

Engines of Venezuelan Emigration to Spain 1998-2015: Achievements of a Strategy of Social Reproduction

Motores de la emigración venezolana a España 1998-2015: logros de una estrategia de reproducción social

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ABSTRACT

This article focuses on the profile and satisfaction level of the migration project of the Venezuelan community that arrived in Spain between 1998 and 2015. The empirical analysis of a survey conducted to 383 Venezuelans illustrates the expulsion factors that activated emigration, the achievement of the expectations, and the integration in the country of destination, focusing on the theory of social reproduction as an emigration strategy. This first stage of migration marks the slow reaction of Spanish authorities to the arrival of a significant number of migrants as of 2016.

Keywords: 1. migration project, 2. achievements, 3. social reproduction, 4. Venezuela, 5. Spain.

RESUMEN

Este artículo se centra en el perfil y el grado de satisfacción del proyecto migratorio de la comunidad venezolana que llegó a España entre los años 1998 y 2015. A través del análisis empírico de una encuesta realizada a 383 venezolanos se visualizan los factores de expulsión que activaron la emigración, el logro de las expectativas y la integración en el lugar de destino, enfocado desde la teoría de la reproducción social como estrategia de emigración. Esta primera etapa migratoria marca la lentitud en la reacción de las autoridades españolas ante la avalancha recibida a partir de 2016.

Palabras clave: 1. proyecto migratorio, 2. logros, 3. reproducción social, 4. Venezuela, 5. España.

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INTRODUCTION

Two decades ago, the Venezuelan community was not yet an object of study within the global migratory panorama. Given the economic potential it offered and projected, Venezuela was since the end of World War II a host country for European emigrants (Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian) and refugees (Jews). Moreover, since the 1960s, Venezuela also began receiving flows of Latin Americans (Colombians, Cubans, Peruvians, Chileans, and Ecuadorians) who were fleeing the instability and/or poverty in their different places of origin. However, as of 1998, with the onset of the political and ideological turn, the situation changed in this country and many Venezuelans decided to emigrate to different countries; up until 2015, Spain was the second preferred destination.

As of 2016, a new chapter in the Venezuelan exodus began, differentiating two migratory stages with little in common both in their characteristics and in their impact on and about Spanish society. Between 1998-2015, the Venezuelan group remained almost invisible in the Spanish migration scene and characterized by its high purchasing power, professional and cultural level. The initial project of this group was not to leave Venezuela but to protect everything that was originally achieved through years of effort, study, and work. Emigration became what is defined as a strategy of social reproduction (Morrow & Torres, 2007; Dekocker, 2017; Dekocker, 2018), understood as the tendency to preserve, and even improve in the social, economic, and cultural structure of the host country the status first achieved in the place of origin.

During this period, a large part of the Venezuelan community achieved a high social reproduction expressed itself in the achievement of the expectations first motivating the migration project, this, in turn, resulting in greater integration at the destination (Dekocker, 2017). In 2016 this scheme was broken and at present Venezuelan migrants have doubled, holding first place in the list of entries and raising asylum applications to figures never before reached, becoming a vulnerable group with many obstacles that hinder their integration into the country (Dekocker, 2018). On the other hand, the massive Venezuelan exodus now heads towards other parts of South America (Colombia, Peru, Chile, and Ecuador, mainly), Spain falling to the fourth place in preferred destinations (Freitez, 2019).

This article aims to know the causes of Venezuelan migration to Spain between the years 1998-2015 and to analyze the level of satisfaction of these individuals when it comes to the fulfillment of their migration project. This article is divided into five sections. In the first, the contextual framework, the evolution of the emigration of Venezuelans into Spain in the period considered is analyzed from secondary sources. The second section, the theoretical framework, addresses the reasons for the displacement of Venezuelans and their subsequent trajectory of integration in Spain, fundamentally from the postulates of social reproduction. Next, reference is made to the empirical methodology that was used to address the purposes of this research. Next, the results are analyzed, detailing the sociodemographic profile of this

group, deepening into their migration project and their integration paths and achievements in Spain. Finally, the closing remarks make note of how in the time under study Venezuelans who arrived in Spain have managed to maintain and reproduce with greater success the way of life within new borders, although a change in the adaptation guidelines of those who arrived after 2015 is noticed as well.

CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK: THE VENEZUELAN COLLECTIVE IN SPAIN 1998-2015

Despite its economic potential, based mainly on oil reserves, inequality has been a major endemic problem in Venezuelan society (Gutiérrez Briseño, 2008; Rodríguez, 2003). This circumstance crystallized in 1998 with the advent of the Hugo Chávez regime, which managed to unite wills and became an alternative of hope for Venezuelans. With time, the situation turned into dynamics of concentration of power, corruption, exclusion, exacerbated ideological burden, and questionable management of economic policy. As a matter of fact, almost two decades later, the persistence of the crisis and the uncertainty about the future have pushed the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (Venezuela hereafter) to the largest migratory exodus in its history, according to the data collected (UN DESA, 2017, 2019).

In Venezuela, statistical data are scarce and unreliable. However, sources obtained through international institutions, the media, and research institutes of various universities indicate that the population of Venezuelans abroad was 438,692 in 2015, 695,551 in 2017, 2,648,509 in 2018, and 4,769,498 in 2019 (UN DESA, 2017, 2019). The National Survey on Living Conditions (ENCOVI hereafter, acronym in Spanish for Encuesta Sobre Condiciones de Vida) estimates that between 2012 and 2017 a little over 815,000 people had to emigrate abroad (UCAB, 2017) and in 2018 the estimated population that emigrated in the last five years was 1,500,000 (UCAB, 2018). The stock of Venezuelan emigrants according to United Nations estimates for 2015 was 1,404,448, and in 2019 it was 1,375,690 (UN DAES, 2019). This shows the aforementioned diaspora of Venezuelans to date.

Although the exact number of Venezuelan emigrants is complex to determine, the research that concerns us provides a concrete vision of the migratory evolution of the Venezuelan community that has chosen Spain as a destination country during the period 1998-2015. By statistically analyzing official sources offered annually by Spanish institutions such as the National Statistics Institute (INE hereafter, acronym in Spanish for Instituto Nacional de Estadística) (2016) and the Ministry of Employment and Social Security (Ministerio de Empleo y Seguridad Social) (2016), a relatively reliable idea of the reality of Venezuelan immigration in Spain from 1998 on can be reached. However, it should be noted that an important group (see Table 1) has entered the country with a European passport, mostly Spanish, Italian, or Portuguese. This means that they are counted as

nationals of the community country and not as Venezuelan citizens, even if they have never lived in these destinations before.

In fact, although as of January 1, 2015, there were only 48,421 residents of Venezuelan nationality in Spain, this number increases to 165,983 people if we rather account for Venezuela as the place of birth (regardless of their nationality). For this reason, when analyzing the Venezuelan group residing in Spain, we will focus on the variable "country of birth" regardless of whether the nationality is Spanish or foreign. Migration of Venezuelan origin into Spain has not stopped growing: as can be seen in the following Table 1, the process of increase is similar both for people with Venezuelan nationality and for individuals with dual nationality. The fact that the increase in immigration with Spanish nationality does not slow down in any year is noteworthy. In 1998 there were 46,388 registered citizens born in Venezuela with Spanish or foreign nationality and in 2015 there were already 165,893 which means that in 17 years there has been an increase of 258%.

Table 1. Venezuelan Community Registered as Resident in Spain per Variable. 1998-2015 Series

Year	Venezuelan nationality	Born in Venezuela (Spanish/foreign nationality)		Total
	Total	Born in Venezuela (Spanish nationality)	Born in Venezuela (foreign nationality)	
1998	8,986	38,136	8,252	46,388
1999	10,194	40,057	9,482	49,539
2000	12,119	43,425	11,294	54,719
2001	16,549	46,553	15,783	62,335
2002	22,257	50,075	21,522	71,597
2003	29,716	54,308	29,208	83,516
2004	38,718	61,435	38,823	100,258
2005	49,206	66,795	49,378	116,173
2006	51,261	72,673	52,178	124,851
2007	51,481	77,328	53,302	130,630
2008	58,317	83,524	61,069	144,593
2009	61,468	87,509	64,886	152,395
2010	60,399	90,613	64,443	155,056
2011	59,805	94,701	64,647	159,348
2012	59,322	97,306	64,757	162,063
2013	56,338	100,051	62,093	162,144
2014	49,717	105,090	55,498	160,588
2015	48,421	110,648	55,245	165,893

Source: Own elaboration based on information from the INE (2016).

Given the historical link between Spain and Venezuela, it is logical that the group of people born in Venezuela but registered with Spanish nationality is significantly higher than that of other Latin American nationalities since a vast majority have inherited their

nationality from their parents or grandparents that long time ago emigrated to Venezuela. It could also be the case that some Venezuelans have had the possibility of nationalizing once meeting the legal requirements of residence or by marriage with a Spaniard. However, taking into account that Venezuelan migration to Spain is a fairly recent phenomenon compared to other groups, the concessions of Spanish nationality for residence or marriage do not yet have a great impact, although they are obviously on the rise.⁴

Another relevant issue in the analysis of the profile of Venezuelans who have Spanish nationality is returning. In the period from 2000 to 2015, Venezuela was the country with the highest number of returnees to Spain, absorbing 13% of the total consular discharges. The years with the greatest increase in consular discharges (see Table 2), that is, the greatest return to Spain (2003, 2004, and 2008) match with the increase in registered citizens born in Venezuela and with Spanish nationality.

Table 2. 2000-2015 Consular Discharges of Spanish Returnees Residing Abroad (Five Countries with the Highest Index)

Year/country	Venezuela	Argentina	United Kingdom	Switzerland	France	Total consular discharges	% Venezuela
2000	4,360	2,847	4,029	4,385	2,923	44,538	9.79
2001	4,563	6,539	4,151	3,854	3,341	47,788	9.55
2002	5,511	12,105	3,745	3,923	2,798	52,006	10.60
2003	8,671	5,387	2,383	3,720	3,044	46,630	18.60
2004	5,954	4,426	3,130	3,806	3,157	42,731	13.93
2005	4,360	3,066	2,898	3,821	3,242	38,321	11.38
2006	4,563	2,446	2,840	4,068	2,854	35,706	12.78
2007	5,511	1,936	2,815	3,942	3,004	35,129	15.69
2008	3,857	1,809	2,859	1,784	2,456	31,388	12.29
2009	3,693	1,750	2,935	1,536	2,609	31,689	11.65
2010	4,333	1,447	2,200	1,347	2,073	32,023	13.53
2011	3,935	1,636	2,449	1,216	2,307	33,767	11.65
2012	2,462	1,225	2,339	1,090	1,744	27,675	8.90
2013	2,630	1,021	1,975	1,081	2,175	26,991	9.74
2014	5,326	1,561	2,004	1,230	2,365	34,600	15.39

⁴ 2.3% of the 78,000 Spanish citizenships issued for residence in 2015 were granted to Venezuelans, thus reaching the ninth place among the total of nationalities.

2015	7,991	2,228	2,484	1,470	2,710	44,057	18.14
Total	77,720	51,429	45,236	42,273	42,802	605,039	12.85

Source: Own elaboration based on information from the Ministry of Labor and Social Economy (2016).

As for geographical location in Spain, three-quarters of the Venezuelan community resides in four autonomous communities: the Canary Islands, Galicia, Madrid, and Catalonia, especially in the first two. This situation is associated with the emigration of Spaniards to Venezuela in the 1950s, mostly from the Canary Islands and Galicia. The children and grandchildren born in Venezuela inherited Spanish nationality, and many now emigrating to Spain settle in their places of origin due to family ties. Undoubtedly, having Spanish nationality or another of the European Union facilitates the undertaking of the migratory adventure and can also become a factor of integration (Portes, 2007).

People who only have Venezuelan or another non-EU nationality need a residence permit or a student visa to stay in the country legally and have fewer possibilities of receiving administrative aid from the beginning. On the other hand, non-labor migrants —such as students or retirees— have to acquire private health insurance and demonstrate that they will be financially self-sufficient during their stay.

Despite this, in the case of Venezuelans who would have no access to Spanish nationality, the number of applications for a study visa increased as of 2009 to the detriment of applications for residence and work visas. This issue, linked to the period of the economic and financial crisis in Spain, could be interpreted as a migration strategy. In fact, these data match the results of the study carried out in Caracas by Panadés (2011) to future emigrants with a student visa; of these, 23.3% stated that their emigration would be definitive, even before leaving. For the authors, this statement is indicative of a clear strategy to obtain an initial residence and at the same time guarantee the continuity of their professional status at the destination.

However, an exponential increase in asylum applications is also increasingly noticeable, leading Venezuela to occupy the ninth position among the 89 nationalities seeking asylum in Spain in 2014. An increase in these applications was expected at the time of writing this article, and this presumption is ratified in the latest report of the Spanish Commission for Refugees (CEAR, acronym in Spanish for Comisión Española de Ayuda al Refugiado) (2017), which places Spain as the European country where these applications increased the most, with one in three coming from Venezuelans and occupying the first position in the list of applicants since 2016.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: SOCIAL REPRODUCTION AS AN EMIGRATION STRATEGY

The number of people who currently live outside their country of origin shows a world that offers great possibilities for mobilization. Many reasons lead a person to leave the place that until then was their home and move their existence, their life project, and in most cases, their family to a practically unknown place, and that implies a different social, political, cultural, and economic environment.

Migration is, therefore, a complex phenomenon, which cannot be explained in a one-dimensional way. Nonetheless, the economic drivers have been those studied to a greater depth. From this point of view, migration flows respond to a globalized system basically associated with needs for improvement and economic satisfaction (Todaro, 1969; Castles & Kosack, 1973; Portes, 1978; Piore, 1979; Massey et al., 1994; Arango, 2000). Poverty, the search for a job, and higher income to access better living conditions can be considered the fundamental engines that lead millions of people to abandon their geographical borders.

Now, there are many other social, political, psychological, and cultural reasons that allow us to broaden our view beyond economic disparity. In fact, for the case at hand, that of the Venezuelan community in Spain, it may be necessary to reflect on some specific aspects of the migration project, such as the motivation that leads people to decide for migration and the confrontation at the destination of their initial expectations or expected results against their actual realization. Political and social reasons intermingle here, leading to a migratory process, which as a strategy seeks to maintain the social and economic status held before emigrating.

According to various investigations (Massey, 1990; Kritz, Lim, & Zlotnik, 1992; Arango, 2000; Labrador, 2001), every migration project consists of several stages that can be summarized in three key ones: the decision to emigrate (related to the reasons for expulsion from the country of origin); preparing for emigration (related to the reasons why the destination country is attractive and to the development of expectations); and the integration in the destination country (results and effects of transferring “existence” to another culture).

From the moment a person begins to consider the idea of leaving their country, a series of sociological, economic, social, and psychological processes begin to emerge, which some authors call the “distance” or pre-integration stage (Jackson, 1986; Nuñez, 2010). It is at this stage where the reasons for leaving the country can be identified and it is also here where the choice of destination is made, taking into account the real possibilities to access that country. In other words, the design of the (individual or family) migration project begins in the country of origin, and expectations are generated that go hand in hand with what is intended to be left behind and what is expected to find in the new home.

In addition to the economic factors that translate into an improved salary at the destination, other circumstances must be taken into consideration, such as war conflicts,

political ideologies, cultural aspirations, and others (Ghosh, 1998). Ultimately, the person who emigrates does so because he or she has a perspective of change or improvement in relation to the expulsion factors. Max-Neef (1998) introduced a new paradigm of human development based on three pillars: the satisfaction of fundamental human needs, the generation of increasing levels of self-reliance, and organic articulation understood as the coherent and consistent relationship of balanced interdependence between dualities (humans and nature, the global and the local, the individual and society, planning and autonomy, State and civil society). In fact, according to Max-Neef (1998), economic engines are activated when people feel threatened in the satisfaction of those needs that they consider part of their life project and which in turn prevent or undermine the possibility of having access to material goods.

The theories of social and cultural reproduction appear in social sciences starting from a neo-Marxist ideology, as an attack on the State branded as bourgeois that insisted on perpetuating capitalist dynamics through the educational system. According to the vision of different representatives of these theories, the structural consequences of “the dynamics of reproduction” continually threaten the possibility of a “transformation of social change” (Morrow & Torres, 2007).

From these initial contributions, a whole series of approaches are derived, expanding the sociological debate but commonly in relation to the role of education in this process of reproduction and the role of the State. Nowadays, publications and some specific studies are appearing, which expand the panorama of these first theories of social and cultural reproduction to other fields of research (Barel, 1974; Levitt & Schiller, 2004; Jiménez, 2010; Jiménez, 2011), intending to expand the basic concepts and general contributions to other social areas of research such as, for example, migration.

Yet not all approaches are applicable and it has been found that the timid beginnings of extrapolating these theories to the migratory phenomenon are based, mainly, on the contributions of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1991, 2006) and other authors aligned to his approach, among whom Wacquant (2005) and Giddens (1976, 1995) stand out.

This approach to the study of migration emerges as an alternative to most of the migration theories that associate, in one way or another, the reasons for leaving the country of origin with precarious economic circumstances and, therefore, focus on groups of low economic and purchasing power. Given that migrations of upper-middle classes generally cannot be approached from this argument, other explanations have emerged oriented towards political and social factors that encourage this group to emigrate. However, economic reasons are not exclusive of political and/or social motivations, and none occur isolated: the difference is in the greater impact that some factors have in contrast to others. Perhaps the novelty of the theoretical approach, seen from the postulates of social reproduction, is to highlight other migratory strategies that are associated both with the ideological and political situation of

the country, as well as with the desire to maintain the economic, social, and cultural level, to avoid losing the status one holds or even improving it.

The theory of general systems sets forth that societies are made up of different life systems and, from there, social reproduction is defined as the different structures of social systems present in each society (Barel, 1974). However, in the words of the aforementioned author, reproduction cannot be understood as an “identical replica” of what already exists or is, since in some way reproduction also implies “differentiation, growth, transformation of these social systems” (Barel, 1974, p. 93). However, it is clear that to speak of reproduction, some basic characteristics must first be identified that are constantly maintained within these systems and are fundamental to characterize the group’s way of life and its particularities. Consequently, the typification of these common elements and the relationships that generate the possibility of transmitting ideas, values, and customs from one system to another are those that must be recognized to assess possible social reproduction.

For Bourdieu (2006), every society is made up of two dynamic principles that he identifies as objective and subjective structures. The first is independent of the will of the people, the second, obviously, is applied to the schemes of thought and action that go hand in hand with the subjectivity of the individual (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970). Giddens (1976) already stated something similar in his analysis of social reality, associating two ideas, quite incompatible with each other until then. On the one hand, the structuralist idea that considers the subject has little to contribute to global structures and on the other hand, the sociological currents that advocate the individual as the center of social action. Consequently, Giddens (1976) locates reproduction in that dialectic and interaction between both approaches, considering the process of what is social as the continuous dynamic between what is already structured and what is undergoing structuring.

A more concrete vision is found in the definition by Carmelita Yazbek (1999), who defines social reproduction as:

... How social relations are produced and reproduced in this society. From this perspective, the reproduction of social relations is understood as the reproduction of the totality of social life, encompassing not only the reproduction of material life and the mode of production but also the spiritual reproduction of society and of the forms of social conscience through which man positions himself in social life. In this way, the reproduction of social relations is the reproduction of a certain way of life, of everyday life, of values, of cultural and political practices, and of how ideas are produced in society. Ideas that are expressed in social, political, cultural practices, and in patterns of behavior, and that end up permeating the entire network of relationships in society (Yazbek, 1999, p. 98).

Specifically, if the term social reproduction is taken to the field of migration and it is interpreted as a possible migration strategy, its connotations become nuanced. In such context, its meaning refers to the social components that lead a certain group to opt for a

change of place or “social field” —in Bourdieu’s words— for another “social field,” aspiring to maintain the same way of life, understood as a system acquired as a result of certain conditions of existence, which in its homogeneity becomes the “habitus of group or classes” (Bourdieu, 1991, pp. 100-101). The strategy then consists of maintaining and reproducing the economic, social, and cultural status that was held in the country of origin, at least for the greater part of its fundamental characteristics.

From the analysis of the social field in which migrants move and position themselves, it becomes easier to identify social reproduction. Consequently, it is understood that through social reproduction strategies, migrants aim at maintaining, reproducing, and, if possible, increasing their capital (be it economic, cultural, or social), struggling to preserve the position they occupy in the social hierarchy. The greater the achievement of this, the more guaranteed the integration in the place of destination will be, as it can be stated that so in a way the subject will feel fulfilled in his migration project. Consequently, the individual may even experience it as a definitive reproduction, as aptly expressed by Sayad: “everything happens as if immigration needed, to be able to perpetuate and reproduce itself, to ignore itself (or to pretend to ignore itself) and to be ignored as provisional and, at the same time, never to admit itself as a definitive transplant” (Sayad, 1989, p. 77).⁵

It is from this point of view that the homogeneity of the Venezuelan community is approached, to analyze how it reproduces social stratification in a migratory context that does not initially seek an upward movement, but indeed to at least sustain stability the position already consolidated in the place of origin. This is a select group (Freitez, 2011) for whom emigration was not part of their life project until it was adopted as a migration tactic from the applicable social reproduction by those who have the possibility of undertaking it; given that it implies a high economic investment understood as a strategy, Bourdieu defines it “as a set of actions ordered in view of more or less long-term goals not necessarily posed as such, which are reproduced by the members of a collective ”(Bourdieu, 2006, p. 33). In the words of Cecilia Jiménez: “strategies are developed based on concrete aspirations, able to actually drive practices, as they are reasonably likely to take effect” (Jiménez, 2010, p. 26).

This explains the perception that the vast majority of Venezuelans who emigrated to Spain have about the social and economic stratum to which they claim to have belonged in Venezuela and to which they belong in this country: for the vast majority that level is kept, thus reaching a positive assessment of their situation as immigrants and their achievements.

⁵ Translated by the authors: “...tout se passe comme si l’immigration avait besoin, pour pouvoir se perpétuer et se reproduire, de s’ignorer (ou de feindre s’ignorer) et être ignorée comme provisoire et, en même temps, de ne jamais s’avouer comme transplantation définitive.”

METHODOLOGY

The analysis of the reasons that led Venezuelans to emigrate to Spain between 1998 and 2015 has been carried out over a long period and using different methodological tools. Initially, a qualitative and exploratory analysis was carried out from open interviews on the Venezuelan community in the Comunidad Autónoma de Madrid. The results obtained in this first work were the motivation to undertake a more relevant investigation that would make it possible to typify the profile of Venezuelans in Spain and their migration strategies, based on a structured and predefined design.

For these reasons, in a second phase, it was decided to resort to the use of quantitative tools, specifically, a questionnaire elaborated by this author, made up of 70 closed questions, which was applied to a statistically representative sample with a 5% error margin. The variables to be measured are associated with the migration project and translate into the general characteristics of the group that participated in the surveys, the main and secondary reasons that motivated the departure from the country of origin, the human and economic means of emigration, the initial expectations before leaving and the choice of the destination country.

From the hypothesis that once in Spain the Venezuelan individual tries to reproduce the lifestyle that he had in Venezuela, the variables measure the employment situation, the socio-economic class perception, the type of house, the possession of goods and businesses, and the feeling of loss and achievement in the face of emigration. It should be noted that the common thread in most of the variables is a comparison between the way of life in Venezuela and the current situation in Spain, to establish whether emigration is a strategy of social reproduction, a key element of the question that first prompted this research.

In order to select the necessary sample, stratified sampling was carried out under two stratification criteria: age and place of residence in Spain. Faithful to the option of quantifying Venezuelans residing in Spain under the country of birth and nationality (Spanish or foreign) variables, official data last updated on January 1 of 2014 was obtained from the INE (Municipal Register) on the Venezuelan population registered in Spain. The four Autonomous Communities with the greatest Venezuelan representation in Spanish territory were selected: Canary Islands (47,555), Catalonia (19,579), Galicia (21,171), and Madrid (30,654). It was decided to limit the sample to people from 20 and 59 years old (84% of the registered population in Spain) divided into four groups: 20 to 29 years old; 30 to 39 years; 40 to 49 years; and 50 to 59 years.

With these data, the sample was distributed in the four selected strata, dividing each age group in the same proportion the population is distributed. The margin of error taken into account was 6.1%, given that in addition to having complete questionnaires, there were also partial ones. The fieldwork was carried out between 2014 and 2015, obtaining a total of 323 valid questionnaires. The construction of the questions was based on the differentiation of

capitals according to Bourdieu (2006) (economic capital, social capital, and cultural capital) that are developed in the referential framework of this research.

EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS

This section first describes the sociodemographic profile of the respondents, then focusing the analysis on the factors that determined their departure from the country. Finally, the level of integration of this group in the place of destination is analyzed.

Sociodemographic Profile

The survey was directed at people born in Venezuela, who consequently hold Venezuelan nationality. However, it was noticed that a large part of those surveyed (62%) have a European Union nationality in addition to being Venezuelan of origin (47% Spanish). As had been deduced from the analysis of official Spanish statistical sources, through the INE (2016) and with data from the Ministry of Employment and Social Security (2016), it is a recent group yet with a stable legal situation due to the historical relationship between the two countries: less than 5% of nationals have obtained this status by accumulating the necessary time of residence, most of them having obtained it due to being a descendant of Spaniards (parents or grandparents).

It should be noted, however, that a large group of people who only possess Venezuelan nationality participated in the questionnaire, mostly represented by young people with student visas. Only 4% of the sample currently resides irregularly in the country, this indicating that this group has until now been quite normalized in terms of legal matters. However, it should be noted that our projections point to an increase in irregular migration as a consequence, on the one hand, of the number of young people who at the end of their specialization studies choose to stay in Spain as irregular immigrants, and on the other hand, because the progressive deterioration of the situation in Venezuela has incentivized leaving the country, even illegally (CEAR, 2017). According to the results obtained in the fieldwork, none of the respondents entered Spain irregularly before 2012.

A significant group of surveyed Venezuelans (56%) undertook immigration as a “family” either with their partner, children, or other relatives. In fact, 72% are over 30 years old.

41% have children, two being the most frequent number. Of that percentage, 81% have children who reside in Spain. Taking into account that the survey is applied to participants who have arrived in Spain from 1998 onwards, it should be noted that the Venezuelan community does not yet have a significant “second generation” presence, although this is changing. We must also take into account here the difficulty of assessing this phenomenon with data from the municipal register, since children born in Spain obtain Spanish nationality at birth when their parents born in Venezuela already have it too, and thus cannot be identified as born from Venezuelan parents.

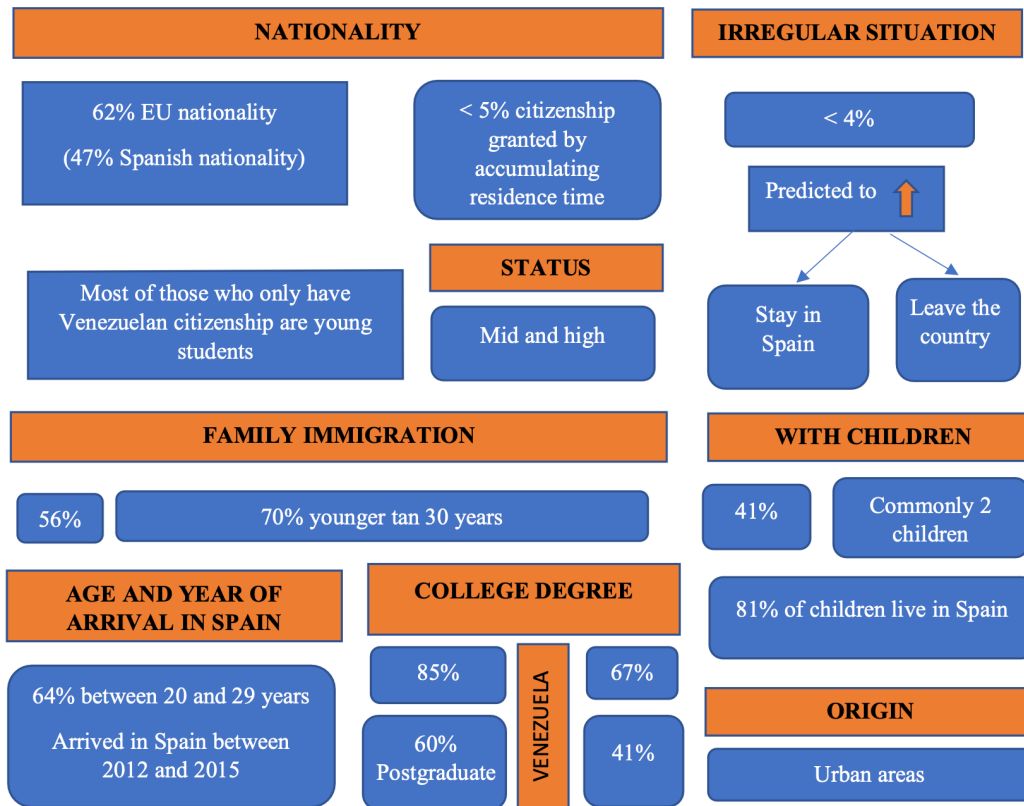
As highlighted earlier in this article, the entry of a significant group of students who arrive alone has been verified. The accuracy of this statement is reinforced by fieldwork when relating age and year of arrival, and noticing that 64% of 20- to 29-year-old individuals who were surveyed arrived in Spain between 2012 and 2015.

As for the education level, it is quite remarkable that 85% of the respondents have a college degree; of this percentage, 60% claim to have a master's or doctorate; 67% of those who studied at universities completed these studies in Venezuela and 41%, also their postgraduate studies.

This data not only show that a large part of Venezuelans arrives from their country of origin with an important educational background, but also that those who complete their studies outside of Venezuela enroll in the highest educational level. This could be related to the aforementioned in relation to the student visas, as in a possible way to enter the country legally and also with the search for an education that may guarantee a job in that same field.

Regarding origin, practically all the participants come from urban areas of Venezuela, with almost zero emigration to Spain from rural areas. Homogeneity is another characteristic feature of this group. This piece of information in itself is not conclusive when it comes to classifying the socioeconomic level of those who emigrate, since there are quite impoverished zones in urban locations. Still the results of this research strengthen this inference: only less than 1% of the people surveyed are located in the lower and even lower-middle-class (8%), and so it is not the popular sectors who participate in the migratory process that the country is going through.

Figure 1. Synoptic Summary of the Sociodemographic Profile of Venezuelan Migration in Spain



Source: Own elaboration.

Migration Project

Regarding the migration project, the Venezuelan group residing in Spain analyzed is characterized by homogenous results. The main reasons identified as the trigger for seriously considering emigrating are undoubtedly social (41%), followed by political with 21%. The third place is occupied by economic motivations, with 17%. When taking into account the specific motives, a clear relationship can be noticed between the main motive and the concrete one, reaffirming once again that the factor originating the migration project is the socio-political situation. It is important to note that although economic reasons occupy third place on the list, these factors are not related to poverty in the country of origin, as they rather reflect the fear of losing the already acquired economic capacity.

Taking into account again some ideas by Max-Neef (1998), it is interesting to look at both the transgressive or destructive satisfiers as well as to the pseudo-satisfiers and inhibiting satisfiers. Destructive satisfiers are employed under the pretext of satisfying the need for

protection, but they generate the opposite and even interfere with the satisfaction of other needs; among these satisfiers, arms build-up, exile, the doctrine of social security, censorship, bureaucracy, and authoritarianism stand out. Pseudo-satisfiers serve a false sense of satisfaction and include nationalist chauvinism, formal democracy, stereotypes, and indoctrination. Inhibiting satisfiers, among which authoritarianism, paternalism, and messianism can be identified, characterized by over satisfying a need and generating indulging habits that prevent personal growth.

These ideas are transferable to the migratory context of Venezuelans, since the combination of Chávez's messianism, the nationalist discourse of indoctrination, and authoritarianism on the rise, are experienced by a sector of society as the salvation of the country (due to its inhibiting characteristic). However, for another sector of society, these variables mean dissatisfaction with autonomy and freedoms. This last social group feels censored and stereotyped, driven to leave the country, almost with a feeling of exile but in search of another society that values the satisfiers they were used to, able to respond to the needs of their life project.

Taking into account that almost 30% of the sample highlights that the decision to emigrate was made in less than a year and that for 40% it only took between 1 and 2 years to effectively undertake emigration, one might think that the decision-making was done hastily, even more so in a group that until the beginning of the year 2000 was totally insignificant in the field of emigration. However, the results show that the educational level, the economic capacity to undertake the trip, and the possibility of entering the country legally are key elements that facilitate a more agile organization once the decision has been made. Beyond the importance of family ties in Spain, the study shows that these ties did not play a significant role in planning the exit. Support is largely perceived by family members in Venezuela. However, it is more of moral support than economic, since 73% use their own money to finance the trip compared to the 9% who resort to selling their house and/or goods or the 15% who make use of both options.

It can, therefore, be concluded that the Venezuelan community does not find motivation for their migration project from the economic hardships they live in their location of origin, but that it is the political and social situation of the country that exerts the greatest weight. Following after Anitza Freitez (2011):

...emigrating is more than the search for economic opportunities, for a job, it is also the search for a safe context that allows developing in a simple daily life. The emigration of Venezuelans has been growing particularly in the middle strata of the population, and among the most frequent reasons for leaving the country not finding opportunities for individual development and personal insecurity have been identified (Freitez, 2011, p.19).

Integration and Achievements at the Destination

In order to measure integration, it is necessary to take into account some specific indicators, both objective and subjective (Heckmann & Bosswick, 2006). Objective indicators are mainly having a job and access to housing; the subjective ones express the perception of immigrants on the success or failure of their migration project. In order to measure the scope of these indicators, the situation of Venezuela with that of Spain was analyzed comparatively. Thus, the impact of migration as a strategy for social reproduction was assessed.

As for job placement, results show that migration did not mean a significant setback for Venezuelans, at least not when it comes to their participation in the labor market. The unemployment figures, even taking into account their slight rise in Spain, are quite insignificant compared to the high percentage of people with a job in both countries, and so we can speak of “advantageous job placement” (Panadés, 2011, p. 58). Regarding the type of contracts issued to those who work for others, 18% of the participants signed indefinite contracts in Spain, and 6% who did not have this type of contract in Venezuela, have signed one in Spain.

In turn, 23% have the same type of contract in both countries. The notable difference between those who had an indefinite work contract in Venezuela and say they have a less valued contract in Spain (25%) is partly explained by taking into account the year of arrival, given that since 2010 it was practically impossible to find the first job with a fixed contract. In fact, 70% of the Venezuelans surveyed who have an indefinite contract arrived in the country before 2009.

62% of people rank between “very satisfied” and “satisfied” in terms of the overall assessment of their job positions. The high educational level held by Venezuelans before arriving in Spain has been repeatedly brought up in this article; in fact, by associating this element with the perception of satisfaction with their jobs in the country of destination, 71% of people with college or postgraduate studies indicate that they feel comfortable with their jobs in Spain. This result suggests that they have achieved a job placement consistent with their professional education.

Self-employment is also relevant in the field of labor. Toledano, Urbano, and Ribeiro (2009) highlight in their study the entrepreneurial nature of Venezuelans, in part, due to the economic capital they bring and as a possible strategy to avoid falling into unemployment or jobs that are not in line with their professional level, while Panadés (2011) highlights the fact that Venezuelans possess Spanish nationality or social capital in the country (family ties), in addition to education or economic capital. Based on the results of the fieldwork, 72% of those who have established themselves own private businesses, and 36% of them state that they have only made use of their financial resources.

Concerning housing, three important elements are taken into account: the type of housing, its size, and the number of people living under the same roof. Regarding the tenure regime, it should be noted that almost 80% of those surveyed owned (and a high percentage provided maintenance for) an apartment or a villa of their own. This data again supports the mid and high socio-economic level of the Venezuelans who emigrate. Once in the destination country, less than 30% own a home. Although it would appear that a fall in social class occurred, several factors influencing this should be taken into account. First of all, it highlights the high cost of flats and chalets in Spanish cities compared to other countries. Second, the successive devaluations of the Venezuelan currency, together with exchange control, pose a great obstacle to getting money out of the country. Finally, the year of arrival is yet another factor: as of 2013 the entry of young people who come alone or as a couple went on the rise, but with less purchasing power or with more difficulties to get money out of Venezuela.

Despite this slight decline in the housing tenure regime, it is still noticeable that 5% own a chalet, and that no one stated living in a hostel or an employer's home. The increasing tendency to rent rooms is due to the increase of young students coming alone and it is much more frequent among those who have arrived in recent years. As for housing conditions, taking into account the number of rooms together with the number of people who live in it, it can be said that they live in quite spacious houses, both in the country of origin and at the destination. It is true that in Spain the number of houses with four or more rooms is decreasing and there is a slight increase in homes with one and two rooms, however, the tendency is also for fewer people to live together.

The perception of success of the migration project can be located among the subjective indicators of integration, reflected in the degree of achievement that each participant believes they have obtained in the destination country, in relation to initial expectations. In this sense, 24% state that they have completely fulfilled their expectations, and 60% described having achieved quite a bit. Taking these two assessments into account, the percentage of those who express satisfaction with what has been achieved is very high. Adding to the above, when asked if they would decide to emigrate again, 96% say yes, including this percentage even those who in the previous question expressed low achievement of expectations.

By associating this high perception of success with the reason that led them to choose Spain as a destination, it is confirmed that those who possessed dual nationality feel more fulfilled upon arrival. However, the importance of having family members in the country and the benefit of the language should not be underestimated. What are most valued about the host country is, firstly, the quality and standard of living, followed by freedom, autonomy, and rights, and thirdly, the economic standard and stability, differing greatly from the other options presented in the questionnaire. The high valuation of these factors is in line with the main reasons for leaving the country: the fact that they have now been restored in

Spain positively influences the feeling of achievement and thus on a better integration into the host society.

CLOSING REMARKS

This article analyzed the dynamics of Venezuelan migration, a group different from other Latin American ones that have settled in Spain since the last decade of the last century, such as Dominicans, Peruvians, Ecuadorians, Colombians, Bolivians, Uruguayans (in this order).

The novelties of the research on which this article is based are mainly two: first, the analysis focuses on the middle and upper social classes; and second, the theories and postulates of social reproduction are made use of in the perspective of analysis. The migration strategies of this group are analyzed not only from the ideological and political situation of the country, but also from the desire to maintain the economic, social, and cultural status held to avoid losing the position to which they belong, or even managing to improve it.

It is a group that enters the country legally, either by having dual nationality or through a residence and work permit, or a student visa. They are also a privileged group, both from the point of view of their education and their purchasing power. Although, as conditions in Venezuela continue to deteriorate, there is an increase in the departure of people looking to resume their higher education abroad.

The job opportunities that Venezuelans who emigrated to Spain have had available for them in the period from 1998 to 2015 are consistent with their professional education. The dual market theory that states that immigrants generally occupy positions in secondary sectors is not fulfilled here (Piore, 1979). It can be deduced then that the high education level of Venezuelan immigrants positively influences the success and satisfaction of their job placement. The unemployment figures for this group are low, and its high percentage of self-employment stands out. The legal situation and job placement facilitate access to public health, housing, and work.

Regarding the feeling of success in their migration project, it should be noted that for many of those surveyed Spain was their first choice for a destination country, and so have established in this country is considered a goal achieved. The Venezuelan community analyzed feels “very much” happy with what they have achieved since their arrival and many would again decide to come to the country and express the desire to stay in Spain, even those who feel they have achieved “little” by now. The achievements obtained are consistent with the motivations upon which their emigration was based, and are therefore satisfying.

It is important to emphasize that both the economic level and the educational background that a large part of Venezuelans brings from their country protect them in some way from discrimination and economic hardship in the destination country. Although social and personal security are considered as the highest achievement obtained from emigration, it is

still true that the economic factor is largely resolved in this group, which in some way makes it easier to assume the difficulties that arise in any migration project. The favored social class to which the Venezuelans who emigrated between 1998 and 2015 belong is a given already from their country of origin, and once in the destination, from social reproduction, these social classes are inserted into similar strata of the society that welcomes them.

The fieldwork of the research that supports this article shows that those who emigrated between 1998 and 2009 have managed to maintain and reproduce with greater success the way of life within the new borders. Emigrating for the majority of Venezuelans who arrived before 2016 did not mean seeking a better economic level; for many, it rather meant safeguarding and perpetuating their position in the economic-social and cultural status to which they belonged in their country of origin, and seeking better opportunities in the face of fear of losing individual freedoms in a country under rapid deterioration.

Having said that, it should be noted that since 2016 the situation of Venezuelan emigration to Spain has changed dramatically, as a significant deterioration in the living conditions of a large part of this group can be noticed. This prevents social reproduction to a greater degree and, therefore, better integration. The positive experience of the first stage may have caused Spanish authorities to slow down in detecting and attending to the needs of those Venezuelans who arrived after this date. In fact, it was only in March 2019 that the government of Spain took specific action towards the Venezuelan community: temporary residence authorization (one year) will be granted for humanitarian reasons to Venezuelans who have been denied international protection before February of 2019, as long as the applications were submitted and denied after January 1, 2014. Although this measure is only addressed to asylum seekers who have been denied said application and the regulation of the procedure are still pending, for many it can mean an improvement in their situation, both from a legal and professional point of view.

Translation: Fernando Llanas

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