2004: 127) assert, such political change “refers to positive rather than negative developments whereby individuals regain confidence in the state of their home country and its capacity to uphold the rule of law and provide peace, security and basic services.” Following the realisation of independence, the Australian Government believed that, due to the withdrawal of Indonesian forces and decline in militia activity, the situation in East Timor was stable and safe, legitimising the deportation of the Timorese asylum seekers within the context of UNHCR’s assessment. However, DIMIA’s positive perception of the situation in East Timor contradicted the young Timorese people’s negative position. They questioned the developing Timorese nation’s ability to provide security and basic services. The majority of the asylum seekers did not want to go back to East Timor, fearing it would not be safe and anticipating a nation characterised by lack of education and employment, poverty, and poor housing. Fatima directly expresses this fear. She worries about the livelihood of herself and her family if they were to return. Both she and her husband have limited education, which in turn limits their opportunity for work and financial stability in East Timor. She starkly articulates the likely hardship they would face and the loss of living standards:

But if you go [back] there to, to do [live] as a slave again.

Fatima 28

Christina conveys another narrative of fear related to the question of repatriation. She told me how she cannot picture her life and future in East Timor. She worries about the lack of education and employment opportunities, she fears that she will not

fit in as she does not speak Portuguese, and she is anxious about once again being in a position of enormous upheaval:

...if I go back to Timor now I don't even know Portuguese. Ok. It's gonna be so hard for me to learn [it] all over again, you know. And then, yeah, there might be English there, like learning English there, but like, I don't wanna study there, you know. I don't see life there any more. Like, maybe used to be, but now – I think back, there's no life... Well, I don't wanna... It's not like I don't wanna go back to Timor, like, Timor is like, you know, I was born there, yeah you know. But it's just... I see no life in Timor, like... You know, I wanna work here, to contribute, like to you know to Australia. And my friends are here. Like, I know more of my friends [are here] than in Timor. Like I do have friends in Timor, lot of friends, but... I don't know, it's just gonna be different. I've gotta start learn everything all over again

Christina 18

Embedded within this quote is a sense of belonging to the Australian community, and it clearly portrays the ambivalent feeling of belonging discussed previously in this chapter. The ambivalence as to where they belong was intensified when the study's participants received the letter from the government requesting their return to East Timor. As Maria explains:

When I look at my paper [the letter from the government] and say why do they want to send me away when I feel this is home now? And that's when I feel like

I don't belonging, perhaps I don't belonging. Or maybe they don't want me here.

Maria 26

Later in the interview Maria told me how she feels connected to the Australian community, and how she feels she has changed throughout her time here. Additionally, a possible return to East Timor would imply that she has to change again. She cannot be the same person in East Timor.

Now I do [feel like I belong here], because I live here so many years now that I feel like I belong here. I get used to living here, because if I go back to Timor I have to change. Like, I can't be the same person. I have to change.

Maria 26

The changes she refers to are a consequence of her integration into Australian cultural practices. She identifies with values, standards of morality, and codes of conduct founded within an egalitarian and individualistic ethos. Hence, due to the differences between the cultural discourses of East Timor and Australia, she finds it problematic to combine newly acquired Australian attributes with a life in East Timor.

The majority of the participants communicate a similar view of having to change if they were to return to their country of origin, and express a deep wish to stay in Australia. Upon arrival in Australia, they experienced having to change and adapt in accordance with the new social environment. This period of upheaval created an awareness, or perhaps fear, of change that reinforces the young East Timorese asylum seekers' worries regarding return and wish for stability. In a study

on the impact of traumatic experiences on refugee adolescents' attitudes towards the future, Frančišković et al. (2000: 582) convey a similar need for stability and reluctance to change. They compare the situation of refugee adolescents, who had been directly affected by war in Croatia, with local adolescents who had been indirectly affected by the war. The research shows that refugee adolescents experience a decline of trust, creating unsociable behaviour, isolation, withdrawal from social surroundings, and lack of close relationships, factors which impeded their development of identity. They will therefore, according to Frančišković et al. (2000: 582), "aspire to stability and security".

Frančišković et al. suggest that the wish for stability will be reflected in an attempt to maintain a constant picture of self. This is mirrored in the young East Timorese people's reluctance to change, which demonstrates a concern about having to compromise their way of being, of having to become 'someone else'. Having spent approximately half of their lives in Australia, they feel as if they are different from what they would have been if they spent their teenage years and adolescence in East Timor. As two young East Timorese asylum seekers told the ABC's *Compass* on the 30th March 2003 (*Return to Timor?* 2003):

Because we grew up in Australia we just feel Australian now and if we're going back there it feels so different.

Iolanda Tching

Metaphorically it's like pulling a tree a growing tree out of one country and to just try and plant in another country. I mean it just wouldn't grow any more.

Pedro Cham

Like the participants of this study, Iolanda Tching and Pedro Cham have developed their identity and picture of self through their socialisation into Australian discourses, and they, like the majority of the participants, retain a lifestyle which they worry they cannot continue in East Timor due to restricted opportunities and communal values.

The female participants of the study reveal greater fear of change than their male compatriots. They worry that their individuality will be restricted by the communal discourse of East Timor and the restrained role of women. Many of the young women who took part in the study enjoy individual freedoms as expressed through their opportunities to pursue individual aspirations and dreams, and their movement within public spheres, which in East Timor are largely dominated by men (such as the scene of cafes, pubs, and clubs). They worry that they will have to compromise this individuality by having to change in accordance with the community's values and expectations.

The participants' fear of change suggests that they necessarily embrace a crystallised sense of self. I have, however, argued that identity is ever-changing; that is, throughout the lifespan of individuals it will develop through their practice within particular contexts. How, then, can the participants' identity be crystallised? Why do they fear change if identity is continuously changing?

Despite the processual nature of identity, all human beings possess a continuous image of self. Through practice within particular sociocultural structures, and through negotiation of external and internal definitions of self, our identity, as well as our perception of self, develops. Accordingly, the same processes that develop and transform our identity constitute a foundation for a coherent self-image. A perception of self, of others, and of the interrelationship between self and others

are preconditions for an individual's functioning within the social world. This implies a somewhat continuous sense of self, a picture of who one is.

I previously argued that some consistency must exist for identity to matter, thereby questioning the postmodernist image of fractured and fluid identities. This refers to a process of crystallisation. This process is intensified when facing threats to one's identity, such as that facing the young East Timorese asylum seekers with regards to their possible return to East Timor. With the realisation of independence in East Timor, the young asylum seekers were left with a choice. They had to negotiate their feelings of belonging and aspirations to stay in Australia with an awareness of their Timorese heritage and nationalist commitment. Following the political changes in East Timor, the members of the Timorese diaspora had to 'crystallise' their identity and sense of belonging, not only in terms of external classification, but also according to their evolving internal sense of themselves. Being forced to clarify their belonging, the young East Timorese people had to relate to their hybrid identities and, consciously or unconsciously, challenge their habituated way-of-being in the world. The independence triggered a sense of renewed self-definition, which was again challenged by the threat of deportation, forcing the participants to relate to the possible consequences of return on their identity. The subsequent fear of change is not a fear of the processual nature of identity. In contrast, return to East Timor represents an abrupt change in the familiar circumstances confirming and reinforcing their crystallised sense of self and their identity. Accordingly, the change they fear is not the continuous development of identity, but the abrupt change which challenges values, codes of behaviour and practice. However, the participants' fear of change, enforced by their potential

extradition to East Timor, was contrasted by one vital exception. This will be given further attention below.

Elisa's Road to Independence

Contrary to the other participants, Elisa believes she can retain, maybe even reinforce, her identity and individuality if she returns to East Timor. Elisa's story takes us back to the discussion about socialisation into the Australian discourse of individualism and the appreciation of freedom. She arrived in Australia together with her parents and siblings about five years ago when she was 17 years old. Like the other participants in the study, she emphasises freedom as one of the best aspects of living in Australia, saying:

I think the best thing to live in Australia is to have all this sort of freedom. I mean, you are the one that controls your life. You can control your life and put limitations on it. Freedom doesn't mean you go free, whatever, do whatever it is, but, I suppose it's just, you know, be free.

Elisa 22

Simultaneously, Elisa is the only participant who, at the present time, would like to return to East Timor. Surprisingly, her aspiration to return is founded upon a yearning for more independence. In her own words:

I think it's better for me to go back because, I, I don't, I can't see myself really to live here, and not to be really independent, because, like, on this stage, on my

age like this, I need to be more free. But it's not that I'm going to go and do something bad. I need to, you know, free life. I mean enjoying my life, my youth.

Elisa 22

Elisa is experiencing strong parental control. Her parents are strict, holding traditional values which collide with her new way of life. They experience difficulties accepting Elisa's lifestyle, perceiving it as disrespectful and without appreciation of their traditions and values. She explains:

But most of the time I have pressures from my families, because, even though we live in Australia, like, almost four years now -- My parents they're really, really strict, and they're pretty much holding back still our values and traditions that we have in East Timor.

Elisa 22

As long as she is in Australia, Elisa feels limited by the discourse of respect, by her parents' demand for devotion and obedience. Thus, she considers returning to Timor as an opportunity to achieve her independence.

This example demonstrates how the young adolescents negotiate their identity and belonging within both Timorese and Australian discourses. Moreover, it exemplifies how socialisation into particular discourses can have unique outcomes. Whereas the other participants proclaim the individuality and freedom of the Australian society as a reason for wanting to stay, Elisa feels her freedom being restrained in Australia. She has, like the other participants, become socialised into a discourse of individuality. However, as long as the parentally-imposed discourses of

respect and communality dominate her practical and cognitive behaviour, she cannot embrace this freedom.

Reconciling a Desire to Stay with Feelings of National Obligation

Facing threats of deportation, the young asylum seekers had to convince the Australian Government that they belong in Australia, and that they had a legitimate right to stay. As Amelia puts it:

Basically you just have to convince the immigration that, you know, I am an Australian now. More an Australian now than I am Timorese.

Amelia 25

However, the process of persuasion was not only directed towards DIMIA. It was also intended for themselves and significant others, negotiating feelings of guilt and responsibility, legitimising their wish to stay. The young Timorese found themselves in a complicated situation, positioned between personal aspirations and a sense of commitment towards the growing Timorese nation. By presenting a hypothetical promise of future return, all the participants justify their decision to stay in Australia. They argue that by delaying their return, they will be able to bring something back to East Timor, additionally contributing to the nation's future. As Tomás, who is midway through a graphic design course, explains:

I can see that if I in ten years' time, fifteen years time, if I'm going back there [then] I can use my skills in there. Most of the Timorese people don't have that kind of skill [graphic design] right now...

Tomás 28

Josef's narrative represents another example of how staying in Australia can be represented as a fulfilment of national obligation. By extending his stay in Australia, Josef believes he will receive education, training and experience that will advantage the Timorese nation in the future. By delaying his return, he will develop skills that are a rare commodity in East Timor. Consequently, he acts in accordance with the Timorese discourse of communal obligation. It could be argued that the promise of future contribution legitimises his wish to stay and enables him to overcome feelings of guilt for not participating in the rebuilding of the Timorese nation.

That's, the reason [why I will stay] is, because I wanna have the strong link, [a] connection in Australia before I go back to Timor. As I see this country [it has] more a lot opportunity for me to learning and to make good [political and financial] connections. And also if I stay here I can make more connection to Australian people to inform them they can go back to Timor, like yourself, you [are] interest[ed] about East Timor. I can give a lot of information, like [a] resource centre...And also if I myself, [if] I'm here I'm set, I build up my solid connection here, strong thing, so I'm ready going back to my country and know how to work over there. And [it will be] easy to make the connection outside and [to] more understand how to working in international relationships.

Josef 30

This notion of future return is combined with the participants' continuous claim of belonging to the Timorese nation. This assertion is expressed in various ways. Some of the participants create a separation between where they belong and the perception of home, saying they belong to Australia, however, home is East Timor. Others negotiate their belonging through referring to where they were born, consequently stating their enduring membership to the Timorese nation. Yet others, such as Josef, remain emotionally attached to East Timor through a belief in the separation between body and spirit. He explains:

...I feeling I didn't separate from my country. I don't know about other East Timorese thinking, but myself I never and ever separate. Whenever, if I live in Europe, I think I didn't separate with my country because I got a strong spirit with my country, my country with me, my ancestor with me. So separate because only my body. So my body are not there, but I still my spirit 'cause I'm Timorese. That's what I said before, I'm born Timorese, I wanna die like Timorese. 'Cause I'm Timorese.

Josef 30

The combination of the continuous association with a primordial bond connecting them to East Timor and the hypothetical promise of future return enable the young Timorese to face the challenges imposed upon their identity and sense of belonging in the aftermath of the liberation of East Timor. By pursuing individual opportunities, they fulfil the communal discourse of obligation. In essence, this enables them to reconcile their dual belonging and hybrid identity, and the divergent discursive frameworks of East Timor and Australia.

CONCLUSION

Refugees and other displaced people are often perceived as being removed from their roots, their culture, and their traditions. They are commonly depicted as separated from their ideal habitat, placed within a state of 'homelessness' and 'uprootedness', in which they may experience loss of identity and face challenges to their behaviour and social practice (Marrus 1985, Shawcross 1989, Stein 1981). Indeed, the devastating effects of exile should not be underestimated. However, as this thesis has argued, the marginalised state of exile may also entail individual agency and empowerment. By means of personal agency and practice, refugees possess the ability to reconstitute their shattered lives within the context of the host country. They hold the power to recreate meaning and develop an understanding of the cultural logic upon which perception within the new society is founded. Moreover, exile does not necessarily lead to loss of roots, tradition and identity. Although geographically and contextually distant to their home and their roots, exiles retain a memory and an image of their homeland, family and friends. Through their personal memory and various imaginative resources, a sense of roots is sustained.

Considering the case of young East Timor asylum seekers in Australia, this study has revealed how young refugees may learn to live with the devastating and disrupting experiences of flight and exile. Seeking protection from the Indonesian regime, the participants of the study left East Timor as children or young adolescents during the 1990s. In Australia, removed from their familiar surroundings and coping with trauma and loss, the young asylum seekers faced particular difficulties as they

were confronted with the Australian Government's claim that they should be entitled to Portuguese nationality. Disqualified from seeking refugee status, they were left in a state of uncertainty and liminality for up to 12 years.

Despite their insecure and liminal circumstances, through their everyday practice within their local communities, the young asylum seekers became immersed into the Australian society. Arriving as children or young adolescents, the participants had the potential to energise and excite their habitus in accordance with the new environment to which they had been introduced. Their cognitive structures were developed within the context of both East Timorese and Australian discourses, and they attained a cultural logic that enabled them, and indeed continues to enable them, to create meaning within both the East Timorese and the Australian context. Thus, due to the immigration complexities and their subsequent prolonged stay in Australia, their habitus was developed and modified within the frameworks of their multiple socialisations; their identities reflecting both Australian and East Timorese discourses.

The young East Timorese people's agency within the Australian context and the subsequent adjustment to their new sociocultural reality did not cause a rejection of their original culture. Rather, they adopted an additive strategy of acculturation, enabling their navigation across the cultural borders of their two homes. Hence, a pattern of biculturalism is evident, reflecting their continued association with the East Timorese culture and its dominant discourses, combined with loyalties and affiliations embedded within the Australian sociocultural context. They developed a mosaic of icons of self-ascription, leading to a hybrid identity.

A continued sense of their original home and past belonging is strongly articulated by the young East Timorese who participated in this study. By means of

imaginative resources, such as cultural practice, sentiments of shared values and standards of morality, and shared cultural heritage, they imagine themselves as part of the East Timorese nation and retain a sense of belonging to the Timorese community and national identity. This 'imagined communality' is paralleled by corresponding feelings of communion with, and belonging within, the Australian community. The subsequent complex pattern of identification stimulates hybridity.

As a consequence of crossing and overlapping boundaries, the hybrid nature of their identity and their complex pattern of belonging occasion tension and ambiguity. Ambiguous feelings of belonging are particularly evident in the participants' negotiation between the two dominant, though conflicting, discourses of their socialisation: individualism and collectivism. They are drawn between an appreciation of the freedoms and opportunities embraced by the Australian discourse of individuality and their awareness of communal obligation and respect embedded within the East Timorese discourse of communality. These ambivalent experiences of belonging and identity can be traced back to the divergent historical narratives and cultural discourses mirrored in their experience of the past, the present and the future. However, as outlined in Chapter Six, through narrative practice and negotiation of boundaries, the young East Timorese have learned how to successfully negotiate these feelings of ambiguity and hybridity.

The conflict of belonging became amplified in the shadow of the East Timorese independence. With the realisation of independence in East Timor, the young Timorese asylum seekers were left with a choice: they had to reconcile their feelings of belonging to, and aspirations to stay in, Australia with an awareness of their Timorese heritage and nationalist commitment. With the 'return of their homeland' they had to confront their hybrid identities in a new way. They had to

make a conscious choice about where to live, accordingly clarifying their belonging. The independence triggered a sense of transition, allowing a renewed self-definition.

This renewed self-definition does not imply a rejection of any previous sense of belonging. In contrast, it is argued that the independence facilitated a refined and reinforced commitment to both their East Timorese heritage and their Australian affiliation. With the acceptance of permanent residency in Australia, the participants attain attributes as expatriates; that is, in the words of Hannerz (1990: 243), “people who have chosen to live abroad for some period and who know when they are there that they can go home when it suits them.” This opportunity for return enables the young East Timorese to actively relate to their home country through their connection to a ‘transnational’ space. They enter a cosmopolitan zone in which they retain a continued attachment to East Timor.

Accordingly, the young East Timorese who participated in this study imagine themselves as part of the East Timorese nation and they see themselves as part of East Timor’s future. With the independence of East Timor and the movement towards the ‘transnational’ sphere, the participants are able to fulfil a strongly felt communal obligation. They feel a sense of indebtedness towards their moral community of social belonging (Hage 2002), East Timor, and many of the young East Timorese articulate a wish to somehow play a part in their country’s future. By pursuing individual aspirations and dreams in Australia, such as education and employment, they attain particular qualities and skills that may contribute to the future of East Timor, either by their contribution from the translocal space or with a potential future return. Hence, by engaging in the Australian individualistic discourse and pursuing the various opportunities that it entails, they are able to fulfil a strongly felt obligation embedded within the East Timorese discourse of collectivism.

The young East Timorese people's agency and practice within the East Timorese and Australian sociocultural discourses have led to a simultaneous awareness of various cultures, traditions, languages and, ultimately, homes. Through socialisation, personal agency, and processes of categorisation within particular sociocultural contexts, the active development and transformation of their identity has occurred. This process has been at the core of this dissertation. Through an understanding of the participants' individual life-stories and the particular histories and contexts in which these develop, the thesis has illustrated how these young East Timorese have employed a strategy of additive acculturation, leading to hybrid identities and a complex sense of belonging. The study represents a contribution to the scarce anthropological research on young asylum seekers and refugees, and contributes to an enhanced understanding of the situation of young East Timorese people in Australia.

Further anthropological research is necessary, both on the subject of East Timorese people in Australia and that of young refugees in general. Research on the dynamics of the East Timorese diasporas may contribute to an enhanced understanding of how people comprehend and deal with transition from exile to expatriate and, moreover, the establishment of long-distance nationalism. This thesis has primarily focused on the role of socialisation, age, agency and the negotiation of dominant discourses. Future research might adopt a different approach by focusing on those young people who actively decided to return to East Timor after the independence. Such an approach necessitates a focus on why young refugees would return to their country of origin given that they have spent large parts of their lives in exile, and, subsequently, become influenced by the culture and social structure of the host country. How do young returnees negotiate dual feelings of belonging and a

hybrid individual identity? How do they relate everyday reality with the dreams, hopes and aspirations of a life in a free East Timor?

Research into such issues may further inform our understanding of the processes of agency, socialisation, and acculturation, as well as the relationship between age, identity and the experiences of cultural and social change. More specifically, such research may accentuate the role of young East Timorese expatriates and returnees as authors of their own life-story, actively deciding where, what and who to be.

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GUIDE FOR SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

For researcher use only

Topics

Life in Australia

Life in East Timor

The Future

The interviews

Thanks for agreeing...etc

- Make sure the interviewee is aware of his/ her rights as a participant in the study: Confidentiality and anonymity, the opportunity to withdraw from the project at any time without giving any reason, the option to terminate the interview at any time.
- Ask for permission to tape record the interview. Tell the participant that he/ she can review, edit or erase the tape recording if he/ she so wish.

Life in Australia

Could you tell me something about your day-to-day life in Australia as it is now?

- Family
- Friends
- Work
- Study
- Involvement with community groups
- Hobbies/ interests

What was it like when you first arrived in Australia?

- Sources of support
- Hardship
- Sense of relief or safety

What have been the best aspects of your life in Australia so far?

What have been the most difficult aspects of your life in Australia so far?

What do you appreciate about Australian culture and life in Australia?

What do you miss the most about East Timorese culture and life in East Timor?

Can you tell me something about your current visa situation?

- Problems
- Expectations of future visa status

Life in East Timor

Where in East Timor do you come from?

What was it like to grow up in East Timor?

- Family
- Friends
- School
- Every day life
- Political situation

What do you appreciate the most about your East Timorese background?

Do you feel part of an East Timorese culture? How and why?

- Values
- Attitude
- Practice

The Future

What are your hopes for your future?

What are your hopes for the future of East Timor?

APPENDIX 2

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY¹

Pseudonym	City ²	Sex	Year of Birth	Year of flight	Age ³	Arrival with	Home town ⁴	Parents' work	First language	Ethnicity	Edu ⁵	PR ⁶	Return ⁷
Tomás	Sydney	M	1975	1994	21	Sister	Dili	Merchants F ⁸ : dead	-	Mixed Timorese and Chinese	Diploma Private College	No	No
Maria	Sydney	F	1977	1995	17	Mother/alone ⁹	Dili	M: teacher F: civil servant Today: merchant	Portuguese	Native Timorese	Certificate Private College	No	No
Elisa	Sydney	F	1982	1999	17	Family	Dili	M: civil servant. F: water engineer	Tetum	Native Timorese	HSC	No	No
Sebastião	Sydney	M	1985	1995	10	Family ¹⁰	Suai	M: housewife F: merchant	Hakka	Chinese Timorese	HSC	No	No

¹ Biography in chronological order of interview.

² Indicates where the participant lives in Australia.

³ Indicates the participant's age upon arrival in Australia.

⁴ Indicates where the participant used to live in East Timor.

⁵ Highest level of formal education received.

⁶ Indicates if the participant had Permanent Residency at the time of interview.

⁷ Indicates if the participant has returned to East Timor.

⁸ F = father, M = mother.

⁹ Her mother accompanied her to Australia, but later returned to East Timor.

¹⁰ Sebastião arrived together with his family, however they returned to East Timor, leaving him and his sister with extended family in Australia. His family fled to Australia following the violence in 1999, and they now live together in Sydney.

Pseudonym	City	Sex	Year of Birth	Year of flight	Age	Arrival with	Home town	Parents' work	First language	Ethnicity	Edu	PR	Return
Esmeralda	Sydney	F	1971	1994	23	Siblings	Bacau/ Dili	M: dead F: merchant	Tetum	Mixed Timorese and Portuguese	Diploma TAFE	No	No
Christina	Sydney	F	1985	1997	12	Sister	Dili	M: merchant F: unemployed	Tetum	Native Timorese	HSC	No	No
Josef	Melbourne	M	1974	1999	25	Alone	Bacau/ Dili	F: Fretilin	Mix – Tetum	Native Timorese	Ongoing University	Yes	No
Abelio	Melbourne	M	1982	1994	12	Family	Dili	Merchants	Hakka	Chinese Timorese	Year 11	Yes	No
Amelia	Melbourne	F	1979	1994	15	Siblings	Dili	Today: own a restaurant	Hakka	Chinese Timorese	Certificate TAFE	Yes. Close Ties	Yes
Joana	Melbourne	F	1978	1994	16	Family	Dili	Parents dead	Tetum	Native Timorese	Diploma TAFE	Yes	No. Going.
Mariana	Melbourne	F	1982	1994	12	Family	Suai	Parents owned a small business	Hakka	Chinese Timorese	Bachelor degree	Yes. Close Ties.	No
Fatima	Melbourne	F	1976	1993	19 ¹¹	Alone	Dili	M: housewife F: civil servant/ mechanic	Tetum	Native Timorese	Year 11	Yes. Spouse.	Yes
Emanuel	Melbourne	M	1979	2002	23	Alone	Bacau/ Dili	M: housewife F: carpenter	Makassae/ Tetum	Native Timorese	Bachelor degree	No. Student Visa.	NA

¹¹ Fatima fled to Portugal in 1993, and did not arrive in Australia until 1997, hence the discrepancy between year of flight and age.