

MEDELLIN: AN ATTRACTIVE CITY OF DESTINATION FOR VENEZUELAN IMMIGRANTS

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ABSTRACT

The recent wave of globalization has offered to some people the chance to move to countries where aspirations and expectations can be met and opportunities encountered, more likely than in their home country (Albano & Sánchez-Barrciarte, 2015). Despite Venezuela being a receptor of Colombian immigrants around the 20th century, since the end of the last decade there has been an increasing number of Venezuelans settled in cities like Medellin. This study focused specifically on those immigrants by analyzing their profiles, reasons for leaving their country and choosing this city for their future projects, as well as their adaptation process related with migration theories.

RESUMEN

El proceso de globalización ofrece a las personas la posibilidad de moverse hacia países donde sus aspiraciones, expectativas y oportunidades son encontradas con mayor probabilidad que en sus países de origen (Albano & Sánchez-Barrciarte, 2015). Aunque Venezuela solía ser un país receptor de inmigrantes colombianos en el siglo XX, desde el final de la década anterior incrementó el número de venezolanos instalados en ciudades como Medellín. Este análisis se enfocó en estudiar sus perfiles, las razones para salir de su país y escoger esta ciudad para sus futuros proyectos, así como el proceso de adaptación relacionado con las teorías migratorias.

KEY WORDS: Latin American migration, Venezuelans in Medellin, Political and Economic instability, Adaptation Process, Immigration theories.

INTRODUCTION

This article aims to provide a road map to generate novel and useful insights for future studies of Latin migration by analyzing the specific case of Venezuelan immigrants living in the city of Medellin in Colombia. Medellin is currently Colombia's second largest city which has recently attracted migrants with different profiles due to an amazing process of social and economic transformation that has made of it the host of international events as the World Urban Forum 2014 (Rodin, 2014) and awarded in 2013 as the most innovative city of the world (El Tiempo, 2013). Namur (2013) connects that transformation with the high levels of investment done on integration and infrastructure, also related with the role of big companies linked with the region. During the first decade of 2000, approximately 16% of the city's economically active population was composed by immigrants: 29.7% of those were international migrants (Robbins & Salinas, 2006). In 2014, consular procedures and services to foreigners in Medellin were around 7.200, which represented a 19% growth rate compared with 2013 (El Tiempo, 2014) and meaning biggest presence of immigrants in the city.

This study comprises a sample of 10 randomly selected Venezuelan immigrants who were interviewed, in order to understand their experiences and their settling and integration process in the new culture. The paper provides the background of Venezuelans in Colombia, various theoretical implications of international migration, a discussion relating the findings with the theoretical migration framework presented and a final conclusion based on the studied individuals. The present analysis discussed: Which have been the key factors affecting the migration decisions of Venezuelans currently living in Medellin?

Venezuelans in Colombia

On the article *Llegaron los Venezolanos*¹ published by the Colombian magazine *Semana* (2011), two migration waves of Venezuelans to Colombia were described. The first wave of immigrants arrived to Bogota around 2002 and consisted of those PDVSA² employees who were made redundant because of political differences with the current Venezuelan government. These emigrants were highly educated professionals who helped to strengthen the development of the oil sector in Colombia, a country that was increasing its dependency on extractive industries.

Then a second wave of Venezuelans arrived to Colombia from the “capitalist bourgeoisie”³ that Hugo Chávez (1954-2013) was fighting during his Presidency, who needed a safe place to invest their financial resources. In Colombia they found an attractive destination for entrepreneurial ventures such as restaurants, business, art, real estate and others where they have been placing their capital (Semana, 2011). At the beginning of the 2010 decade, the socio-economic profile of Venezuelans living in Colombia could be classified as upper-medium class, far from illegality or poverty (Echeverry Hernández, 2011).

According to *Migración Colombia*⁴ (2014a), and as it is shown in Graphic 1, in November 2014 Venezuelans represented 15% of the entire number of entries of foreigners in Colombia and were placed in the second position just after the United States’ citizens for that month (Migración Colombia, 2014a). The analysis from November 2014 indicates that

¹ Venezuelans have arrived

² Petróleos de Venezuela, S.A. PDVSA is the Venezuelan state-owned oil and natural gas company created in 1976.

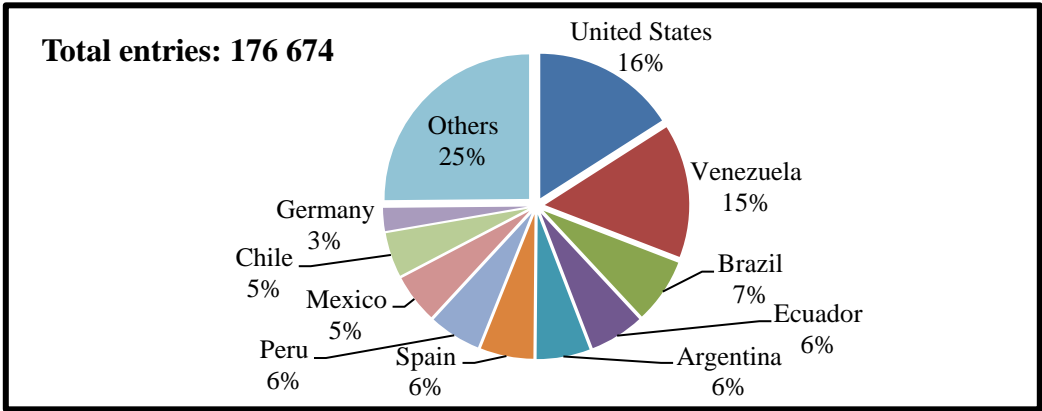
³ Capitalist Bourgeoisie was a term used commonly by Hugo Chavez to impulse class struggle and make an invitation to socialism.

⁴ *Migración Colombia*: Is the Colombian public entity that exerts the supervision authority and immigration control according to national sovereignty and Colombian Laws.

<http://www.migracioncolombia.gov.co/index.php/entidad/quienes-somos2/objetivo>

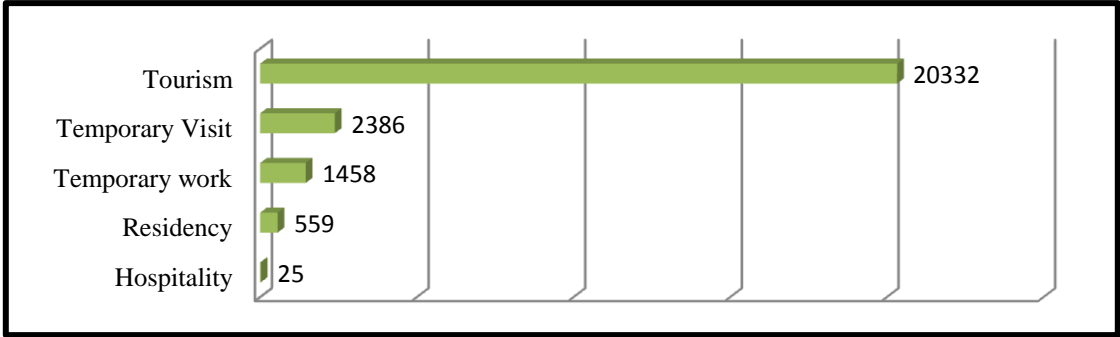
there were various reasons for their arrival, tourism being the major motive and followed by more than 2000 Venezuelans who said that temporary work and residence factors influenced their decision of traveling to Colombia (See Graphic 2). This group of immigrants also represents the biggest share of foreigners with a work contract (22% among all the temporal workers that entered Colombia in November) and of temporal students too (26.3 %) (Migración Colombia, 2014a). In January 2015, the number of Venezuelans surpassed the number of United States citizens and registered the first place on entries to Colombia with a number of 28141, being 45% of them women and 55% men (Migración Colombia, 2015).

Graphic 1: Percentage of entries to Colombia per nationality, November 2014



Source: Migración Colombia 2014a, authors construction

Graphic 2: Reasons of Venezuelans to enter Colombia in November 2014

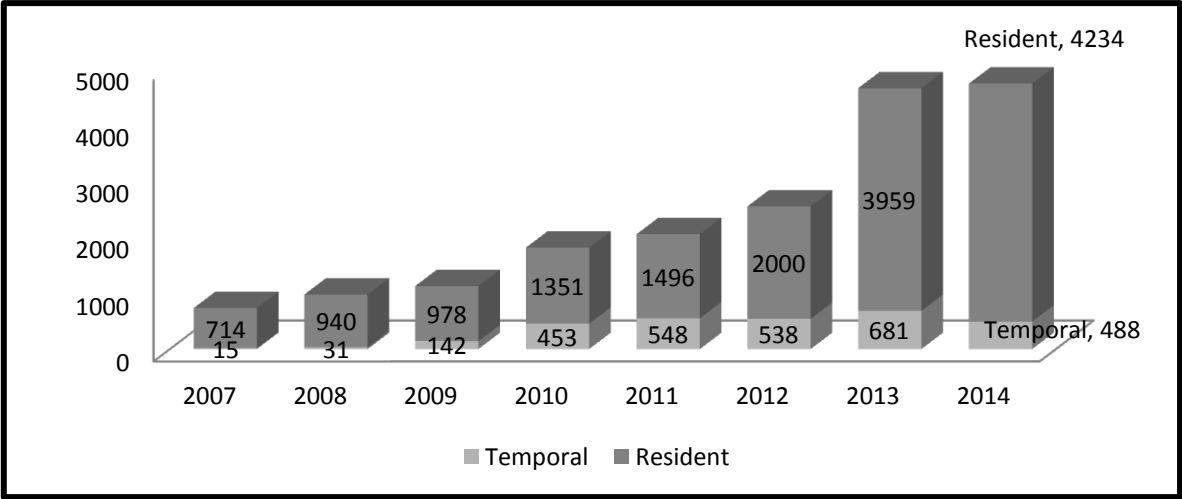


Source: Migración Colombia 2014a, authors construction.

However, there are differences on the types of immigrants in Colombia: The largest group corresponds to Venezuelan citizens without previous links with the country, who must use their Foreigner ID or work permit to live in Colombia. The other group is composed by descendants of Colombians who migrated to Venezuela in the past and now are returning to their hometowns; this group is potentially eligible for Colombian nationality (Santana Rivas, 2009). According to Colombian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a total number of 7081 Venezuelan citizens represented the biggest number of Visa requests in 2013, the majority of them motivated by job contracts (Cancillería, 2014).

Graphic 3 exhibits the growth of Foreigner IDs requested by Venezuelans in Colombia as an evidence of the rising number of members of this community. This figure has increased 548% since 1996 and has made of Venezuela the country with more nationals with Colombian Foreigner’s ID accounting for 15% of the total against 10% from U.S (Migración Colombia, 2014b).

Graphic 3: Venezuelan Foreign ID Temporal/Resident per year



Source: Migración Colombia (2014b), authors construction

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review provided a theoretical migration framework in order to understand the factors that affect the immigrant decision-making, the cultural adaptation process and the Venezuelan immigrant profiles and patterns. The effect of international immigration on the structures of sending and receiving countries captured the attention of several academic researchers (Borjas, 1989; Borjas & Bratsberg, 1996; Massey, 1998; Polgreen & Simpson, 2011; Sjaastad, 1962). In view of the continued importance of international migration flow from countries of varying levels of economic development, this paper will attempt to contribute to this approach by analyzing the Venezuelan immigrants living in Medellin. The literature that does exist indicates that Venezuelans continue to immigrate and their integration into a new context may produce social and economic changes (Guanipa, Nolte & Guanipa, 2002). The literature review was organized into sections to understand the theoretical elements related to migration flows and identified the key factors that have affected the migration decision of Venezuelans currently living in the city of Medellin.

THEORETICAL FACTORS THAT AFFECT THE INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION FLOW

Borjas (1989) stated that immigrant flows are determined by the following factors: international differences in income opportunities, costs of migration (distance, language and cultural differences), immigration policy, political circumstances, macroeconomic conditions and demographic organization. Also cultural similarities, moving costs, social policies, immigration obstacles and demographic situation are some factors associated with international migration (Borjas & Bratsberg, 1996); as well as macroeconomic variables

such as unemployment, inflation and political situations that affect the progress of a society (Polgreen & Simpson 2011).

Sjaastad (1962) suggested that migration decision is based on the income or earning differentials that result in the attractiveness of a given destination. Basically migration decisions are made by comparing the utility of living in the home country with the utility of living in the host country. Also, as Massey (1998) identified, a person can be motivated to migrate if higher income is not available locally and going abroad can improve the status through foreign wage labor. For a better understanding of the relationship between theoretical factors and international migration Chart 1 was constructed where the factors are listed as follows:

Chart 1: Factors that influence international migration according to different authors.

Author	Cultural Similarities	Income Opportunities	Costs of Migration	Immigration Policy	Political Circumstances	Demographic Situation	Macroeconomic Variables (Unemployment and Inflation Rate)
Borjas (1989)		X	X	X	X	X	X
Borjas and Bratsberg (2011)	X		X	X		X	
Polgreen and Simpson (2011)					X		X
Sjaastad (1962)		X					
Massey (1998)		X					

Source: Authors construction upon mentioned authors.

THE VENEZUELAN CASE

Historical context

In Latin America migration has been a widespread phenomenon since colonial times as it was traditionally an immigrant-receiving region (Kritz & Gura, 1979). However some intraregional movements existed within since new political frontiers were created, especially related with employment offer and demand (Pellegrino, 2003).

During the oil boom of 1970s, Venezuela witnessed an increasing presence of highly educated immigrants, combined with unskilled and illegal migrants coming from countries like Colombia. But later, Venezuelans and former immigrants started leaving the country due to emerging instability in terms of quality of living, political and economic reasons (Torrealba, 1987). Since the arrival to the Presidency of Hugo Chavez in 1998, political and economic changes were implemented in the business and informal environments affecting the rules of operation, laws, taxes and everything regulating daily life; those changes created differences of political support among elites and popular sectors of society; mainly upper and middle economic classes started feeling threats to democratic stability, private property and their personal security due to nascent expropriation measures and socialist tendencies (Lander, 2005), those unconformities could be reasons to explain the wave of migration that was mentioned by Torrealba (1987).

Venezuelan Immigrants Profile

Some authors (Falicov, 1999; Marin, G & Marin, B, 1991; Zuniga, 1994) demonstrated that most Hispanic families⁵ experience common characteristics in their historical background like migration experiences, cultural roots and Spanish language legacy. Venezuelans share language, religion and culture with some Hispanics but their patterns of immigration, rich natural resources and level of education are what makes them different (Guanipa, Nolte & Guanipa, 2002). Ingoldsby and Smith (1995) stated that typically families from South and Central American countries immigrate to the United States or Canada to avoid persecution, poverty and/or get basic education, while Venezuelans are normally middle class and seek to continue education at an undergraduate or graduate level. Based on the last statement the factors that characterized the Venezuelans immigrant profiles and that influenced their immigrant decisions are:

1. **Education:** As higher educated immigrants gain the resources needed, they have access to proper information of the employment market that influences their choice of destination (Polgreen and Simpson 2011). Less educated immigrants experience an uncertain employment future upon arrival as they are attracted by magnet cities that seem to offer a better life (Lawson & Brown, 1987). Levy and Wadycki (1974) mentioned how education level could affect the interest and objectives of a possible migration, saying, “educated members of the labor force in Venezuela are more mobile” (Pp 387) so there are significant differences in the way they perceive cost and benefits of their possible destinations.

⁵ Hispanic term is used to refer to the people from Central and South American countries and who speak Spanish as their native language.

2. **Employment:** Portes (1976) outlined that developed countries affect the international flow of professional graduates, less immigration flows are expected in advanced western countries and higher immigration flows are predictable in less developed countries. Fagiolo and Mastrorillo (2014) presented a positive relation between international trade and migration networks, which can be explained by three factors: country economic size, demographic size and geographical distance.
3. **Networks:** Migratory networks establish relationships among individuals (family, friends), which could diminish risk and costs for immigration (Izcara-Palacios, 2010). Levy and Wadycki (1973) proved the greenwood model for the case of Venezuela, which shows that previous migrant's from one region, could influence future migration of nationals.

Venezuelan Migration Patterns

According to Guanipa, Nolte, and Guanipa, (2002), there is a major difference between Venezuelan and other Hispanic patterns of immigration, as many Venezuelans have previous experience living abroad mostly in the United States or Canada. Guanipa, Nolte, and Guanipa, (2002), established 3 main migration patterns that explained the Venezuelan migration flow:

1. **Pursuit of higher educational level and better opportunities:** The Venezuelan government enabled the access to international education mostly in countries where English is widely spoken. According to Guanipa, Nolte and Guanipa (2002) this pattern is very special for those Venezuelans that first studied abroad and then

emigrated, because English language speakers and the living abroad experience open doors for job opportunities.

2. Mixed marriage: Some Venezuelans while studying or living abroad get married with host or a third country nationals and face intercultural issues, deciding to stay abroad instead of going back home (Guanipa, Nolte & Guanipa, 2002).

3. Voluntary and forced emigrants: The first are those who decided to travel abroad voluntarily because they want to invest in a certain country or to follow better opportunities (Nieto, 2000). These emigrants compared to others are better psychologically prepared to start in a new place, but difficulties with cultural integration can take place too, this pattern can be legal or illegal (Guanipa, Nolte, & Guanipa, 2002). Forced emigrants are those who have been forced to move from their home country due to personal, economic or political conflicts, they emigrate with the intention of restoring their lives (Nieto, 2000).

CULTURAL ADAPTATION PROCESS

According to Oberg (1960), immigrants will most likely experience the stages of culture shock: honeymoon, anger and resentment, adjustment and integration. In a more recent study Trivonitch (2014) also presented four stages of cultural adjustment: the honeymoon stage, the hostility stage, the integration / acceptance and the home stage, which can be related with Oberg (1960) stages.

- **Honeymoon Stage:** Characterized by the appreciation and curiosity about the new culture, where everything seems to be novel and exciting. It may last from few days or weeks (Oberg, 1960).

- **Anger and Resentment Stage:** It is distinguished by frustration and aggressive attitude towards the new environment because of cultural differences (language, food, communication, ideas, beliefs, education). This struggle is followed by anxiety and uncertainty. This stage can be experienced during the first three months (Oberg, 1960).
- **Recovery Stage:** This stage stands out that the immigrant still has difficulties in adapting but he also experiences a feeling of appreciation and understanding for the new cultural environment. After 6 months people might change their attitude and get along in the host country (Oberg, 1960).
- **Adaptation Stage:** The immigrant accepts the host country as a manner of living and he is able to accept both cultures appreciating what he likes and dislikes. A total adjustment into a new culture does not only include customs, food and habits, but also start to experience adaptability and tolerance (Oberg, 1960).

Similar thoughts, feelings and behaviors provide a sense of familiarity and understanding for people who share the same culture (Falicov, 1999). The cultural similarities from one country to another impact the adaptation of immigrants into a new culture.

PULL AND PUSH FACTORS

Pull factors

One important consideration that influences the destination of the migration process is the perception of opportunities out there. Bigger cities or urban centers are more attractive to immigrants due to their economic opportunities and quality of life (Jones, 1978). Levy and Wadycki, (1974) said that “educated migrants prefer destination states with high levels of educational opportunity” giving to this variable a great significance on the choice. In

Colombia, some scholars have made studies to analyze migration into particular regions; Fields (1979) proved that areas with higher income, stable and varied employment sectors were the ones receiving greater number of migrants. Also, as they are big cities they develop biggest pull forces in comparison with smaller cities and they gain fast development capabilities (McGreevey, 1974).

One important factor upon the forces that could exert a country to be chosen as a migration destination could be the distance it has from the home country, distance which might be measured physically but also culturally speaking. Movements across neighboring countries tend to include social processes that depend on complementary opportunities and create complex migrant networks (Parrado & Cerruti, 2003). Ravenstein Migration Law proved that great part of United Kingdom migrants only used short distances (Ravenstein, 1885), for him short-journey migrants were those who “moved only from the country of their birth to an adjacent or border country”. *Long-journey* migrants went beyond the border countries (Grigg, 1977), making of this type of neighboring migration a common issue with a lot of explanations and analyses.

As was mentioned before, cultural adaptation is better for immigrants when they find cultural affinities where they have arrived. Malaver (2012) mentioned how some Venezuelans feel comfortable in Colombia because they are culturally similar so they don't have to abandon their style and they are still geographically close and can visit their families constantly. This could be a special pattern of migration because there are constant moves across the countries and maybe a possibility of return is considered.

Push factors

Immigration decisions are highly affected by push forces that happen inside the home country and motivate people to look outside. Those forces might be influenced by public policy, government actions, educational opportunities, transportation and industrialization (Brown & Goetz, 1987). Migratory movements could be affected by historical and political relations among countries, which could promote those movements when particular economic political or demographic issues are happening inside one of them (CEPAL, 2006).

In the case of Venezuela, a shift was perceived when they went from receiving people to sending out migrants from middle and upper classes due to political reasons (Durand & Massey, 2010). Civil conflict and violence have proved to be factors influencing the decision to migrate, and as higher their impact is, the greater the distance they generate creating international movements (Bohra-Mishra & Massey, 2011).

Venezuelan diaspora has increased to represent more or less 6% of the population, with around a 90% of them going abroad after 1999 and mainly during the last years of the Chavez and Maduro transition (Symmes Cobb & Garcia Rawlins, 2014. *Reuters*.) Economic crisis, inflation, shortages of basic goods and insecurity keep growing as reasons why Venezuelans want to go abroad (Symmes Cobb & Garcia Rawlins, 2014. *Reuters*).

METHODOLOGY

This research was based on a multiple-case study methodology, as it allows comparisons that explain whether an outgoing finding is characteristic of a single case or is continuously

repeated by several cases (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). This study provides an in-depth insight into why a group of Venezuelans decided to migrate and chose Medellin.

This research was based on a qualitative interviewing, as the verbal communication between the researcher and the people studied allows valuable data gathering (Bradley, 1993; Mathers, Fox & Hunn, 1998). Semi structured interviewing with open – ended questions proposed by Mathers, Fox and Hunn (1998) was selected, therefore the interview was conducted in Spanish so candidates feel comfortable answering in their native language and asked in an informal manner so that it appears more like a conversation. Furthermore the signing of a permission release was requested, in order to avoid any legal claim as the results are required to be published (Delorme, Sinkhan, & French, 2001). The selection of the cases was based on the argument of Eisenhardt (1989), where with less than 4 cases is likely to be unconvincing to construct theory and with more than 10 cases is expected to be complex due to the volume of the facts; therefore 10 Venezuelan immigrants were interviewed.

Venezuelan people were the source of data collection in a direct way as the researchers interacted with them first hand (Bradley, 1993). A randomly sample of 10 Venezuelan immigrants was selected with the common characteristic of their nationality and city of residence, there were a total of 6 males and 4 females interviewed. The data collection was based on the answers recorded, as anecdotal evidence becomes crucial in multiple-case study research (Mintzberg, 1979).

The multiple case study approach was useful to interpret commonalities and dissimilarities identified during the data collection (Ghauri, 2004). To ease the development of the analysis, the answers were recorded and then carefully transcribed by the researchers, who

are fluent speakers of English and Spanish, as the transcription process can affect the participants and the goal of the research (Oliver, Serovich & Mason, 2005).

FINDINGS

Given the confidentiality agreement signed by the research participants of the data provided, they will be presented in the analysis with letters A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J for identification purposes, rather than using their real names.

Migration Decision

The participants were asked about the factors that influenced their migration decision specifically to Medellin. E and H share the common facts that are married women and the business context in Medellin certainly influenced: “The city represented a business opportunity for my husband and at the same time an education opportunity for me” (Participant E –woman 27 years -, Interviewed in Medellin, 2015). Although the married woman E is in Medellin because of her husband, she adapted by turning the initial limitation into a source of advantage recognizing that Medellin offers an opportunity in the education field, as well as C who studied an undergraduate certificate and J who is currently studying. “Medellin offered a very good level of education and more opportunities than the city we lived” (Participant C, Interview, 2015). From the last statements the level of education and the economic growth of the city can be highlighted as determinant factors in the decision making process for Medellin. The cultural aspect was mentioned as well: “Basically because of the cultural similarities and the language. People in Medellin are quite similar to the people of Caracas” (Participant E, Interview, 2015). It is

interesting to consider the particular cases of B and C, because their Colombian family living in Medellin was a motivating factor that influenced their city of choice.

The political and economic instability was identified by the participants as the major reason to emigrate, for instance the 44 year man, a systems engineer said that: “I believed that the political and economic situation is not going to improve in the short term, so I decided to look for opportunities in steady economies like Colombia” (Participant D, Interview, 2015). The delinquency and criminal activities were pointed out as another reason to emigrate from Venezuela: “The insecurity was increasing and I didn’t see an attractive future for me” (Participant A, Interview, 2015). The common responses indicate that Venezuela is definitely going through difficult political and economic situations, which are affecting the decision to migrate looking for a favorable future and better opportunities. The previous arguments create an effect on the consideration of leaving voluntarily or not, although all participants said that they voluntarily immigrate, some of them as E and J mentioned that the situation of the country influenced their migration decision: “It was a voluntary decision because we were the ones deciding to leave before being expelled, but at some point it was involuntary because the circumstances forced us” (Participant E, Interview, 2015).

Adaptation Process in Medellin

Interviewed participants admitted that the Venezuelan and Colombian cultures definitely share similarities, proof of this lies on D who was raised near the Colombian – Venezuelan frontier in Cucuta: “As I grew up in San Cristobal, I realized that we share many traditions with Colombians regarding the food and family gatherings” (Participant D, Interview,

2015). The participants not only identified similarities regarding cultural aspects, but physical and climatic likeness; F and G talked about the topography and weather relationship: “Both cultures are Latin and friendly, furthermore the weather is similar to Caracas “(Participant G, Interview, 2015). On the other hand the responses of E and I differ from the perspective of the friendly culture stated by G, E said that: “The "paisa" people are much more friendly and receptive in comparison to the Venezuelan people” (Participant E, Interview, 2015). I who lived in a city near the coast answered that: “I think that the "paisa" culture is much closed while the "costeño"⁶ culture is much friendlier and do not have to know you in depth to say, "Hey come to my place or let's go for a drink” “(Participant I, Interview, 2015). The last statement is particularly remarkable compared to the other perspectives, as she not only referred to the people from Medellin but also to the people from the Colombian coast.

E (lawyer) and H (teacher) not only shared the fact that they are in Medellin because of a business opportunity for their husbands, but also are experiencing totally different activities from their professional field; E commented that: “Now I am studying a master program and working in a coffee shop“ (Participant E, Interview, 2015) and H said that: “I could say that I am a housewife but I will like to find a job as a teacher ” (Participant E, Interview, 2015). It can be said that both participants gave up their professional careers in the new city of destination, as the business framework offered an attractive opportunity. A and C admitted that their current job position is much better from what they expected and certainly illustrate that Medellin completely met their academic and professional ambitions, A (23 years) said that: “ I am grateful for the professional opportunity I have here, I feel

⁶ Expression use to refer to the people from the Colombian Caribbean region.

much better from what I expected to be at this age ” (Participant A, Interview, 2015) and C (33 years) said that: “I lived in a vulnerable sector where I didn’t have any professional expectations, now I am working in a construction company as an administrative assistant ” (Participant C, Interview, 2015).

The quotations illustrate the stages in the cultural adaptation process that coincide with the time living in Medellin. For instance those who have been living for few months in Medellin like H (10 months) mentioned that curiosity, interest and enthusiasm perfectly described their current feelings regarding the adaptation process: “I am very excited to be in a different country, the new culture caused me great curiosity” (Participant H, Interview, 2015). On the other side appreciation, flexibility and tolerance for the new culture appears to be the feeling experienced for A, C and J who have lived for longer periods of time, (more than 5 years), for instance C said that: “When you arrived to Medellin you feel totally confident” (Participant C, Interview, 2015). It is important to mention the interesting cases of women E and I, who have lived for around 2 years and have studied a Master Degree in Medellin, as both experienced all the stages in the same particular order, E answered that: “Sincerely I’ve been through all the stages starting by curiosity, then anger, followed by appreciation and now flexibility” (Participant E, Interview, 2015) and I said that: “I had experienced all the stages, I remember that at the beginning everyone asked me "Where are you from?" and "Why Medellin"?, it was kind of annoying”(Participant I, Interview, 2015).

The people from Medellin, commonly known as “paisas”⁷, were a crucial element regarding the adaptation process of the studied Venezuelans, because they facilitated the inclusion as they are charismatic, warmth and welcoming people. This last fact can be related with the answers of A, E, F, G and J who have experienced constant interactions with “paisas” as they are studying or working, F explained that: “I should say that who has helped me the most is the people from Medellin, even more than Venezuelans” (Participant F, Interview, 2015). The importance of Venezuelan friends was another factor regarding the adaptation process as E explained it: “They represent like a second family, we share the same experience” (Participant E, Interview, 2015).

Another influential factor that attracts immigrants into a specific city is the existence of migratory networks, in this study all the participants revealed that their migration decision was non-driven by migration networks, but more by a search for better opportunities. Despite the last common answer it is important to mention the following characteristics, those who came for business purposes or familiar reasons came mainly with immediate family specially spouse and children, for instance F mentioned that: “I only have contact with my 15 co-workers and their families” (Participant F, Interview, 2015). Also there were others that met Venezuelans after they settled in Medellin “I met some Venezuelans in the airplane when I was traveling to Bogota to the Venezuelan embassy” (Participant J, Interview, 2015). These features demonstrate that knowing people from the same nationality in a distant location certainly creates a group that represents support for and favors the adaptation process of the community of immigrants; regardless of age and sex,

⁷ Expression use to refer to the people from Antioquia, Caldas, Risaralda, Quindío. The city of Medellin is located in the region of Antioquia,

the participants knew about the existence of a Facebook group called “*Venezolanos en Medellin*” where “We try to help each other, we talk about our jobs, we organize cooking plans and we promote different events” (Participant I, Interview, 2015).

For the purpose of this analysis, the ease of access to Colombia was analyzed, it was identified that the selected sample used different types of visas such as; student visa, work permit or a particular visa due to their double nationality. B, C and I admitted that their entrance to Colombia required no effort due to their nationality, “It was very easy to access the country because my parents are Colombian and I have dual citizenship” (Participant B, Interview, 2015). Other Venezuelans influenced by academic and business purpose such as J and F declared that their access to Colombia was manageable and easy since the educational institutions and the employer company assisted and facilitated their visa processes. However, G (Legal and Commercial advisor) and F (Administrative manager) who were motivated by business issues and are actually working exposed a different point of view: “It was easy to get my N1 visa business and renew it, but when trying to apply for a different visa is more complicated” (Participant G, Interview, 2015) and F said “Although it was easy for me, I admit that for the entrance of the employer company it wasn’t” (Participant F, Interview, 2015),

Long Term Decisions

It is noteworthy to examine the level of satisfaction in Medellin and the intentions of going back to Venezuela or the alternative plans. All the participants agreed that Medellin is a very welcoming and warm city; this was evidenced in their happiness scores. In a scale from 1 to 5 participants were asked to define their happiness, the responses of B and H

illustrate the high level of satisfaction, H said that: “I am completely happy but you always miss your family” (Participant H, Interview, 2015) and I expressed her happiness with the following statement: “I am happy but I could be happier if my family could live here” (Participant I, Interview, 2015). Despite H and I having lived for different periods of time - 10 months and 30 months respectively - and being in different stages - curiosity and tolerance respectively - their families in Venezuela still influenced their adaptation process in Medellin. It can be said that their families can become a motivator factor for going back to Venezuela or a pull factor that bring them to Medellin.

What can be said in general terms concerning the level of satisfaction of the Venezuelans in Medellin is that it is high and that they are pleased. Thus, we have the particular cases of A (23 years) and J (25 years) who said that: “I will analyze the idea of studying abroad once I finished my undergraduate program in Medellin” (Participant J, Interview, 2015) and “In few months I will go to Barcelona to study, but I do not exclude the idea of coming back to Medellin (Participant A, Interview, 2015). Based on the previous arguments it can be inferred that Medellin has fulfilled the expectations of the immigrants, the youngest members of the sample are attracted to academic opportunities abroad, while the rest are interested in settling as they have already found good opportunities and quality of life in Medellin.

Based on the common and repeated responses, the political and economic situation of Venezuela can be strongly related with the intention of going back. All the participants expressed their love for their home country and agreed that in the short term going back is not a favorable option: “I will love to return, but the freedom and opportunities I am looking for, are not there ” (Participant A, Interview, 2015). B and D who are working in

their professional field as in Venezuela, considered that they will go back just if the current government changes: “If the situation in Venezuela improved I will return, but it seems it will take long” (Participant D, Interview, 2015).

DISCUSSION

According to the findings it is possible to say that the general profile of Venezuelans in Colombia matches with the studied literature. Regarding the education level, a high degree of professionals and students have been found among this sample, who also belongs to an upper medium class and is willing to find better opportunities on the selected destination, as stated by Levy and Wadycki (1974), Guanipa, Nolte and Guanipa, (2002) and Polgreen and Simpson (2011). Certainly the education factor stands out in this migratory group, as it influenced their migratory decision and the adaptation process they experienced.

Analyzing the types of Venezuelan migrants, the two groups that were mentioned by Santana Rivas (2009) (Venezuelan citizens and Colombian descendants returning to the country) were identified in the sample. The group certainly illustrates the two types of Venezuelans: the natural-born Venezuelan citizens that were looking for business or educational opportunities and that had to deal with the whole process of Visa requirements and on the other hand, the case of the Venezuelans with Colombian nationality roots or Colombian family that took advantage of their Colombian nationality. Based on the previous statements regarding the waves of migration from Colombia to Venezuela, it can be said that the family ties and the advantage of having Colombian and Venezuelan nationality are determinant factors that favored the migration decision to Medellin.

The topic of Colombian immigration policy is of great importance for understanding the level of influence of this factor in the migration decision to Colombia. Most of the participants defined the access to the country as easy and confirmed that their current status of visa is legal. The last fact definitely matches with the figures presented by the Colombian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Cancillería, 2014) regarding the increasing foreign ID requests from Venezuelan citizens. Despite the last statement it is important to mention that some participants criticized the difficultness when trying to apply for a different type of visa.

Jones (1978), Levy and Wadycki, (1974) and McGreevey (1974), stated the importance of the push and pull forces that have influenced the international migration wave, they emphasized on the attracting role of big cities to migrants due to the quality of life, economic and educational opportunities. The last theoretical factors can be related with the study case of the Venezuelan immigrants who chose Medellin, because they revealed that business opportunities, quality of life and education and growth of the city were important reasons that influenced their migration decision.

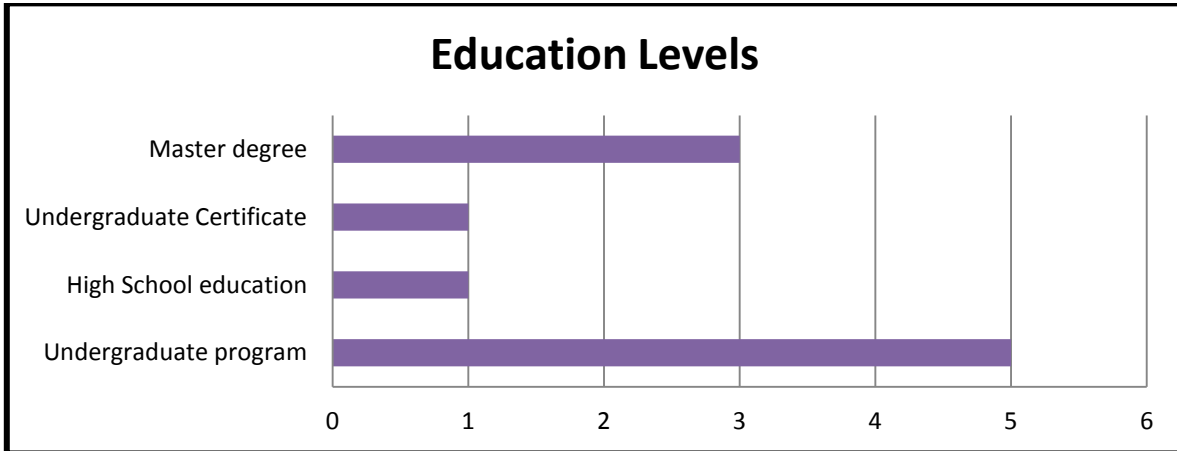
Parrado and Cerruti (2003) and Ravenstein (1885) suggested as another attracting factor, neighboring country migration, which is a strong determinant for destination selection. Almost all the participants mentioned cultural similarities and geographical proximity among the main reasons for choosing Medellin, which proves that the feeling of knowing the environment and feeling comfortable are determinant factors in the migration decision. Other participants highlighted that the ease of travelling by plane or technological tools to keep in touch were key factors to determine location. When asking about their returning

intentions most confirmed that they are not planning to return by now, principally because of the political and economic situation in Venezuela.

In terms of the push factors, the influence of public policies, government actions, educational opportunities, historical and political reasons, civil conflict violence that were mentioned by Brown and Goetz (1987), CEPAL (2006) or Bohra-Mishra and Massey (2011) were related issues in the migratory process of Venezuelans to Medellin. The participants in several occasions emphasized that their migration decision was related with the political and economic instability in Venezuela. The fact of feeling insecure and without opportunities forced them to look abroad, which can be related to the Symmes Cobb and Garcia Rawlins (2014) statement about the great Venezuelan Diaspora during the last years being due to the leftist government. Constant affirmations about the government, the insecurity and the impossibility to return while the actual government remains in power, demonstrates that the political and economic instability had a great influence on forcing Venezuelans to immigrate.

This last fact also coincides with Guanipa, Nolte and Guanipa (2002) point of view about the Venezuelan migration patterns compared to other Hispanic groups. Certainly the three Venezuelan immigration patterns were identified; high levels of education, marriage influence and voluntary and involuntary migrants. Graphic No. 4 illustrates the high level of education, as most of the participants are highly educated and well prepared. Regarding the second pattern only few participants go along with it, as only two have relationships with Colombians; however the third pattern completely describes the immigrant's profiles, as all voluntarily migrate.

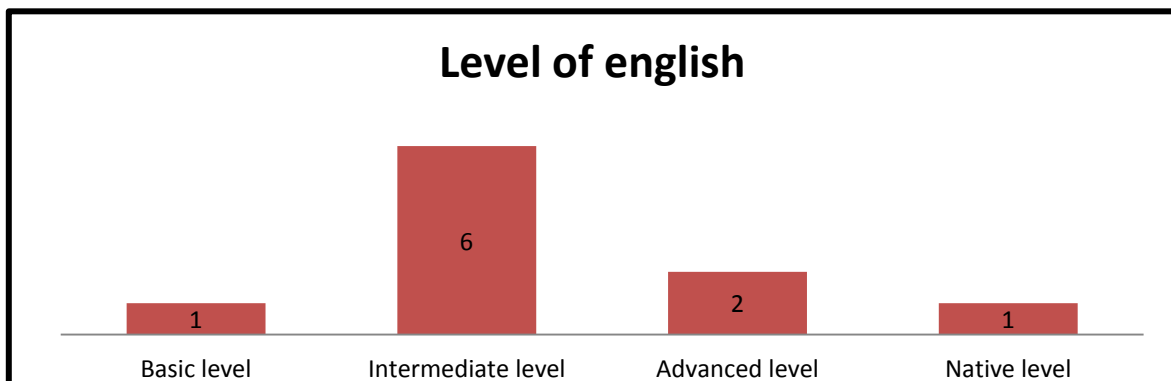
Graphic 4: Venezuelan Migration Patterns



Source: Authors construction based on the participants' answers.

Continuing toward the explanation of the first pattern it can be said that it matches with the study cases because most of them speak English (See Graphic.5) and some have lived abroad, working or studying specifically in Spain, USA and Canada. It can be said that the first pattern of the Venezuelan immigrants was identified in the sample and it is of great importance because it allows turning disadvantageous circumstances of the new culture into sources of advantages, for instance job opportunities.

Graphic 5 Level of English



Source: Authors construction based on the participants' answers.

The case of the Venezuelans in Medellin is a clear illustration of the adaptation process studied by Oberg (1960) and Trivonittch (2014). When talking about their adaptation experiences in Medellin, participants revealed their feelings and the time they have been living in the city, which were related to a specific stage (See Chart No.2). However, what was interesting is that the periods of time mentioned by Oberg were not exactly fulfilled for the interviewed people, which we considered could be related with the cultural similarities among Colombia and Venezuela that facilitate the adaptation process and reduce the time needed to adapt as it was mentioned by Falicov (1999) regarding the similarities with people of the same culture.

Chart 2: Cultural Adaptation Process

Participant	Knowledge of a foreign language	Time Living in Medellin
Participant A	Appreciation for the new culture	5 years and 8 months
Participant B	Flexibility, tolerance and confidence	1 year and 6 months
Participant C	Flexibility, tolerance and confidence	18 years
Participant D	Appreciation for the new culture	7 months
Participant E	Flexibility, tolerance and confidence	1 year and 5 months
Participant F	Flexibility, tolerance and confidence	5 months
Participant G	Curiosity, interest and enthusiasm	1 year and 5 months
Participant H	Curiosity, interest and enthusiasm	10 months
Participant I	Flexibility, tolerance and confidence	2 years and 6 months
Participant J	Appreciation for the new culture	5 years

Source: Authors construction based on the participants' answers.

Another important factor for immigration theories was mentioned by Izcara-Palacios (2010) through the definition of networks of migration. This case study tried to identify if the previous flows of immigrants certainly attracted new Venezuelans to Medellin. Despite some participants mentioned that relatives were living in Medellin before arriving, the

results did not confirm at all that the establishment of the family or friends influenced their migration decision and neither the location decision.

As a first conclusion it can be said that the Venezuelan migration flow has started due to recent political instability, and that the studied people may become pioneers for future networks coming to Colombia because participants constantly mentioned how they missed their families and how the situation is getting worse in Venezuela. Furthermore, networks should not be limited by the effect of attraction, but should consider their effects on the adaptation process, for instance the Venezuelan friends previously known or met in Medellin, strengthened a community that exerted a support role for those new migrants in the city and helped them during their process of adjustment.

CONCLUSIONS

Regarding the profile of the Venezuelans it is interesting to consider the following characteristics; the fact that the participants do not exceed the age of 45, most have a high level of education, proficiency English language and arrived to Medellin with their family or couple. Medellin definitely represents a magnet city for Venezuelan immigrants as it open the doors to a suitable business context, high-level academic institutions and to a better quality of life for their families. One first conclusion is that Medellin influences the choice of destination of this group of immigrants.

The evidence presented in this paper concludes that the main factor that accounts for the immigration increasing from Venezuela to Medellin during the last 20 years has been the political and economic instability. It is probably fair to affirm that this factor will continue to influence migration decisions, unless the situation dramatically changes and it offers a stable economic environment.

Although all the participants support their love for Venezuela and how much they missed their families, they have two clear positions; going back is not a wise decision and Medellin is a good city to construct a new future. This view is based squarely on a common realistic perspective about the Venezuelan government in the short term. If this perception continues among Venezuelan immigrants in Medellin and why not in other regions of Colombia, this situation can turn into a pull factor that attracts family members from Venezuela.

What these cases had in common is the search for better opportunities, as Venezuela was not offering attractive prospects. The selected cases provide significant evidence that Medellin offered a good-looking environment to fulfill their needs and expectations as immigrants. The data collected certainly proved that Medellin eased the adaptation process, because of the warmth and charisma of the “paisas”. That is to say that the role of the local culture as a good host for immigrants positively influenced the adaptation process, it was confirmed through the high level of satisfaction and the desire of staying for a long term.

LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

This study pretended to offer a comparison of different points of view about the immigration phenomenon in Medellin; therefore the researchers contacted the Venezuelan consul in this city. Despite the fact that the principal consul in Medellin kindly accepted an interview, it was really difficult to obtain the publication consent, he was contacted 6 times and he never replied positively. It can be said that that talking about bureaucracy and mentioning political aspects limited the freedom of speech and the comparison of results.

As it was mentioned at the beginning of this paper, the interviews were conducted in Spanish and then translated to English. It was identified that this activity limited in certain way the disclosure of some details, as the studied Venezuelans are highly expressive and emotional when talking, which is a descriptive characteristic of the Latin people.

For the purpose of this study only the city of Medellin was chosen and it can be said that its particularities might have affected the adaptation process and motivations of immigrants in this city. It is highly recommended to do comparative studies with other cities of Colombia, for instance Bogota or other regions, to identify different patterns of experiences and adjustment while living and working.

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