Venezuelan Migrants' Resilience Strategies and Cultural Integration: A View from Chile

Liliana Acero (Corresponding author)

Voluntary professor at Post-Graduate Programe on Policy Strategies and Development (PPED) at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Academic Director Fundación Cuerpo y Energía: Teoría y Métodos Neoreichianos

Santiago de Chile

Rua Conselheiro Lafaiete 104 Ap. 202, Copacabana, Rio de Janeiro

RJ. CEP: 22081-020 Brazil

Tel: 55-219-7629-6337   E-mail: lilianaacero2009@gmail.com

Pablo Zuleta Pastor

Psychology Professor at the Universidad Bernardo O Higgins

Member of Directing Committee Fundación Cuerpo y Energía: Teoría y Métodos Neoreichianos

Zip code: 8320000. Santiago, Chile

Tel: 56-991-008-621   E-mail: pablo.zuleta@ubo.cl

Abstract

There has been a substantial influx of legal and irregular Venezuelan migrants into Chile in recent years, the number of whom was estimated as of May 2024 to be 532.700. They represent 32.8% of total migrants and the majority of foreign residents. Their expectations in migration were based on the global characterisation of Chile as an 'oasis' in Latin America. They were looking for either mere survival – given the socioeconomic conditions and violence prevailing in Venezuela – or stability and a better standard of living. The present paper develops a qualitative analysis of their resilience capacity and social adaptation strategies during resettlement. Ten in-depth face-to-face interviews were carried out divided

by gender and class. Interviewees' narratives were analysed with an eye to how they describe their networks and relationships, the personal characteristics that favour their integration, their affinities and differences with the host country's cultural trends, and their fears of losing their culture of origin, as well as the possibilities of developing a new life project in Chile. The results show that their resilience patterns are mostly conservative and endurance oriented, though with some divergence. This individualistic component overlaps with a strong reliance on their families and close relationships, mostly among compatriots. However, none of them belong to migrant organisations that can defend their rights, despite their living in a 'hyper neoliberal' country that offers little state support for the implementation of adequate policies that could facilitate their social integration.

Keywords: Migration, Resilience patterns, Cultural integration, Venezuelan migrants

1. Introduction

In the last decade, there has been a substantive influx of Venezuelan migrants into Chile, some arriving legally and others crossing borders using unauthorised routes (representing 70% of the migrant total; between January 2022 and June 2023, the number of Venezuelans was estimated by the police to be 76.722. The migration of Venezuelans to Chile skyrocketed in 2018 with the creation of a new visa for the former – the Democratic Responsibility Visa (DRV) – which, in its first phase, allowed them to enter the country with either a valid or expired passport. This privileged Venezuelan migration and limited Haitian migration, which was subjected to annual quotas and family reunification. In the second phase, the DRV restricted Venezuelan migration by requiring that a migrant request the document at a consular office, and ultimately, this kind of visa was suspended in 2020 (Lara et al., 2021).

The number of Venezuelan migrants in Chile as of May 2024 have been estimated at 532.700 individuals (R4V, 2024). Per the official estimate of the foreign population in Chile in December 2022, 1 625 074 foreign nationals resided in the country, of whom 32.8% at that time were Venezuelan. The 2024 figure includes an estimated population in an irregular situation (107,223), of whom 70,647 (13%) were Venezuelans. Since 2019, Venezuelan migrants have been the majority of the foreign residents in Chile, and in 2024 they accounted for more than a third of the increase in the latter (R4V, 2024).

The situation in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela became critical over the last two decades, especially after the death of President Hugo Chávez in 2013, who was replaced by President Nicolás Maduro. At that point the Venezuelan economic and political crisis deepened (Council on Foreign Affairs, 2018). Poverty and crime escalated to levels never imagined in the country: where 48% of domestic households were in poverty in 2014, the proportion had risen to 81.8% by 2016 (Fundación Bengoa et al., 2016), and also in 2014 the homicide rate was 91,8 per 100 000 inhabitants, the second-highest rate in the region (Observatorio Venezolano de Violencia, 2016). With sex tourism and drug smuggling taking place, Venezuelans became extremely fearful of becoming victims of human trafficking (John, 2018).

President Maduro's actions were met with massive protests and international condemnation and one of the consequences was a process of massive migration, with 'fleeing sought as their [Venezuelans'] only solution'. Migrants started looking for better and safer opportunities and living spaces and as a consequence Venezuela saw a 'forced' global migration – including refugees – that totalled 7.7 million inhabitants (more than 15% of its overall population) as of May 2024, 6.9 million of whom settled in Latin American countries (R4V, 2024).

The most-recent elections including the latest one held on 28 July 2024, have been regarded as neither free nor fair by international independent observers. These elections were especially contentious, as the local opposition was sometimes barred from running or repressed before, during, and after the elections took place. Maduro was presented as having won the presidency, though no evidence was presented, while the true winner, according to reliable voting sources, was the former diplomat Edmundo González Urrutia, who had to

seek asylum in Spain amid a climate of repression of dissent**.**

Multiple stress factors influence the lives of migrants during the adversity they confront before migration, during transit, and as they settle in the host country, such as quality of life in the country of origin; transit risks; exposure to violence, abuse, fraud and climate changes, as well as precarious living conditions. In the specific case of Venezuelans arriving or residing in Chile, increased migration has resulted in a humanitarian crisis. This particular flow has been characterised at least by two different waves of migration. In the first, according to Salgado *et al.* (2018), the Venezuelan migrants differed from other foreigners in Chile due to their educational profile: a majority held university degrees (55,3 %), just above a quarter (27,6 %) had technical degrees, and 8,5 % had completed secondary education. In contrast, the second, more recent wave, which started gradually in 2015, has been of people with a lower economic status and level of training, as well as an increase in irregularity (Torres & Salazar, 2021).

The choice of the country to which to migrate by Venezuelans largely depended on the international image of 'oasis' projected by the Chilean authorities, international organisations and, especially in 2019, President Sebastián Piñera, who was the first to make it possible for Venezuelans to migrate to Chile almost without restrictions (Somma et al., 2021). Chile's 'exceptionalism' in Latin America was made possible by a stable democracy and a steady economic growth that brought about the creation of thousands of jobs while also increasing wages within a 'white' and 'European' culture (Tijoux, Córdova, & Rivera, 2015). Dazzled and drawn by this unrealistic imaginary, Venezuelans were quickly disappointed by the harsh conditions of their lives in Chile. Furthermore, in October 2019 an outbreak of protests questioned the social inequalities of the 'Chilean model' and the political system's lack of legitimacy.

Many of these migrants have managed to get ahead in Chile; others are still looking for possibilities and waiting for opportunities. To face stressful realities the development of individual and social resilience strategies is crucial.

After establishing the context of problem, the paper describes the research approach followed, the main questions it aims to answer, and the qualitative research method adopted. The following sections analyse Venezuelan migrants´ interview narratives on themes closely related to their resilience and cultural integration. First, the paper discusses the social networks they establish and the relationships that have helped them or on whom they depend. Second, the personal characteristics that these interviewees consider facilitate their resilient behaviour are described and the cultural affinities and differences they experience with their hosts. Their own definitions on ways in which cultural loss influences resilience strategies are then discussed and their ability to establish or design a new kind of life project for the future. The study concludes showing their tolerance and endurance and claims that collective action could be beneficial for the defence of their rights as citizens.

2. Research Perspective

Resilience refers to the ability of an individual or a community to respond to different forms

of shock, risk, adversity, and disturbances in ways that enable social adaptation, and renewal or transformation (Ungar, 2012). The term derives from the Latin verb *resilio*, meaning 'jumping back', which speaks to the ability to recover successfully from injury or disaster (Cruz- Mera & Tusev, 2019). Migrants' resilience is shaped by personal attributes, experiences, and histories and also depends upon the perceptions and expectations of the social world that surrounds them (Simich et al., 2012).

Resilience analysis involves the study of adaptive capacity, as well as research on populations' responses: citizens' protests, political demands, novel solutions, institutional reorganisations, and so on. Socioeconomic and political conditions impact the formulation and implementation of resilience strategies (Brown, 2016). For example, the neoliberal formulation of resilience 'tends to make individuals responsible for outcomes while justifying the withdrawal of the State' (Krüger, 2018, p. 54) and focuses on the individual's self-organisation and acculturation.

Gerard Bouchard (2013, p. 267) sets forth three main ways by which communities and individuals can face shocks and recover their former capacities of functioning. These three forms of resilience are (a) the conservative strategy – resisting stress and returning to the system's prior state; (b) the adaptive strategy – using various adjustment methods and negotiations/compromises between social actors; and (c) the progressive strategy – creatively responding to risk and stress and restructuring and changing power relations while facing adversity.

However, the individual self is not static but dynamic, being shaped relationally through identifications and differentiations, power relations, affective networks, and institutions. There is almost a daily remaking of individuals as subjects, especially in the case of migrants who tend to live between 'two internalized worlds' and cultures that overlap and interconnect (Author, 2024). A transnational approach to this topic helps to explain the tendency of migrants to maintain, build, and reinforce multiple linkages with their countries of origin (Glick & Salazar, 2013). Migrants forge and sustain social relations that link together their societies of origin and resettlement, building a network of financial, affection, cultural and information ties that extend across borders (Basch et al., 1994). They thus can live their lives simultaneously in two or more countries.

Bearing in mind the patterns of the explosive recent Venezuelan migration to Chile, the transnationalism of migrants' behaviour, the adverse conditions they confront and the manner in which they do so, this article sets out to investigate qualitatively their experience, guided by three interconnected questions:

- How is resilience behaviour shaped among Venezuelan migrants in Chile?

- How are migrants' resilience strategies narrated by them?

- Are they oriented towards cultural integration?

3. Method

To explore the questions above, first a bibliographic study was carried out that entailed the

analysis of articles by authors specialising in Venezuelan migration. To find these articles searches were performed of Google Scholar, the Interagency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants (R4V), and the websites of relevant international organisations working in Chile. As the second step, ten semi-structured in-depth face-to-face interviews were undertaken with Venezuelan migrants, accessed through a snowballing technique. The interviews, two hours long, were taped and transcribed.

The 10 interviewees were equally divided by gender and they represented different age-cohorts and wage quintiles among Venezuelan migrants who live in the metropolitan area of Santiago de Chile. The majority of interviewees belonged to the lower middle class, the 30–45 years age-cohort they participants had lower schooling levels than the average of 14 years (Joint Data Center on Forced Displacement, 2024). Most of them defined themselves either as *latino* or brown/Caribbean and as non-practising Catholics. They were part of the recent wave of Venezuelan migrants arriving between 2016 and 2020, except for one woman who came to Chile in 2009.

The content of the narratives was analysed following Mulkay (1993, pp. 723-724), who defines "discourse regularities, in form and content, that are built according to pre-existent sociocultural beliefs and reveal an interrelated set of background assumptions". The aim is to pinpoint convergences and divergences between the points of view of different social actors, as well as more-subtle variations in each extreme. Once narratives were classified according to the prevalence of themes, they are contrasted with keywords that reflect the recurrent topics addressed as significant concerns. In this case, keywords and phrases included: resilient behaviour, resilient strategy, social networks, cultural affinities, cultural differences, personality traits, relational sharing, transnational contact, cultural loss and life project. The analysis of narrative extracts will be anonymised, for reasons of confidentiality.

The study undertaken does not pretend to draw universal conclusions, given the small sample analysed. Rather, it has the potential to be illustrative of behavioural trends in a given population. The following sections present the qualitative analysis of narratives on factors that influence individual and social resilience.

4. Results

4.1 Networks and People

Most interviewees had some form of relationship, whether family or friends, in Chile prior to arrival, which was key to reception. These persons tended to offer short-term housing, food, and information, for example, on access and use of Google maps to locate transport, employment possibilities' and understand the host society's behaviour, during the first months. However, a few came without having any previous relational contact.

There is an internalised cultural framework (Moro, 2004) that when migrants resettle, especially when migration was forced or unexpected, does not include cultural clues that enable them to interpret the world into which they are integrating. This situation is stress inducing and requires the use of multiple resources to achieve a favourable adaptation. This is why relying on relatives and/or friends already integrated in Chilean society was a source of

crucial support.

The interviewees recognized that "the impact is stronger upon arrival". According to one male participant, there is a crucial first step "to adapt to survive" and once a person gets organised and makes a good step forward, "things tend to flow". But as other accounts show, this did not happen for everybody.

Interviewees also often obtained information on the documentation process from civic organisations related to the Catholic Church – more specifically from the Jesuit Service for Migration (SJM) or the Catholic Institute for Migration – and less often from websites publishing official data and internet social networks. These two formats of initial integration offered the relative security and safety needed to take the first steps for settlement:

> Well, the first time it was a friend, she received me and helped me get my first job. Afterwards, for the documentation I looked for the Jesuits that are close to the Bustamante Park, this was to get some orientation, including the fact that they help a bit with employment access (man).

The provision of active material support by Chilean hosts was clearly atypical. Only one male interviewee reported having received this:

> My support network of friends that I made in Chile, as I told you, gave me presents of clothes. My boss in the coffee shop at that time gave me a refrigerator, as I had none I had to shop daily for food. Someone else gave me a TV set. The state just the bonds they distributed during the pandemic.

This might be an exception, but if those who represent the 'host society' act effectively in a manner that responds to the everyday needs of migrants, it substantively influences the latter's adaptation. It makes them visible and recognises them in their vulnerability, as well as being subjects worthy of rights.

A man who discovered of being diagnosed with HIV positive on arrival stated:

> For example, when I had to face the problem of being diagnosed with HIV, I went to a foundation that connected me with the public health network. I attended a migration advice meeting only once at the Catholic Institute of Migration. From then on, I took the reins in my hands.

To exercise individual resilience and 'take charge of your own life' some sort of minimum social backing, at least, seems to be a necessary condition, as in this case from the public health system:

> On arrival, relatives, then when I had friends I incorporated them, then clinically the psychiatrist when I needed to get out of that strong depression, and then I started activities that could distract me, for example all the courses I took were to connect and understand people. I used my time as saleswoman to develop confidence because one definitely needs to build a network as nobody knows who you are (woman).

Courses and work often serve the purpose of socialisation.

However, though the interviewees valued the importance of network formation for social integration, as the extract above shows, almost none joined a migrant collective or any other civic society organisation, not even the woman who had been in Chile for a longer period of time. It seems that in the forms of relationships established certain neoliberal values predominated, where relationships were used as instruments for the fulfilment of immediate needs. Han (2014) argues that among contemporary neoliberal subjects, deep friendships are lost and give way to relationships that are not necessarily directed to building collectives.

The quality of the following woman's experience diverges from the rest because at the time she arrived in 2009, there was not as large an influx of Venezuelans as there would be in later periods and in addition some members of her family were already in Chile:

> No, I found employment quickly, I registered at the health clinic soon, found a school also immediately; it was not complicated at all to insert myself into the Chilean society. My family gave me fundamental support as they had already opened a path, most especially my daughter who was the first to arrive.

Possibly, a certain 'state of daze' would have predominated for this female migrant if the new frameworks of understanding had not been transmitted by those family members who had arrived earlier on.

4.2 Personal Characteristics

The main personality traces these interviewees report as necessary to develop resilience and social integration tend to converge. These include personal qualities such as independence, sociability, willingness to learn, motivation to get ahead, openness to accept the challenge, perseverance, patience, a strong character, and an empathic attitude. They often refer to these personal qualities with a lot of pride.

The following narrative extract summarises some of these aspects within a specific type of individual resiliency, one that emphasises empathy towards the Other:

> Resilience mainly, beyond my empathy that I think is felt like feedback because when I meet somebody I immediately ask: 'How are you?' I am concerned about him/her. Then next day he/she ask me the same thing, they worry about me. I think I am a sociable person, as I talk to many people.

This male interviewee describes personal qualities and responsibility as the basis of a resilient response to new circumstances.

Two interviewees defined resilience almost as tolerance/endurance. One, a male, said:

> I think that it is resilience and endurance, that is if you have already left, if you have already sold what you had, what are you going to do? Return with empty pockets? With nothing? One has to tolerate and try to solve the problems that appear.

This interviewee expresses a way of thinking intimately related to traditional forms of masculinity: a mix between endurance and 'the idea of not being able to go back' without demonstrating that something had been achieved in his life through migration (Silva-Segovia

et al., 2021). The second interviewee, a woman, said:

> I think it depends on willpower and on always moving ahead and have a character that does not let either sorrows or a bad situation bend you. What has really bent me has been only the cold climate, but one tries to move forward in the best way possible.

Often the climate differences between Chile and Venezuela are pointed out as sources of suffering, sometimes even of frequent illness. Without denying the difficulties of adapting to cold weather when coming from a warm country, this type of argument could be used as a defensive or protective strategy to deal with mental stress in a more manageable way. As Le Breton (2017) argues, sometimes it seems easier to dwell upon or face physical pain than psychic suffering.

However, more than half of the participants mentioned that they were very grateful to locals and compatriots who helped them overcome the climate conditions, especially by freely providing them with adequate clothing:

> Clothing when I arrived, a lot of it to wear in a winter I had never experienced. The first winter I was walking and I began to feel cold in my hands, cold, cold. I had a coat without pockets. Suddenly, I stopped feeling cold and when I arrived at the metro, I tried to reach for my cell phone and my hands were asleep; they did not function and I could not understand why. I had no clothing. I had arrived just in shorts and a T-shirt (man).

The shelter received was both concrete, as well as symbolic: it helped him with feeling his own hands and developing resilient actions once again.

Patience is another personal trait that is often crucial, especially in relation to the long registration processes and in dealing with the acceptance of differences with locals. The documentation required is ill-defined and residency approval extremely slow, being marked by inconsistencies and uncertainties that are part and parcel of the recent (2021) migration law (Authors, 2024). Migrants' explicit comments in the interview questionnaires tend to centre around this issue and on how it produces a strong sense of insecurity in most of them.

In general, interviewees sounded optimistic, extroverted, 'willing to laugh', and demonstrated a strong sense of willpower when facing difficulties – probably cultural characteristics of their mother country that they had internalised. Garassini (2011), analysing Venezuelans' dominant cultural traits, also emphasises their disposition to gratitude, which could be discerned in some of the interviewees' narratives. However, a certain loneliness was transmitted in the adaptation behaviour being described, as it depends exclusively upon their individuality. In some cases these attitudes transform into denial, especially when there is maltreatment that is not confronted, possibly as a form of protection:

> I try always to see the positive side. I do not mean I do not see the negative one and that there are moments when I collapse, but I try to focus always in the positive side of the situation, so if something bad happens to me with someone, what helps me is to try to get over it. I always try to put on a smile and I like a lot to help whether it brings me a benefit or not (woman).

Recognition of potential mental collapse seems to be more frequently expressed by women than men.

Self-criticism about longing too much for their country of origin also applies to some participants and reflects difficulties in developing resilient strategies. A woman explained:

> I cannot forget my Venezuela, my banner, yellow, blue, and red, my *arepa* [local corn cake], my family. Maybe I say it is toxic because I am clinging to that and I am in Chile and I am not enjoying what there is here, maybe that is why I am saying it.

It seems this interviewee dwells on her being ungrateful to the new country and denies her right to long and hence the grief associated with mourning loss that needs to be felt, accepted, and/or expressed to facilitate the development of resiliency (Volkan, 2019).

In general, within their resilient behaviour, which could be also described in most case as a tendency towards endurance, the majority of the interviewees tended to share with others their achievements only and omit their difficulties. In a third of the cases, difficulties were shared only with spouses, other relatives, or sometimes with Venezuelan friends. The reason recurrently mentioned for adopting this attitude is lack of trust when it comes to revealing their vulnerabilities.

One woman somewhat diverged from the general behavioural pattern, though only regarding close relationships, stating:

> Yes, yes, yes, I do not have problems talking, I need to talk to feel better. If I do not talk with my parents I talk to a friend.

In summary, interviewees' resilience strategies tended to blend endurance with active integration, though most reported using strategies of resilience that resemble what Bouchard (2013) has defined as conservative strategies, which entail resisting stress and returning to the prior state.

4.3 Affinities and Cultural Differences between Venezuelans and Chileans

Interviewees tended to dwell longer on this topic. The general convergent view was that cultural differences predominated between Venezuelans and Chileans and the interviewees did not feel affinity with all of aspects of Chilean culture. Fortunately, the idea of reaching an absolute acculturation was unthinkable among them, as it would do away with their specific identity, with the host group's culture becoming dominant and subjugating their own, i.e. it would eradicate multiculturalism (Moro, 2004).

They felt affinity especially in the way Chileans value family life. All of them admired the celebration Chileans engage in during the week of the 18th of September of what they call *fiestas patrias* (national holidays). This event celebrates the country's independence. It is characterised as a week-long holiday during which many cultural activities, such as street music, dancing, and folklore displays of the *cueca* (the national dance) take place around the country, especially within the *fondas* (pavilions of varying size and construction) set up for this event. When democratic rule returned the whole celebration was extended and continued

as a tradition when many cultural activities take place.

Venezuelans' active and joyous participation in the festivities can also be partly related to the fact that it may be their main or only extended holiday, given their long working hours. It also reminds them of their experience at Christmas in their own country, which was their main national celebration during the year and which they missed enormously. Moreover, they felt that the social climate in Chile shifts in a positive way towards joy and contentment during that week.

A woman explained:

> I like their national holidays, I like that month because everybody is happy, they become friendly, the rest of the year they are not so happy. I do not like that aspect of Chileans. I also like their gatherings in the afternoon for the once [a lighter meal than dinner] with friends. ….I like a lot how the Chileans socialize; I feel identified with them.

Based upon the positive value assigned to these activities, interviewees liked the love the Chileans have of their country and the respect they have for their traditions, as well as their capacity to protest when they feel something is wrong. Other cultural practices that only some of them liked is talking with double meaning, irony, and making frequent jokes. However, a third of them reported not having any cultural affinities with the local culture and often felt this was a good reason for wanting to migrate elsewhere.

Among cultural aspects they disliked, they emphasized the host society's tendency to hypocrisy, the gossiping (*cahuín*), the criticism of others behind their back, and the inability to openly bring up aspects they dislike in others. At work, they often considered Chileans as inefficient, negligent, or disorganised, which usually resulted in generating 'double work' for everybody in order to correct mistakes or attain goals. One male interviewee said:

> And the only thing I do not like is their incapacity to act directly, because they can arrive and say, 'Hello. How are you my friend? I am happy you are well'. And then [they] turn around and say, 'Shit, this dude is boring', instead of approaching one directly, 'You know, dude, I do not like you and I can't tolerate your attitude'…. They prefer to avoid talking and the relationship becomes hypocritical so as to flee from confrontation.

Also, the participants did not relate well with the rapid pace of life in Santiago. They made recurrent references to their own difficulties in understanding the way locals expressed themselves, as they thought the latter talked 'too quickly'. They explained that they felt excluded when the words used by Chileans for objects of daily use were totally different in their mother tongue. Though the shared language is Spanish, they commented that the local jargon generates important communicational problems.

Narratives were polarised in their descriptions of certain behavioural aspects of the host society. A few interviewees regarded Chileans as showing companionship, while the majority considered them as closed up in themselves, being defensive, competitive, not very empathic, and distrustful of others. Some migrants blamed the country's very long dictatorship as the main cause for the population's development of the cultural norms they disliked:

I do not like when they are in the street and have no awareness of their surroundings. Often they have little empathy and they are very closed up, maybe due to the history they lived during the dictatorship, because then life involved just taking care of oneself. It is difficult to gain their trust. Another thing I dislike is that they are competitive and do not cooperate. Maybe this all was caused by the same reason (woman).

Another male interviewee expressed his dislike of 'their passive aggressive attitude. Keeping things too much to themselves and suddenly, exploding publicly when it is out of place'.

The lack of affinity with certain cultural attitudes might lead to rejection of the new culture as a whole and thus make resilient strategies more complex due to reduced cultural identification. Baez et al. (2022) analyse different types of migrants' acculturation/assimilation processes and propose the following classification of such processes: (1) integration, meaning maintaining the culture of origin and adopting the host culture; (2) separation, which implies keeping the culture of origin and rejecting the culture of reception; (3) assimilation, described as the rejection of the culture of origin and the adoption of the new culture; and (4) margination, in which both cultures are rejected. The participants interviewed seemed to move between cultural integration and separation, though the latter was not absolute as it involved only certain aspects with which they felt little affinity, as shown above.

Interviewees described Venezuelan culture as more open than the Chilean one, though not 'liberal' enough – referring to its lack of acceptance of cultural and gender diversity. They stated that Venezuelans have a tendency to play more openly with words and in life in general. One of the male interviews felt there was greater gender equality in Chile than in Venezuela: 'Here you interact with both sexes in the same way'.

4.4 Cultural Loss

Three formulations in relation to the potential loss of roots and traditions prevail within the narratives analysed. But interviewees all concurred they would not lose their culture due to migration. The first vision is based on a strong longing, sometimes understood as the longing for people who might die; the second is based on the acceptance that origins are always acting within the personality, though they can be complemented with other behaviours; and the third is more prone to accept cultural integration/adaptation through assimilation, incorporation, or even fusion with the host's culture, language, accent, or modes of expression.

Regarding one variation within the first point of view, a female interviewee said:

No, I take Venezuela wherever I go, it is like my 'toxic love'. I very much like learning about Chilean culture, I like their idioms even when they say rude things. I like to know what they mean, for what they use them, but it is not something I would incorporate into myself.

This is an example of a cultural learning function like an 'add on' instead of an integration or transformation of one's own cultural frameworks. With the phrase 'toxic love', she shows she

is full of longing, though she is conscious that this might act as an obstacle for her integrating adequately into the new culture.

In one case, the sole idea of losing her culture made a female interviewee cry and she stated, 'I do not even want to think of this possibility' and also did not want to consider the loss of relatives through death. The loss of roots is symbolically represented as death, treason, or forgetfulness and therefore one must distance oneself from even thinking about this possibility (Achotegui, 2020).

Regarding the second vision of potential cultural loss, interviewees felt that their Venezuelan culture lies in their hearts. Some expressions of this point of view were 'This is carried in one's blood', 'Values are always maintained', and 'No, not at all; because I do not think my personality depends on the place where I am, but on myself'.

A more emphatic narrative regarding this vision was put forth by a male interviewee:

> In spite of the fact that I do not want to impose them and I do not want to say it is the only thing that defines me, I do not think I will lose them if I stay here. I would be very happy if I am allowed to acquire those of Chile, but always remembering my roots and origins, always. I think, I will never lose them.

For this interviewee, keeping his own identity and roots was not at odds with the desire to incorporate some Chilean traditions and attitudes as well as colloquial forms of speaking into his life. This last narrative shows a certain openness to cultural integration.

The vision that predominated tried to balance both cultural worlds. As a male interview put it, 'One makes a trade-off between trying to take in both cultures, obviously there are things one will never forget'. A variant of this third vision from a woman pointed at the possibility of openly enriching one culture with the other, a sort of multicultural integration:

> I think mine I do not lose; I would enrich it with those of Chile. In fact, I continue speaking with my Venezuelan accent, at home we eat Venezuelan food. When we give a party, as my brother-in-law is Chilean, we make one Venezuelan and one Chilean dish. As I cook Chilean food at the restaurant, I have learnt certain dishes, so I have made a fusion.

In the answers to this question, interviewees tended to expand their views on linguistic differences and add the role of the strong presence of Venezuelans in Chile as another factor that contributed to their feeling reassured about the continuation of their own culture. One participant provided many examples of how he referred differently to types of clothing when talking with other Venezuelans versus with Chileans. How Venezuelans addressed others respectfully was another recurrent topic, e.g. on language differences in using the word 'you', for which there are two types of formulations in Venezuela: a colloquial and a respectful version especially used to approach the authorities or the elderly. One of these words is not used at all in the Chilean language and a different word is required to make that respectful distinction. Social assimilation for a few also entailed changing the way they talk and the expressions used. A woman reported: 'I adapt myself, I have a neutral accent, I think. And use

words they say here'. This is a variant of the third vision.

In some cases, interviewees were worried about how to transmit their traditions of origin or their language specificities to their children. A male interviewee said 'Perhaps my son, it is not that he will lose them but he will not have them. The idea is also not to confuse him, I maintain local words with my spouse and my friends'. On this topic a woman interviewee stated:

> For myself no, as I came here as an adult, and I realize when I am discussing, that the accent I thought I had lost comes out and even when Venezuelans say I have lost it. But with my four-year-old daughter I feel strange when she asks me, "Mum, I want to know how to talk".

Age was another variable mentioned that could provide reassurance regarding the maintenance of own's cultural background.

In relation to this topic, transnational networks act as an important way to maintain not only emotional ties but also cultural ones. Almost half of the individuals interviewed communicated daily by the internet or phone with family members and friends and sent weekly remittances of money to Venezuela or elsewhere to support their families. These mixed identities and roles across the two cultures, of origin and resettlement, are often valued as a resilience strategy by Venezuelan migrants in Chile.

4.5 New Life Project

Several migration researchers have found that the conscious formulation of a new life project is a factor that contributes strongly towards the healthy development of migrants' psychological resilience, resilience strategies, and social integration (Lindert et al., 2023; Ungar, 2012; Cetrez et al., 2021; Lee et al., 2020; Rashid & Gregory, 2014). Taking on new perspectives and tasks possibly also increases faith and hope in relation to the future.

However, not many of those interviewed had been able to either think or design a new life project within Chile and even fewer to put it into practice, even among those who had been in the new country for quite a while. The following quote from a female interviewee lays bare how difficult it was to work long hours and simultaneously develop a new life project: 'No, at the moment, I have not projected myself beyond today. I go to work and return home and I feel calm'. The participant talks about a life without horizons and curiously states she is at peace with it.

A strong wish to own their own housing was expressed by most interviewees, though only a few were taking steps in this direction. Also, almost half of the interviewees – mainly men – had thought about establishing an independent business, usually in partnership with spouses or family. Their projects usually entailed using knowledge acquired in Venezuela, e.g. about local foods. Preparation for this purpose often meant trying out possibilities in quite a realistic manner, as related by a male interviewee:

> There is a dream of having something like a coffee shop. My partner is very good at the kitchen. He cooks very but very well. And there is a project we have in mind to be

developed soon, materialise it, I think it is possible to do it here. Maybe a restaurant, a cafeteria with some meals, something belonging to us.

Another male interviewee said:

The project of owning a family business started after being settled here, because when I was living in Venezuela 6 years ago I did not think of that. I only thought about the day-to-day living, work to earn money to survive and now, that I am here and have a daughter and have matured I think more about the future.

In contrast to the previously presented perspectives on the topic of a new life project, in these last two narratives having one was felt as a source of 'life' instead of anguish. The commitment to fatherhood, being older, and being in a mixed marriage (of a Venezuelan and a Chilean) might be factors behind this viewpoint. The two interviewees who had family residing in other countries were more inclined towards using their accumulated savings to develop their entrepreneurial purposes abroad (Italy and Peru were mentioned). A variant of this view was expressed by a male interviewee with a university degree in systems engineering who had worked in his field in Chile for an extended period of time after arriving and as of the time of the interviewee owned a liquor store with a partner. Given the economic support of owning a business, he said that he wanted to go back to work professionally and maybe take a short study course.

In two other cases, the life projects of a male and a female interviewee solely included family reunification: 'Look, my project would be to be together with my family again and provide them with stability and a future, so that they do not have to experience what I had to'.

A radically divergent view expressed total uncertainty regarding the future and a distrust about life planning – possibly due to the fear the social protests of 19 October have inspired in this population, which may have reminded them of negative experiences during their exit from Venezuela. The approach to life presented in the following extract was also influenced by a certain traumatic way of experiencing the original migration, i.e. suddenly having to abandon what had already been built at home to restart at 'point zero'. A life project is thus seen as a source of anxiety. When one life project is lost, maybe building a new one can be felt as a risk, especially if the first experience generated a wound that has not healed or even post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). A female interview said,

I have not been able to think about a new life project, no, because when one has a divided heart, one learns not to make plans. Because if the same happens to Chile as to my own country and we have to run away again, then I do not make plans. I do not think I am going to have a car, a house as I had in Venezuela. And I had to leave the country with a suitcase of 23 kilos and nothing else. So I live in 'the here and now', seeing what life brings me. I do not make plans.

5. Conclusions

In the sample under study, most interviewees reported using resilience strategies of an individualistic character, based upon how they defined their own identities. However, these

strategies were often also social, as the interviewees relied heavily on the relationships with their families and other people close to them for support, mostly compatriots. But the interviewees were not collectively minded, in a standard way: they did not engage in other forms of association, organisation, or grouping, except in terms of informal linkages with other members of the Venezuelan community. Joining an organisation could be useful for collectively addressing the issues that directly impact their lives and/or their rights as citizens. This type of institution could consider migrants' main claims, suggest changes to policies related to migration and social welfare, and confront state agencies when their actions are inadequate actions. However, confrontation of and resistance to injustice tended to be either avoided or performed alone by the interviewees.

The main resilience strategy adopted was conservative, though it encompassed some subtle variations and there were a few divergent narratives more oriented towards cultural integration. The interviewees, that are strongly socially discriminated had adopted a defensive survival strategy due to the effect upon them of the weight of power asymmetries (Mbembe, 2003). Reframing resilience to engage directly with normative concerns requires the privileging of critical discussions on power and justice. In this sense, it is difficult for the migrants to symbolically appropriate the social space into which they have been inserted – known as a practice of re-territorialisation (Herrera et al., 2023; Haesbaert, 2013). When Venezuelans experience themselves as 'those from outside' or 'those that do not strictly belong to Chile', they can feel as subjects without rights. Chilean society does not facilitate the exercise of their rights as citizens.

On the one hand, the interviewees' difficulty in dealing with the grief and pain related to cultural loss, the harassment suffered in the migration process, and their lack of participation in existing collective associations lead them to a form of resilience understood in the traditional theoretical sense of tolerance and endurance. This type of resilient strategy does not deal with the capacity of people or collective organisations to mobilise and make political and socioeconomic demands of society and, more specifically, of the state (Author, 2024).

On the other hand, public institutional support is scarce and appears more as a declaration of intention within planning than as real practice. Public efforts on behalf of the migrants also often overtly hinder the meeting of their demands, for example, by not facilitating employment opportunities or creating bureaucratic obstacles for migrants' integration into the public services. This problem is especially pronounced in a society where basic services are to a great extent privatised.

The results of this qualitative study do not pretend to be generalizable to the whole population of Venezuelan migrants in Chile. But at least the results reveal some relevant trends in how Venezuelan themselves narrate their patterns of individual and social resilience and cultural integration. The reader should be reminded that these results are based on a sample of individuals who do not belong to collective migrant organisations. A relevant omission in the article is that it does not concentrate on the negative influence everyday discrimination experiences have upon the resilience and integration patterns used and this

should be analysed in future studies.

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