

## Discourses About the Reasons for Migrating to Chile. From Expulsion to Seeking Professional Fulfillment

### Discursos sobre los motivos para migrar a Chile. De la expulsión a la realización profesional

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#### ABSTRACT

The article intends to contribute to understanding the factors leading to the decision to migrate and choose Chile as a destination. Techniques of dialogic inquiry have been used to analyze three groups of migrants (Colombians, Venezuelans, and Spaniards) residing in the Los Lagos Region. The sociological discourse analysis has been used to process the information. The emerging narratives showed four discourse types regarding migration: forced migration, traditional labor migration, professional growth and, finally, the search for professional fulfillment. It is shown that the economic dimension of migration loses relevance while the socio-political circumstances of the expelling countries and personal projects and expectations of migrants gain heuristic value.

*Keywords:* 1. international migration, 2. reasons for migration, 3. sociological discourse analysis, 4. Los Lagos Region, 5. Chile.

#### RESUMEN

El artículo busca contribuir a la comprensión de factores que están en la base de la decisión de migrar y elegir a Chile como lugar de destino. Se trabajó con tres colectivos de inmigrantes: colombianos, venezolanos y españoles residentes en la Región de Los Lagos, utilizando técnicas de indagación dialógica. Se utilizó el análisis sociológico del discurso en la fase de procesamiento de la información. Las narrativas emergentes evidenciaron estas cuatro posiciones discursivas respecto a la migración: la forzada, la laboral tradicional, el crecimiento profesional y, finalmente, la búsqueda de realización profesional. Se demuestra que las causas económicas no siempre están detrás de un proyecto migratorio, pues en algunos grupos la situación político-social de los países expulsores y los proyectos e inquietudes personales tienen mayor peso.

*Palabras clave:* 1. migración internacional, 2. causas de la migración, 3. análisis sociológico del discurso, 4. Región de Los Lagos, 5. Chile.

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## INTRODUCTION<sup>4</sup>

As Bauman (2016) recalls, the migrations or movements of people to territories other than the ones they were born in are nothing new; since its beginning, modernity has been accompanied by these processes, which is why it's been a constant practice of social life. However, today there's significant change in these migration movements, they are continually growing in volume, dynamism and complexity, in a context of greater uncertainty for those who undertake the journey.

Economic internationalization, globalization and contemporary technological transformations have led to conditions that promote and accelerate transnational human mobility processes on a planetary scale, for this reason it's understood that the social transformations that have been occurring in the world are mostly explained by migration dynamics (Ariza & Velasco, 2015).

The increase in international immigration in Chile is related to and is an expression of these global trends. In this same scheme, Latin America shows an intensification of intra-regional flows, and at the same time, a reduction in migration flows to destinations outside the area (Martínez & Orrego, 2016). Intra-regional flows are not new, however, it is the increase in their intensity and the emergence of some countries as migration destinations that has drawn attention in the last period. Immigration from other regions has lost intensity in relation to previous decades, but remains current, and in some cases has had a slight increase, especially since 2008, as a result of the global economic crisis.

In this regional scenario, Chile has established itself as a migrant receiving country. Thus, the foreign-born population went from being 1.22 percent of the total population in the 2002 Census to being 4.24 percent in the 2017 Census (Canales, 2019), and 7.8 percent as of December 31 of 2019 (INE & Departamento de Extranjería, 2020), becoming one of the countries in Latin America with the highest proportion of foreign population. Although for the 2017 Census the group with the highest representation was Peru, the groups that have had the greatest increase in recent years are Venezuelans, Colombians and Haitians. This indicates that migration from border countries, although maintaining its flow towards Chile, is losing force in relation to the emerging flows of the aforementioned countries. As for immigration from countries on other continents, the 2017 Census shows that Spain is the country with the highest representation, and although in terms of percentage of total immigrants it has a lower participation than for the 2002 Census, the figure has almost doubled if absolute values are considered.

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The explanations regarding the increase in immigration in Chile are related to economic, political, and security factors of the sending and receiving countries.<sup>5</sup> Thus, Chile's growth and degree of economic stability –compared to other countries in the region– would be attractive elements that favor its choice as a migration destination (Martínez & Orrego, 2016; Solimano & Tokman, 2006; Stefoni, 2009). However, it is known that the willingness to migrate and the chosen migration destination is not only due to the aforementioned factors, but is also related to other factors such as the existence of migrant networks, political conflicts, violence, or family unit strategies, among other elements. What are the predominant strategies and factors that define migration in the different migrant groups? Are these factors different for migrants from the Global South and Global North?

Through the use of qualitative methods, this analysis aims to understand the push factors of migration and the choice of Chile as a migration destination for three groups of migrants –Colombian, Venezuelan, and Spanish– who have arrived in the country since 2008 and identify relevant discursive positions in each of them. These three groups have been chosen for their numerical and geographical representativeness –since they confront one country of origin from the Global North against two from the Global South– and because they represent, *a priori*, examples of different predominant causes in the decision to migrate. In particular terms, this study contributes to understanding recent migration to Chile and, in general terms, reviews the explanatory approaches to the causes of migration.

In addition, the Los Lagos Region has been defined as a spatial cut, since from 2010 it has shown an unusual increase in non-border international migration, like other areas in the south of the country. Likewise, the Los Lagos Region presents different geographic, demographic, and economic development sector particularities compared to the Metropolitan Region and the Norte Grande regions, which is where migration has been concentrated in the last 30 years, and therefore, studies on the subject in question.

The article has four sections; the first presents the bibliographic review that refers us to the causes of migration, both the theoretical perspectives and the explanatory proposals of international immigration in Latin America and Chile; the second section describes the methodological strategy of inquiry and analysis; subsequently, the results are presented; and, finally, the last section states the conclusions of the study.

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<sup>5</sup> It should be noted that the political changes in the American continent provide important signals to understand the exponential growth of migration to Chile in recent years. Among these factors we can mention Donald Trump's rigidity, the Venezuelan political crisis and the Chile-Venezuela Democratic Responsibility visa, promoted by the government of Sebastián Piñera since 2018, which allows Venezuelan citizens seeking refuge in Chile to obtain temporary residence for one year, renewable for the same time period.

*Migration: analytical perspectives*

The complexity that characterizes current migratory processes requires the complementarity of various approaches that contribute to its understanding (Arango, 2003). The most recognized traditional explanation of the causes of migration refers to the migration phenomenon as a process caused by labor reasons, a distinction found in classical and neoclassical theories, which argue that inequalities in employment and salary between countries would be the cause of population displacement. Thus, job opportunities and salaries are the so-called push and pull factors from one country to another. From this theoretical perspective, in the countries of origin of the migrant population, negative factors would predominate, such as low employment and low wages, while positive elements would predominate in the receiving countries (De Lima, Jentsch, & Whelton, 2005; Massey et al., 1993). However, it is known that the causes of migration are not found exclusively in wage differences between territories, since even if these differences exist, emigration does not always occur. In this same sense, government policies can become a push factor for migration, if they affect how income is redistributed and promote inequality within the same territory.

In addition, another element that affects migration is the perception of relative deprivation or satisfaction, a perception obtained in comparison with a reference group. Thus, those who perceive greater relative deprivation will have a greater incentive to migrate (Serban, 2007; Stark & Bloom, 1985). On the contrary, if a similar economic situation is shared in a reference group, even if it is poverty, it is likely that they will not perceive a lack of assets in relation to their group, and therefore, migrating will not be considered as an option.

In micro terms, sometimes migration is an economic strategy of the family unit, so the migration of one of its members is decided at the family group level. By doing so, it is possible to increase the expected family income and also reduce the economic risks for the family nucleus (Massey et al., 1993). From this perspective, migration arises as a possibility that social groups have to overcome the structural limitations of the system, as well as the unequal distribution of income (Parella, 2007).

Along with the above, the existence of collaboration networks between potential emigrants and people who have emigrated to other countries facilitates and increases the potential to emigrate, since the costs of migration decrease, allowing the optimization of resources (Gurak & Caces, 1992). These collaboration networks can be diverse in terms of intensity, that is, both weak and strong bonds are considered in the decision to migrate (Liu, 2013). On the other hand, the theory of migration networks helps explain the direction and maintenance of migration flows, despite the fact that the reasons that started a migration flow have disappeared (Silvestre, 2000). It is argued that migration networks have a multiplier effect on migration flows, making moves more likely. This theory is interesting, since from an analytical point of view it allows us to overcome the neoclassical and economic perspective, allowing an opportunity to delve into the different dimensions and multiple variables that are interrelated at the micro and macro levels (Faist, 1997).

The migration movements in the region and in Chile are not exclusively work and economically related, these can also occur for political or insecurity reasons, depending on the country, and in some cases the reasons tend to be mixed. In the case of Colombian emigration which has occurred since the late 1990s, the main reasons for migrating would be the “strong economic crisis experienced by Colombia at the end of the century and the exacerbation of the armed conflict” (Martínez, 2011, p. 78). The last period of Venezuelan migration also has a mixed origin, the main cause being the country’s internal political conflict, which has also had economic and security implications for the population (Castillo Crasto & Reguant Álvarez, 2017; Páez, 2015).

In the last decade, intra-regional migration movements have intensified in Latin America and the Caribbean, even above the traditional emigration patterns, such as to the United States and European countries, mainly Spain, which has been explained by the impact of the economic crisis that began in 2008 (Domingo i Valls & Recaño Valverde, 2009) and by the migratory barriers that the main receiving countries have imposed. (Soto-Alvarado, Gil-Alonso, & Pujadas-Rúbies, 2019). In addition, the opening of markets and the few barriers for trade, work and tourism in Latin American countries is another factor that favors intra-regional movements (Durand & Massey, 2010). In Chile, the results of the 2017 Population and Housing Census confirm the regional trend, as 87.7 percent of the foreign-born population comes from countries in South America, Central America and the Caribbean (INE, 2018).

Cerrutti & Parrado (2015) point out that the limitations of the theories that explain migration by the difference in income between one country and another are more evident in intra-regional migration, since although there are differences in income between countries, the differences in terms of living conditions are not as different as they are between countries of the South and the North. The explanation focuses rather on the labor market and employment opportunities in the countries of origin and destination, and not exclusively on the income differential. In addition to this, although the improvement of living conditions is present in the migratory decision, in intra-regional migrations the historical and socio-political causes are important factors to consider. Regarding the historical causes, it’s considered that many population movements have pre-colonial roots, and that they are part of established social practices that have been delimited by national borders (Garcés, Moraga, & Maureira, 2016; Lube-Guizardi & Garcés, 2013, 2014). On the other hand, political instability has been a characteristic of South American countries for decades, generating migration flows to and from different regional destinations in certain periods.

The causes of recent international migration to Chile have been explained from a macroeconomic perspective, with emphasis on the growth and development that Chile has had compared to other countries in the region (Mancilla & De Lima, 2014), which makes it an attractive place to look for opportunities (Aninat & Vergara, 2019). Along these same lines, Solimano & Tokman (2006) state that the causes of the increase in international immigration in Chile are due to the rapid growth of the Chilean economy and its high GDP compared to other countries in the region, and adding to this, a more favorable labor market. Similarly, Stefoni (2009) points out that “differences in economic indicators such as GDP, per capita income, poverty rate and labor market structure (between Chile and Peru) help explain these movements” (p.197). However, he adds that

these indicators, by themselves, do not explain migration to Chile, since there are also other countries in the area that have indicators well below Chile, and yet their migration flows to this country are not relevant. On the other hand, as mentioned previously, the migration of Peruvians and Bolivians in the Great North of the country has been explained by various authors based on historical relationships and job opportunities, producing a circular migration and greater intensity of transnational relations (Garcés et al., 2016; Lube-Guizardi & Garcés, 2013, 2014; S. Soto-Alvarado, 2020; Tapia, 2015).

Chile receives both skilled and low-skilled migration, trends seen in other countries in the region. This fact is explained by the theory of the dual or segmented labor market (Dickens and Lang, 1988; Piore, 1979) that also occurs in many other countries of immigration, particularly in regions of new immigration such as East Asia and southern Europe (Aysa-Lastra & Cachón, 2015; Baldwin-Edwards & Arango, 1999; Cachón, 1997; Domingo & Gil-Alonso, 2007; Fielding, 2010; Gil-Alonso & Domingo-I.Valls, 2008; King, Lazaridis, & Tsardanidis, 2000). However, when comparing Chile with other Latin American countries, it is among the countries with the highest relative weight of skilled migration (Baeza, 2019). Studies on skilled migration in the area have been mainly concerned with emigration to countries of the global North and the consequences for the countries that suffer human capital flight. The causes of skilled migration are multiple and varied, therefore the specificities of each country must be considered, as well as the networks or links established between migrants and their community of origin (Pellegrino and Martínez, 2001). Bermúdez (2015) states that five migratory scenarios of the skilled population can be differentiated: those linked to programs for the reception of skilled labor in developed countries; those who emigrate pressured by insufficient working conditions in their countries of origin; those associated with international companies; political refugees; and finally, those who migrate for educational purposes. Each scenario affects the opportunities and conditions of incorporation in the migration destination.

Skilled South-South migration has been less explored; however, recent studies show that in the case of the skilled migration of Latin Americans to Chile, not all of them find work according to their level of qualification, but rather a portion get jobs in the secondary labor market, which offers lower-qualification jobs, with their skills underutilized (González, Canales, Cruz, & Ocampo, 2017; Soto-Alvarado, Gil-Alonso, & Pujadas-Rúbies, 2019). On the contrary, skilled North-South migration has greater possibilities of being inserted into jobs that match their qualification level, as indicated in a study of the migration of Spaniards to Chile (Rodríguez, Romero, & Hidalgo, 2015). The motivations of Spaniards with a high level of qualification to migrate to Chile are more related to the possibility of developing professionally than to earning income, which tends to be low compared to the country of origin.

## RESEARCH FRAMEWORK. QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

In an interesting work on Mexican migration in the United States, Ariza & Velasco (2015) highlight the virtues of a qualitative approach exercise to approach the complexity of the migration phenomenon. In their opinion, the contextual and flexible nature of interpretive research allows us to go deeper and in greater detail in the study of the migration process. Thus, in the interaction with the migrants, their condition as contextually situated social actors is relieved.

Assuming these considerations, this study is based on the premises of a comprehensive exploratory design: its procedural structure is articulated in the proposal of the sociological analysis of discourse (Conde, 2010; Herzog & Ruiz, 2019), recognizing the word and the story as events of a dialogic and contextual nature, in which sense and meaning are articulated (Cornejo, Besoain & Mendoza, 2011).

The essential characteristic of the sociological discourse analysis (SDA) lies in its ability to understand social phenomena through a pragmatic approach to the text and the social situation, which refers to a contextual analysis where the meaning of the arguments is constituted based on the actors who enunciate them (Alonso, Fernández & Ibáñez, 2016); that is, it's an interpretive and relational process that captures the relationships between the micro-macro of conversational spaces (Conde, 2010), through a transit and connection between social representation and discourse generalization (Requena, Conde, & Rodríguez, 2019).

The interest of the SDA is not only to capture the subjective meanings of the actors but also to access the intersubjective matrix of the actors, and with it, access the meaning of the actions of the situated social subjects (Ruiz & Alonso, 2019). Hence the relevance and high performance provided by this technique to account for the outlined goals.

During the investigation phase, 28 semi-structured interviews were conducted with men and women from Venezuela, Colombia and Spain, who currently reside in the Los Lagos Region, Chile, who arrived in the country as of 2008. The Los Lagos Region is located in the south of Chile, 1,000 km away from the country's capital, has a population of 828,708 inhabitants and between 2002 and 2017 the foreign-born population had a relative growth of 70.2% percent. The study was carried out in this region due to its recent incorporation as a destination for non-border international migrants, like the other areas of southern Chile. The interview application period was carried out between the second part of 2017 and the first months of 2018. The criteria for placing the observation in these groups were several: first, because South-South migration (Colombians and Venezuelans) and North-South migration (Spaniards) are represented in them, the latter migration has been less explored in regional studies; and also because Colombians and Venezuelans are two populations that have recently increased their flows to the country, while in the case of Spaniards, it's the most represented immigrant population from the Global North.

The interviews were developed based on three main themes: the reasons for migrating and the choice of the migration destination, the arrival and installation at their destination, and their future projections. This article specifically analyzes the reasons for migration and the decision of the

migration destination. As categories of analysis of the results, the following four were touched on: the immigrant's country of origin and the position of said country in the world-system (Wallerstein, 2006), as a country of the center (North) or of the periphery (South), their level of qualification, the existence or not of migration networks as support elements for the arrival, establishment, and labor and social promotion of the migrant, and the push factors or triggers of their decision to migrate.

The analytical reduction focused on the interpretation of the narratives of the interviewees considering the social context and the history in which their discourses are produced. From this approach, it is argued that, to a large extent, discourses are produced and shared socially, and that these are affected by the historical-social environment of the subjects in question. Thus, when speaking, the subjects are bearers of the actions and speech of society (Conde, 2010).

For a first analysis, the Atlas.ti software was used, with which an analytical reduction of the text was carried out, in which 299 references were identified and grouped into 13 discursive condensations. With this as a base plus the overall reading of the text, discursive positions were identified, as well as the basic narrative configurations that organize the discourses.

## RESULTS: THE DISCOURSES ON THE DECISION TO MIGRATE

The result of the analytical process managed to distinguish four discursive positions present in the three groups (see Table 1). Firstly, they were sorted according to whether it was a South-South migration (between developing countries, as is the case of migrations between Venezuela and Chile, and between Colombia and Chile), or a North-South migration (with origin in a developed country, such as Spain, and destination in a developing country, such as Chile). Subsequently, the level of qualification of the interviewees was taken as a factor that also affects the elaboration of discourses on the migratory decision. In each of the identified narratives, a particular way of elaborating the reasons and factors that were considered to make the decision to migrate and choose the destination emerges. It should be noted that the discursive position that emerges from the Venezuelan interviewees is exceptional, since it's recognized as a forced migration, in which characteristics such as skill level are not relevant in the particularities of the migration process.

In the analysis, four narrative configurations of discursive positions were identified, which correspond to discursive condensations that help explain migration, identified as: motivation, which identifies the factors that lead to the decision to migrate; personal or family strategy, which identifies whether the decision to migrate corresponds to a group or an individual; choice of destination, which identifies the factors that affect choosing the country of destination, and finally, migration networks, which accounts for the existence and type of migration networks prior to migration that may have influenced the choice of destination.

Table 1. Discourses on the reasons for emigrating of the labor migrant population of Colombians, Venezuelans and Spaniards residing in southern Chile

		South-South Migration		North-South Migration	
		Venezuelans	Colombians	Colombians	Spaniards
Discursive position	Forced migration	Traditional labor migration	Migration for professional growth	Migration for professional fulfillment	
Migration reason	Focused on expulsion	Focused on the search for better opportunities	Focused on personal and professional growth	Focused on personal and professional fulfillment	
Migration strategy	Group-family	Group-family	Individual	Individual	
Choice of destination	Determined by macro and micro political and economic elements	Determined by macro and microeconomic elements	Determined by macro and microeconomic elements	Determined by micro factors	
Migration networks	Formal and informal migration chains	Diffuse or incipient migration chains	Primary or secondary networks	Primary or secondary networks	

Source: Adapted from Soto-Alvarado (2018, p.158).

### *Venezuelan migration: forced*

*One feels that there is like a deadline, a red line.*

For the Venezuelan interviewees, the decision to migrate occurs in a context of social, political and economic pressure and is therefore experienced as a situation of expulsion or displacement that can be described as “forced” (Acosta, Blouin & Freier, 2019; Cáritas de Venezuela, 2018; Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores y Movilidad Humana; 2018). Although the strictest definition of forced migration is related to the refugee category (Guerrero Verano, 2015; Pérez, 2003), the majority of Venezuelan citizens who have arrived in Chile live in a complex situation in terms of their migratory status (Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela-R4V, 2020). The refugee applications from this group are a very low percentage –according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2021), there are just over 18 000 recognized Venezuelan refugees, compared to some 6 million Venezuelan refugees and migrants worldwide–, and given that forced displacement for political reasons is linked to economic reasons, it tends to be considered as labor migration.

In this analysis, the category of “forced” is used for Venezuelan migration because Venezuela’s push factors prevail over those of attraction from Chile. This category finds its correlation with the analysis carried out by Sassen (2016) on emerging migrations, in which he points out that there

are migration flows of displaced individuals as a result of extreme conditions in their place of origin, even though they are not recognized as refugees by formal systems. It's difficult in these situations to distinguish between migration purely for reasons of persecution and migration caused by the loss of ontological securities (Castles, 2003, p.5).

The narratives of the Venezuelan interviewees express the need to emigrate as a result of the political, social and economic crisis in Venezuela, which has worsened since 2015. Considering the Venezuelan context, the educational level is not relevant to explain the migration decision, since the discourses indicate that the push factors for migration are transversal, on the one hand, insecurity resulting from violence and public insecurity, and on the other hand, the complex situation of the country's economy.

The severe economic inflation in Venezuela and its consequences in the coverage of basic needs are explanatory arguments of emigration, which are present in the testimonies of the interviewees.

The currency and with it the salary are losing their purchasing power, right? For example, at the moment the salary of a tenured professor does not exceed 5 dollars a month, so it's basically impossible to live; at what point does one feel that there is a *deadline*, a red line (Interviewee 29, personal communication, April 5, 2018).

Likewise, another discursive fraction points out that one of the main reasons for emigrating is public insecurity, a product of crime and violence:

later I tried walking and that's when they assaulted me, so I said: I can't leave by car, because they're going to steal it, and I can't walk either; so it was more than anything else, safety. I felt [...] unsafe, that at any moment something could happen to me (Interviewee 7, personal communication, November 20, 2017).

The interviews show that, even though the decision to leave the country is an individual process, in most cases the planning and preparation for departure is made with the support of family and/or friends. One of the first obstacles faced by those who have already decided to leave the country – written in most of the stories of the interviewees – is the devaluation of the national currency, the Venezuelan bolívar, for which reason, in order to buy a plane ticket, they must ask for loans from acquaintances or sell goods. In addition, there is no availability of dollars in formally established currency exchange services, which forces them to acquire them on the black market paying a higher exchange value than stipulated. As a result, affording airfare is too expensive, which has forced many Venezuelan migrants to undertake the trip to Chile by land, a journey that lasts 9 to 12 days.

The interviews also show that primary social networks play a fundamental role in terms of paying for the trip and entering the new country, facilitating the goal of migrating based on "financial sponsorships" (Gurak & Caces, 1992).

And well, [...] I talked to my grandfather mainly to see if he could help me, apart from what I had already saved up, a little extra help, um... [...], my dad also helped me, and well, plus what I had saved (Interviewee 3, personal communication, November 7, 2017).

The migration destination is chosen considering the macro and microelements of the economic, political, and social spheres of the possible migration destinations, which are evaluated by the potential migrants and that restrict the possibilities of the destination. Regarding the macroelements, these are related, firstly, with the migration regulations in certain countries, and secondly, with the economic situation and development of the country. The migration restrictions imposed by countries that have been traditional destinations, such as the United States, or Spain, in Europe, as well as the economic crisis of 2008, have reduced the possibility of considering them as a migration destination, despite the fact that they maintain a relative migratory attractiveness. In this scenario, the gaze is turned towards countries in the same region, mainly towards those with whom there is a treaty or bond that provides facilities to enter and work, such as the Southern Common Market (Mercosur) agreement<sup>6</sup>.

As of the second semester of 2019, these entry facilities were modified with a national decree that requests Venezuelan citizens a consular tourist visa to enter the country.

Because it had the highest economic growth in Latin America, we are both professionals. Umm [...], what happens is that Chile also facilitates migratory work. Here they do not ask for [employment] background, with our degree it was very easy for us (Interviewee 15, personal communication, December 11, 2017).

On the other hand, the micro factors that are usually considered by potential migrants for the choice of destination are the existence of social networks in the country, in this case Chile, and the economic resources they have to travel, including the cost of the trip. The networks created between origin and destination play a facilitating role in the migration process, lowering its cost, and also contribute to a faster job placement at the destination (Gurak & Caces, 1992).

The discourses related to the choice of Chile as a destination are divided between those that link both macro and micro elements in order to make a decision and, on the other hand, those discourses that only consider the existence of migration networks in the country as the main element for choosing.

I had other possibilities, I think it was mostly out of fear, I have a visa, I could've gone to the United States, but since I had no one there to welcome me, and many friends turned their back on me, childhood friends... And Chile was the second option, and it was Chile, Santiago, when Raúl contacted me, and told me Armando was here [...] (Interviewee 16, personal communication, December 12, 2017).

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<sup>6</sup> The Decree 239/03.10.2008 enacts the agreement on the travel document of the Mercosur and associated States. The States Parties are: Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay and Paraguay, and the Associated States are: Chile, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela. In its first article, it recognizes the validity of the national identification documents of each State Party and Associated State as valid travel documents for transit through their territory (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, 2008).

*Migration of unskilled Colombians: traditional labor*

*Suddenly, reaching a better future.*

The discourses of Colombian migrants are those that most faithfully adjust to the classic approaches of migration theories that explain international labor migration. Migrants usually state that the decision to leave the country is mainly due to economic reasons, related to seeking better job opportunities, in order to earn a better economic income than in their place of origin.

In this discursive position, the structural inequalities of the country of origin perceived by the interviewees are manifested, such as inequalities in the distribution of income, in job opportunities and in the personal treatment:

The thing is that in Colombia there may be lots of work because there are many construction companies and all that, but in Colombia the minimum wage is very low compared to the monthly family consumer basket, so with one's income, earning minimum wage, you can't cover all your expenses (Interviewee 26, personal communication, April 14, 2018).

What happens is that the big companies eat the small ones and [...] as always, those who have more, win; the politicians have their construction companies and all the contracts are for them, and as an employee they want you to 'work for this amount', and you out of necessity have to work for that amount (Interviewee 28, personal communication, April 4, 2018).

Migration is motivated by the perception of the limitations of the economic system of the country of origin, which are expressed in employment and remuneration inequality. In this discursive position, migration is a project that seeks to benefit the entire family group and not only those who emigrate. The possibility of generating more income to send monthly remittances is accompanied by the expectation of being able to save for future projects in their country of origin.

We never really had a problem getting work, sometimes a little, sometimes a lot, and at least for food there was enough, but we didn't go beyond that. And the idea of suddenly coming here is to see, suddenly, if you can have a better future, get things, property, anything that will get you more (Interviewee 26, personal communication, April 4, 2018).

Along with this, the perception that families from the same neighborhood or town that have a member residing in Chile have improved their quality of life compared to their own –relative deprivation– is another factor considered in the migration decision. "In the town, everyone who came to Chile spoke highly of it and that it changed their lives a little bit" (Interviewee 27, personal communication, April 4, 2018).

In this discursive position, the choice of the migration destination is defined mainly by two factors: the existence of migratory networks that build a bridge with the destination and the favorable exchange rate of the currencies between both countries. Regarding migratory networks, there are ties that have emerged from hiring foreign workers (Sassen, 2007) either from direct hiring by Chilean companies, or through kinship networks or acquaintances. Having a job offer before migrating allows them to reduce the migratory risk in terms of job placement and obtaining

a legal residence permit in the country. On the other hand, the networks they have in Chile allow them to minimize living expenses, since generally upon arrival they stay in the homes of relatives or acquaintances.

A cousin who was in Santiago works with a person who [...] He works [in the] tint business and we work [in] construction. And his boss was going to build a house, so he recommended me and told me that I should come; so, of course, I arrived with a job (Interviewee 28, personal communication, April 4, 2018).

In addition, migration chains have been established from some areas in Colombia, as is the case of the town of Quimbaya, and in Chile, which obviously directly influences the choice of this country as a migratory destination. In this sense, a potential migrant may not have a direct support network (family or friends) in Chile, but knowing that these “local” migration chains exist, and that they will find many countrymen residing there, giving the migrant a sense of security regarding his establishment in the place of destination.

Suddenly, due to the ease with which many people are traveling here, then [...]. Because my mom and dad are in London, England. I never traveled because there are a lot of requirements, a lot of inconvenience to get there (Interviewee 25, personal communication, April 4, 2018).

Regarding the convenience of exchanging Chilean currency for Colombian currency, the reports indicate that the exchange ratio is 1 to 4, which generates an extra benefit when sending remittances to family in Colombia. There are those who consider it as “the foreign business”. The favorable currency exchange value ratio places Chile as a preferred destination amongst other countries of the area, and at the same time is an incentive to project oneself in it, at least for a while.

That is the business of the foreigner, that is the greatest motivation that the foreigner has to be here. It's like any South American who wants to be in the United States, or a few years ago in Spain, you see? That you can earn very little, but it helps you because when you make the currency exchange back in your home country, it's a lot, a lot; it quadruples (Interviewee 12, personal communication, December 1, 2017).

#### *Migration of skilled Colombians: professional growth*

*I had a very good situation in Colombia, [but]  
I considered that I was not growing any more.*

This discursive position corresponds to skilled South-South labor migration. In Chile, not much research has been done on this type of migration, and the studies carried out have focused, for the most part, on qualified North-South migration, and on highly qualified South-North emigration, which has been called *Human Capital Flight* or *brain drain*. The analysis carried out in this research is a first step towards understanding skilled South-South migration.

In this discursive position are young professionals under the age of 35, among which healthcare professionals stand out, preferably single men and women, who have recently started their work

life. In this group, salary or employability differences are not found within the discourses on the reason for migration, on the contrary, it is argued that they have had a good job and are located within the middle and/or upper strata, hence the triggers for migration are related to their need for professional growth. However, elements related to the relative deprivation of the interviewees in this position are identified. In this sense, Portes (2007) states that:

A perspective related to the *new economics of migration* emphasizes the relative deprivation of professionals who aspire to migrate in relation to two reference groups: professionals who are well placed in their country of origin and professionals abroad with similar training (p. 30).

As for the first reference group, migration would occur when professionals do not achieve a labor and social position similar to that of their successful peers in their own country. While in the second reference group, access to training and professional development is compared for the same profession in different countries, and that is not available in their country of origin, or that have notable salary differences.

Two discursive fractions were identified that raise various reasons that would be present to make the decision to migrate. One of them elaborates a discourse in which she affirms that migration is motivated by the interest of achieving professional goals, associated with professional development, and considers that borders are not an obstacle for this.

I have a dental clinic in Cali, too, and I am very [...] I really like goals, challenges and always being active [...] I considered –when I came I had a very good situation in Colombia–, I considered that I was not growing any more, I had already met my quota, so I said: I want to go to another country to set up [a] dental clinic (Interviewee 8, personal communication, November 24, 2017).

The other discursive fraction is similar in that migration is a way to achieve professional goals, but it does not focus on getting a job and remuneration according to their level of qualification, but rather it's linked to the continuation of studies or acquiring more training in the professional field.

I lived well with my job in Colombia, it's not that I was lacking anything or that insecurity bothered me, as it does to many, nor did I come for money; no, what I wanted was to study because in Colombia there is hardly an opportunity to specialize in the medical area, there are very few places (Interviewee 14, personal communication, December 9, 2017).

The relative deprivation in this discursive fraction occurs due to the study conditions and opportunities for professional development. Referring to this, Portes (2007) points out that professional training and specialization in certain areas can be very different between countries considered as central and peripheral. In this case there would be differences in access to specialization between one country and another. In addition to this, the speeches exemplify structural inequalities:

The use of a “pituto”<sup>7</sup> happens a lot there; it’s self-financed, it’s very expensive. The cost is almost the same as in Chile, that if one was to have one in Chile [...] the workload is triple than what it is here, so in the end it was going well for me, but in the end it just didn’t work out [the specialization] (Interviewee 14, personal communication, December 9, 2017).

In this discursive position, the decision to migrate is made individually, and in general, they do not resort to their networks to finance the migration project.

This group considers other countries in the same region as a migration destination, where it would be easier to carry out professional specializations, get job placement, as well as maintain their professional status in order to achieve the goals set. In this discursive position, attractive non-regional countries for traditional labor migration are not within the expectations of this group, mainly because most of the jobs available are low-skilled, which is detrimental to professional growth and also means a loss of acquired social position.

As in the previous discursive positions, in some cases there are social networks in the place of destination that play a role in promoting migration, rather than providing economic support for migration.

I had a friend here in Chile from university who was also studying, and he told me “no, look, here I did three years of public service and with that you can make points and then you do a specialization” (Interviewee 14, personal communication, December 9, 2017).

Although in this discursive position the stories are more diverse in terms of the existence of networks in the place of destination and the existence of work prior to displacement, all the discursive fractions state that the main engine of migration is professional growth.

#### *Migration of Spaniards: professional fulfillment*

*The only bad thing is that I had a bachelor’s and a master’s degree, and I was working part-time and as a salesman.*

This group of migrants is mainly represented by young professionals, men and women, with and without a partner, with more than 16 years of schooling; that is, people who fit the North-South skilled migration typology. The decision to migrate is made individually and is associated with the stage of life in which they find themselves, where one of the objectives is the emancipation of their parents (Rodríguez et al., 2015).

The main reason for deciding to migrate outside their country is to get jobs in accordance with their qualification level, which is related to their need for professional fulfillment. This is because in Spain they have only managed to get precarious jobs that are unrelated to their profession. The economic motive related to earning more money or being able to save as a motivation for migration does not appear in the reports, but neither does obtaining a better quality of life.

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<sup>7</sup> Chilean idiom that refers to contacts or acquaintances in a company or institution and that help you obtain work, benefits or procedures more quickly. In public service it’s synonymous with nepotism.

Well, that year [2012] I had been doing a master's degree in Barcelona, in fact, I had finished my master's degree and I spent a year and a half looking for a job in Spain and there was nothing; well, there were jobs, just none that had anything to do with my profession. Well, then I had to make a decision, [...] go and get experience elsewhere or stay and work in a pizzeria, you know? (Interviewee 18, personal communication, January 24, 2018).

I felt super comfortable because my work environment was super good, the people were super friendly, the boss was a good boss, the only bad thing is that I had a bachelor's and a master's degree and [...] I was working part-time and as a salesperson (Interviewee 24, personal communication, March 22, 2018).

There is a shared discourse on the limitation of job opportunities in Spain, as a result of the 2008 economic crisis, and how this has impacted young professionals who have been excluded from the professional workplace.

In this discursive position, the choice of Chile as a migration destination is related to the possibility of getting a job in the area of professional specialization, and not with obtaining higher salaries than in Spain. In some cases, the existence of social networks facilitates this purpose. The possibility of emigrating to other European countries that facilitate migration as members of the EU and their proximity, and which are also the recurring destination of Spanish migrants (Domingo & Sabater, 2013), is not an option for this studied group, which aims at professional and personal development, since a portion of migrants only get low-skilled jobs and with precarious hiring conditions.

But there were two issues [about Germany]. One, that the experience that my friends had there at the moment was not very pleasant; I mean, those I was telling you about in Germany were having like..., initially, quite a few problems, almost all of them slept at work; and well, above all, the main problem was the language, a barrier (Interviewee 19, personal communication, January 24, 2018).

Rodríguez, Romero, & Hidalgo (2015) explain that, in regards to migration to Chile, "it does not seem to be the salary differences or the differences in income levels between Spain and Chile that explain the migratory flows, but the promotion opportunities, both social and economic, that Chile offers" (Rodríguez et al., 2015, p. 118); added to this is the expectation of gaining professional experience.

On the other hand, the migratory networks that link these two countries increase the possibility that Chile will be chosen as a migration destination. These migratory networks are diverse in terms of the intensity of the bond and the role it plays in the potential migrant. In some cases, they have served as a bridge for job placement, while in others, they have only guided and motivated the choice of country.

I had two ex-colleagues from the university who were working here in the south, so they had told me that here in Chile [...] he told me: 'Nuria, there is work here. It's not great work, but it's in our field and our degree is a degree that doesn't exist in Chile' (Interviewee 18, personal communication, January 24, 2018).

## CONCLUSIONS

Asking about the reasons that underlie decision-making when migrating involves, in sociological terms, investigating the range of meanings of a highly complex social phenomenon. It is assumed that through this analysis there has been an approximation to the understanding of the migration process. The investigation into the subjectivity and experience of migrant subjects has allowed us to set up a referential analytical framework of the reasons that explain the arrival of the groups studied in Chile.

In a sense, the work done observes experiences that synthesize and express in turn all the conditions that explain the migratory situations referred to in the theoretical approaches. In this framework, it is reaffirmed that population displacements cannot be placed in any way in conceptual models that reaffirm the centrality of the economic variable. Although this is present, the value it brings to a comprehensive explanation of the phenomenon must be nuanced with other elements such as the political and social situation of the expelling countries and, above all, to personal projects and concerns, which are above the economic dimension.

Schematically, the results distinguish four discursive positions in the three groups studied, which are constructed from the local or country context and its relationship with the global context, and from the social position in which the migrants find themselves.

Thus, the discourses that are distinguished have been identified as forced migration in the case of the Venezuelan group, traditional labor migration for Colombian migrants with a low level of skill, and migration based on professional growth in the case of highly skilled Colombians, and finally, in the migration for the search of professional fulfillment in the Spanish collective. In this last group, the underlying cause of the decision to migrate was the economic crisis of 2008 and the impact it had on the Spanish labor market. In each discursive position, the resources to achieve migration and the conditions in which it occurs are different, so the conditions of vulnerability experienced are also different. In this case, the most vulnerable groups are low-skilled Venezuelans and Colombians, a situation that manifests itself from the beginning of the migration process, with risky moves and no certainty of being able to enter the country of destination. This same condition is later expressed in obtaining jobs and in the greater risk of failure of the migration project.

In all the discursive positions, the existence of social networks is identified and how these have influenced the motivation and decision to migrate; however, the type of networks and the level of collaboration they provide is varied. In the case of forced migration and traditional labor migration, networks are a fundamental part for achieving migration, from monetary collaboration, to the reception at the place of destination and to making connections to get jobs; while in migration for professional growth and for professional achievement, social networks are less relevant, since they do not provide economic support, but are aimed at establishing a link with the country of destination.

The choice of the migration destination, in this case Chile, considers macro and micro order factors in the decision making. Regarding macro factors, the economic crisis of 2008, which

reconfigured the traditional migration destinations of the Colombian and Venezuelan population from Spain and the United States, towards countries in the same region; in this, they consider the economic conditions of the country of destination and their comparison with the conditions of the country of origin, a comparison in which Chile has a positive nation brand, in the context of regional migration. On the other hand, the facilitators of migration and the currency exchange value ratio between the country of origin and the country of destination, are elements that are considered in the migration of Venezuelans and Colombians. In addition, there are political and economic agreements between Chile, Colombia and Venezuela that facilitate immigration to the country, so that migration obstacles are minimal.

For the Spanish group, which presents the discourse of personal fulfillment –and for skilled Colombians, who prioritize professional development–, micro factors weigh more in making the decision to migrate. Thus, the choice of Chile is mediated by the possibility of making use of the accumulated cultural capital and of developing professionally. This motivation contradicts the choice of European countries that are migratory destinations for Spaniards, such as Germany or the United Kingdom, where there are few possibilities for professional development and in some cases there is a precarious quality of life for young Spanish migrants (Rodríguez et al., 2015; Rubio & Bellet, 2018). Regarding the micro factors, it's the social networks that influence the migratory destination, in the same way that they affect the decision to migrate, as mentioned above, since the choice is mediated by the references that a family member, friend or distant acquaintance can provide, up to the support they can receive during the settling period in the country of destination.

Finally, it should be noted that studying the discourses of the members of different groups about their reasons for migrating allows us to understand that these are complex and heterogeneous situations, with particularities for each group, and therefore, the expectations they will have in the country of destination as part of their migration project, as well as the risks and vulnerabilities of each group. Beyond these differences, it is inferred from the discourses that migration is always the search for better well-being, whether in its material or symbolic dimension.

Translation: Erika Morales.

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