

ISSN 0976-271X



# IMDS Working Paper Series

Working Paper Nos. 28–30  
December, 2010

**Latin American Skilled Migration: Historical Trends and Recent Challenges**

*Lucas Luchilo*

**Trends and Characteristics of Latino American Skilled Migration to Spain and the United States (2000-2008)**

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**Diaspora Inquiry: Search for a Method**


*Aditya Raj*

**International Migration and Diaspora Studies Project**

Zakir Husain Centre for Educational Studies

School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University

New Delhi-110 067, India



The IMDS Working Paper Series is published by International Migration and Diaspora Studies Project at the Zakir Husain Centre for Educational Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

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Citations of this publication should be made in the following manner:  
Author, Year, "Title of the Paper", IMDS Working Paper, No. #, month,  
International Migration and Diaspora Studies Project, ZHCES, JNU, New Delhi.

ISSN 0976-271X

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# Latin American Skilled Migration: Historical Trends and Recent Challenges

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## Abstract

*This article analyzes the main trends in the migration of the highly skilled –mainly of scientists and engineers– from Latin America between 1960 and nowadays. Compared to non skilled migration, highly skilled emigrants are less visible and do not represent an important problem for receiving countries – on the contrary, they are usually seen as a valuable resource. Assimilation in the receiving societies is comparatively easy for foreign professionals –especially for those working in science and technology– and they are not seen as a burden on social security systems, and they are targets of policies aimed to recruit highly skilled workers. The purpose of this paper is to summarize the main trends in the history of Latin American highly skilled emigration, in the context of changing international conditions and national development patterns. This paper identifies three main periods: the first one focused on the emergency of the brain drain as a problem for many Latin American countries, the second one organized around the exiles of professionals derived from dictatorships and political persecution, and the third one concerning the impacts of globalization on mobility and migration trends. In this article, highly skilled migration and mobility are considered as a part of wider trends and also as a specific process related to changes in the development of science and technology systems and activities. In this sense, the paper summarizes general information related to highly skilled personnel –defined mainly by the level of educational attainment– and display more detailed information for some relevant groups –graduate students and researchers.*

**Keywords:** Skilled migration, Latin America, Brain drain, Science and Technology, Students, Researchers.

## 1. Introduction

In 1960s´ professionals, scientists and engineers from several Latin-American countries began to migrate towards more developed countries. The trends differed between Latin American countries. Some of them had had a long history of immigration. Millions of workers had traveled to Latin America, especially to Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay during the last decades of the thirteenth century and to the 1930s. Most of them were peasants from Italy, Spain, Portugal and Eastern Europe, but there was a small group of highly skilled professionals attracted by the job opportunities or pushed by wars and political persecutions. Many of them played an important role in the creation of scientific institutions and industrial firms in the region. They were also important as leaders of the associations of immigrants (Vessuri, 2000).

The European migration tide dwindled in the thirties, returned to grow after the war and stopped in the fifties. Some Latin American countries continued to receive immigrants, mainly from border countries. Most of them were economic migrants but there was also an important group of migrants who were escaping from dictatorships and political persecutions. From the beginning of the decade of 1960, a growing flow of skilled emigration started to address United States and Europe. From that time onwards, skilled emigration became a permanent tendency, of higher or lower importance depending on the country and the period.

This article analyzes the main trends in the migration of the highly skilled –mainly of scientists and engineers– from Latin America between 1960 and nowadays. Although the subject is interesting and important, it has not attracted enough attention. A combination of factors may explain the relative lack of interest –a trend that is rapidly changing. Compared to non skilled migration, highly skilled emigrants are less visible and do not represent an important problem for receiving countries –on the contrary, they are usually seen as a valuable resource. Assimilation in the receiving societies is comparatively easy for foreign professionals –especially for those working in science and technology– and they are not seen as a burden on social security systems, and they are targets of policies aimed to recruit highly skilled workers.

The growing importance of the mobility and migration of the highly skilled is leading to a sharp increase in the number and scope of the studies on this subject, not only by migration experts but also from scholars in the field of science and technology studies. However, these investigations tend to focus on the most important groups, mainly from Asia and in the field of ICT.

The studies on Latin American highly skilled migration tend to focus on two basic aspects: the magnitude and composition of the stocks and flows of emigrants and the drivers of the migration process. Other dimensions, as the integration of Latin American skilled emigrants and their performance in universities and firms, their relationship with their countries of origin, their role in sustaining the emigration flows and the behavior on remittances –all aspects relevant in contemporary migration research– are slightly known.

As it is widely known in migration studies, the coverage and availability of information sources is the main obstacle to draw a reliable and detailed picture of migration flows of scientists and engineers. The high quality of US sources helps to alleviate but not to solve the lack of information. The US is the main destination for Latin American scientists and engineers, but the growing importance of European destination –Spain in the first place– highlights the limitations of the sources of information.

The paper aims to summarize the main trends in the history of Latin American highly skilled emigration, in the context of changing international conditions and national development patterns. Thus, we identify three main periods: the first one focused on the emergency of the brain drain as a problem for many Latin American countries, the second one organized around the exiles of professionals derived from dictatorships and political persecution, and the third one concerning the impacts of globalization on mobility and migration trends.

In the first period, the factors related to skilled migration were linked to the United States' job opportunities and attraction policies. The reasons for migration were mainly economical, related to wages and possibilities of professional improvement. In the section devoted to this period, we outline the international context and the main migration trends and impacts on Latin-American countries.

The second section deals with the period of exiles, where the most visible and important feature was the impact of authoritarianism on skilled migration. The spreading of dictatorships along Latin America had important consequences: many researchers were forced to leave their countries, escaping from a dangerous and hostile political context. The persistence of the authoritarian rule also discouraged exiles to try to return. The dark political



climate also affected the decisions of emigrates who did not leave the country for political reasons but for professional motives. From the point of view of the consolidation of institutions and research teams, the impacts were unquestionably negative.

The third section reviews mobility and migration trends in the context of globalization. In the last 20 years the characteristics of mobility flows of skilled personnel, the policies to try to steer or control the movements and the conceptual frameworks to interpret a process more complex and diverse, have changed.

The possibility to systematize a general and detailed picture on skilled migrations is conditioned by the information gap between an increasingly complex phenomenon and the coverage of the information sources (Lowell and Findlay, 2001). In this article, highly skilled migration and mobility are considered as a part of wider trends and also as a specific process related to changes in the development of science and technology systems and activities. In this sense, we summarize general information related to highly skilled personnel –defined mainly by the level of educational attainment– and display more detailed information for some relevant groups –graduate students, researchers.

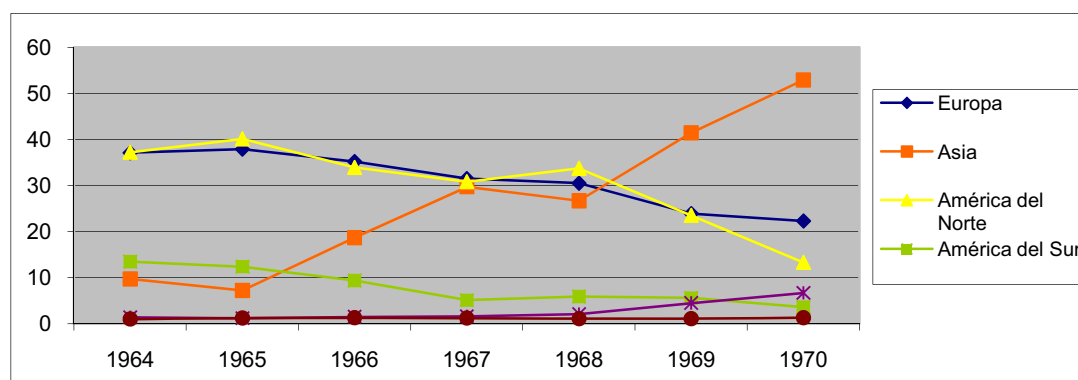
## 2. The Years of the “Brain Drain”

The concept of “brain drain” was coined by the Royal Society in the early 60’s to describe a British –and European– phenomenon. But in that moment the trends were changing and the problem that lead the Royal Society to call the public attention was vanishing for the UK. The international movements of scientists, engineers and physicians began to affect the developing countries: from the mid-60s there was a sharp increase in the migration flows of professionals from Asia –the main region of origin of emigrants–, Latin America and Africa (Brandi, 2006).

### 2.1 The Magnitude and Drivers of Latin American Skilled Migration Flows

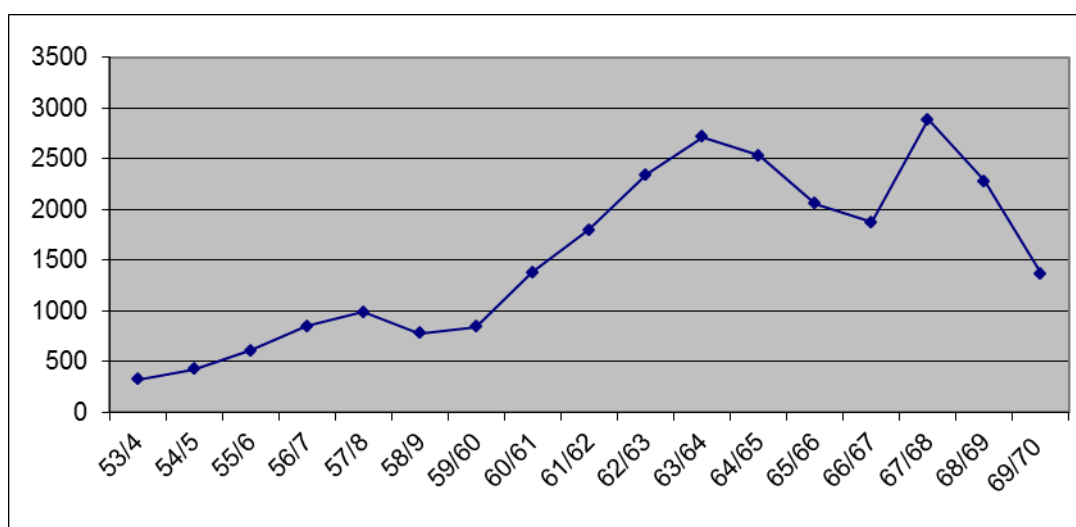
The size and importance of Latin-American skilled emigration can be appreciated in some studies based on data from the United States. Figures 1 and 2 reveal an increase in skilled immigration and a decrease in the percentage of skilled immigrants in the whole immigrant flows. By early 1950s, the skilled Latin-American immigrants were around 300 and by the 1960s they almost reached 3000. At the same time, this phenomenon was overshadowed by the skilled immigration from Asian countries.

Figure 1: Highly Skilled Migration to the United States, by Region of Origin, 1964-1970



Source: Brandi, 2006, on data from Forney (1972)

Figure 2: Trends in Latin-American immigration to the United States, by Categories for admitted Professionals and Technicians, 1953-54 to 1969-70



Source: Schwartzman, 1972, on INS Data

These movements of skilled professionals were not an isolated phenomenon. On the contrary, they were part of a major immigration trend. The data on legal residence status awarded to Latin American immigrants in the US show a sharp increase during the decades of 1950 and 1960, due to the convergence of a highly demanding labor market and the modification of migration laws –from a system based on quotas by national origin to another one which privileged family reunification and the recruitment of foreign professionals and technicians. These changes lead to an important growth in the number of immigrants from Asia and Latin America.<sup>1</sup>

Which was the main driver of the growth of the skilled migration in this period? Probably, the most important factor was the demand for skilled workers by the US firms, universities and research organizations. The shortages of skilled personnel to match the needs of the expansion of the firms, the universities and research organizations, and the health system of the US made the recruitment of skilled workers an appealing option. This alternative was supported by migratory regulations and administrative practices that facilitated the entry under a wide range of legal conditions and the further transition towards permanent residence for many professionals and technicians. From that moment on, the US orientations concerning migration policy showed a consistent bias towards skilled migration. The flexibility and dynamics of American labor markets –including the academic and research labor markets– were key factors to ascertain the effective integration of a very significant numbers of skilled immigrants.

Internal conditions in many Latin-American countries also facilitated the convergence with the US demand. Since the 1950s –with differences in the rate and depth of the processes– Latin-American countries experienced processes of economic and social modernization that included governmental initiatives to promote scientific activities and improve the quality of their universities. On the other hand, bottlenecks faced by

<sup>1</sup> On the changes in migratory legislation and its impact on the United States see, Clark, Timothy and Jeffrey (2002) and Roger (2004).

industrialization and in the agricultural production in the most developed Latin American countries –Argentina, Brazil and Mexico– led to the creation of institutions devoted to improve agricultural and industrial technology. The expansion of the middle classes had an important impact on the higher education sector, with an increase in the number of students and universities.

In this context, the international mobility became an alternative not only for the university graduates from the upper classes but also for an increasing number of graduates from the middle classes, with an educational and cultural capital that made them fit to face with possibilities of success the experience of studying, working and living abroad. The mobility of non skilled workers –especially from Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean– also experienced a very important growth. Migrations from Latin American countries to the United States showed a dualistic pattern: flows of professionals and technicians and massive movements of low skilled workers, destined to jobs which characteristics were rejected by the natives.

Therefore, it is not strange that the Latin-American experiences concerning scientists and technicians emigration that had a higher profile and drove preferential attention were the ones from there more modernized countries in the region, especially Argentina. Horowitz and Oteiza’s pioneer studies revealed a significant emigration of engineers towards United States, in a context of the expansion of a modern higher education system in Argentina (Horowitz, 1962; Oteiza, 1969). This increase happened in the context of a notable change of scale of Latin-American flows towards United States, as it’s shown in Table 1. The most significant information of the series for Argentina is the one of the decade of the 1960s were almost 50,000 Argentines emigrated to the United States, a number that had never happened before and was not reached it in the following decades.

**Table 1: Latin-Americans admitted as Immigrants in the United States, by Region and Countries of Previous Residence, 1931-1980**

	1931-40	1941-50	1951-60	1961-70	1971-80	1981-90
Mexico	22.319	60.589	299.811	453.937	640.294	1.655.843
Caribbean	15.502	49.725	123.091	470.213	741.126	872.051
Central America	5.861	21.665	44.751	101.330	134.640	468.088
South America	7.803	21.831	91.628	257.940	295.741	461.847
Argentina	1.349	3.338	19.486	49.721	29.897	27.327
Colombia	1.223	3.858	18.048	72.028	77.347	122.849
Total	51.510	183.086	618.992	1.303.064	1.812.796	3.458.287

Source: USCIS

The investigations on skilled migration in Argentina focus on engineers. Using the registers of the United States’ Immigration and Naturalization Service, Oteiza elaborated a series with the number of Argentinean professionals and technicians admitted as immigrants in United States, between 1950 and 1966. In that period 6545 persons entered the country, among these 1.131 engineers, 1.180 physicians and 1.323 teachers and professors. The number of engineers that moved to the United States between 1950 and 1961 was equivalent to the 8% of the engineers graduated in Argentina in that period.

On the emigration of scientists, Oteiza pointed out that in the same period 324 Argentinean scientists –most of them chemists– moved to the United States. Probably this figure was underestimating the real emigration, since many researchers could have been included in the categories “teachers and professors” and “non-classified professionals”.

The case of Argentina shows some interesting features. As it's often mentioned in literature about the relationship between migration and development, skilled migration does not come mainly from less developed countries but frequently from countries in the process of modernization. Furthermore, Argentina's case is an example in which a significant flow of skilled emigration took place in a context where the unemployment was low and the demand for technical and professional jobs was growing. Ciapuscio shows a very interesting fact: in the years where the Argentina's skilled emigration increased (Ciapuscio's work focuses over the period of 1960-1964), the immigration to Argentina of professionals and technicians of other countries was also increasing in a similar order of magnitude (Ciapuscio, 1965).

Colombia was another of the Latin-American countries that experienced an important emigration, in absolute terms and as a percentage of the stock of highly skilled personnel. Unlike Argentina –who in the decades of 1970, 1980 and 1990 decreased its emigration rates regarding the 1960s- the increase in Colombian emigration since the decade of the 1960s was the beginning for a continuous growth of emigration flows to the United States. In the case of professionals, the estimations from Chaparro and Arias –also based on the information from the INS- are of 6.470 professionals and technicians for the period 1961-1970. These authors also estimated the percentage represented by the skilled emigrants that entered United States between 1961 and 1966 in relationship with the total of the university graduates from Colombian universities in the period, which was near 17%, with a peak of 23% in health science (Chaparro Osorio and Arias Osorio, 1981).

Compared to Argentina, the impact of Colombian skilled emigration to the United States was more important, due to the lower number of university graduates. Something similar occurred with the less developed countries, where the shortage of college degrees led to the fact that small emigration movements affected in a significant way the availability of skilled personnel.

Other Latin-American countries were not affected by the brain in the same extent of Argentina and Colombia. The Brazilian case is the most important. Based over an important survey made to Brazilian professionals who had studied abroad and had return to the countries, Schwartzman observed that the problem of the emigration of Brazilian professionals was not very important in quantitative terms. Also, the author remarks “the fact that Brazilian professionals who have studied abroad possess an exceptionally high status, in relative terms to the country in which they live that is reflected in their levels of income, life style and job satisfaction” (Schwartzman, 1972).

The permanent emigration of professionals to the United States was the predominant form of mobility in this period. For scientists was also important the mobility for doctoral studies, that in many cases led to subsequent migration. The evolution of the enrollment of foreign students in US universities grew in a constant way between the decades of 1950 and 1970. Since that period, foreign graduate students represented a privileged group for the recruitment of scientists to work in the United States.

**Table 2: Evolution in the Enrolment of University Students Studying Abroad, 1950-1980 (in thousands)**

1950	1955	1960	1965	1970	1975	1980
110	150	240	350	510	670	940

Source: Schott, 1998, on UNESCO data (Schott, 1998).

The experience of graduate studies abroad did not always led to permanent emigration. In many cases, it was a way for the improvement of the capacities of the students, who returned to the country of origin with a useful experience and academic relations. This was the case of Brazilian students abroad, who traveled with governmental scholarships and later returned to the country, where they found a job fitted to their expectations. In other cases the preference to return to their countries was different. In the multinational study conducted by UNITAR in the decade of 1970, different trends can be observed with regard to the plans to stay abroad from many students from different countries (Glaser, 1978). For students from Latin-American countries, the results were the following:

**Table 3: Students' Mid-term Plans Abroad in Developing Countries, 1970s, in Percentages**

Country of origin	Certainly will return and stay in their country	Probably will return and stay in their country	Uncertain	Probably will go abroad and stay	Certainly will go abroad and stay
Trinidad and Tobago	23	25	19	16	17
Jamaica	37	33	8	20	2
Haiti	29	33	8	13	17
Mexico	52	20	8	12	8
Brazil	69	13	8	8	2
Colombia	60	13	1	24	2
Argentina	16	29	16	37	2
Venezuela	63	5	30	2	0

Source: Glaser (1978)

As it has been pointed out, Brazilian students showed a greater propensity to return and stay in their country. The Argentinean students were in the opposite side, with a high intention to stay abroad. Students from Haiti and Trinidad and Tobago also showed a high intention to stay abroad.

## 2.2 The Impacts

In which way did outlined trends have a negative impact on the process of building national scientific and technological systems during the decades of 1950 and 1960? The answer cannot be categorical. In the first place, brain drain was not a generalized phenomenon for all the countries of the region; therefore one should only consider those countries which experienced significant losses. But still, in this case it is difficult to ascribe a precise impact of emigration on the evolution of national science and technology systems, as in many cases the impacts of emigration coincided with repeated political and economic crises.

Probably the bigger impacts were produced in the less developed Latin-American countries. A study made by the Pan-American Union in 1968 showed that above 20% of the university graduates from El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala and Honduras were living and working abroad.<sup>2</sup>

As many specialists have observed, the loss of scientific capacity cannot be estimated with a simple quantitative review, it is also important to consider aspects related to the quality and leadership of the emigrated scientists. This consideration is difficult to make, among other things because the importance of the losses in capability and leadership can be appreciated only in the medium term. When the Argentinean Nobel prize winner César Milstein abandoned his country at the beginning of the decade of 1960, he was only a promising scientist who was looking for better labor and professional conditions abroad.

<sup>2</sup> Osorio and Osorio (1981), op. Cit

### 3. The Years of Exiles

One of the difficulties to evaluate the impact of the “brain drain” on the consolidation of scientific institutions in Latin America is that the emigration originated under the stimulus of an increasing international demand for scientists and engineers and in the Latin-American labour market’s insufficiencies to absorb them with appropriate levels of remuneration and labour conditions only explains a part of the international movements of scientists and engineers in the decade of 1960 and 1970. The main driver of a very significant part of the emigration was the impact of governmental repression conducted by the dictatorships that devastated the region along this period.<sup>3</sup>

The military dictatorships differed in duration and objectives. Between the patrimonial dictatorships of General Alfredo Stroessner in Paraguay and the one of Brazil’s development-oriented generals’, repression was the only aspect in common. Along the 1960s and 1970s, the majority of Central and South America countries experienced long stages of military rule that had a direct impact over the scientific and technological systems. Dictatorships’ characteristics and orientations conditioned that impact in different directions. Restrictions in freedom of speech, ideological control and political persecutions were common features of Latin American dictatorships that discouraged the development of scientific and technological activities. But in some countries –and in some sectors inside the countries- the governments supported steadily ambitious research and development programs. The case of Argentina and Brazil’s nuclear plans illustrates the point.

#### 3.1 Authoritarianism and Skilled Emigration

The correlation between authoritarianism and skilled emigration is not always easy to establish. As Jorge Graciarena observed by contrasting Argentinean emigration of professionals and technicians emigration towards United States between 1950 and 1970 and the political evolution in the same period, it is “difficult to interpret the data as demonstratives of a positive correspondence between both variables” (Graciarena, 1986). This does not mean that the relationship between political crisis, authoritarianism and skilled emigration is irrelevant, it simply points out to the absence of a linear correlation. So it is necessary to introduce some contextual factors elements that may bring a more complex framework to deal with the connections between authoritarianism and skilled emigration. For many Latin-American countries in 1960s, military interventions were not an exception but a well established political pattern. In fragile political systems, the political intervention of the armed forces was part of the system, not an external factor. Therefore, the political instability and military interventions influenced constantly all mobility and migration movements. From this perspective it is difficult to draw a clear line between migrations led by economic incentives and migrations forced by political motives. For this period, recurrent political instability should be considered as a kind of permanent factor that conditioned the decision making process of the skilled emigrants.

This consideration does not invalidate the fact that along the period 1950-1970 there had been emigration flows directly linked to political factors, particularly relevant in the scientific field. Probably the most important case is the emigration of Argentinean scientists after the

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<sup>3</sup> Meyer and Salgado (2002) reviews the main military interventions that drove thousands of Brazilians, Argentineans, Chileans, Uruguayans, Haitians, Guatemalans, Salvadorians and Dominicans to exile.

military coup d'état of June 1966 and the intervention of national universities. This case stood out not only because of the number of investigators that left the country, but for their relevance in the scientific system and its impact over university investigation. Over 1300 teachers of Buenos Aires University resigned, among them over 300 of the School of Natural Sciences and a similar number in the School of Humanities, many of which had been leaders of the university's academic renovation. These resignations were followed by a wave of emigration: 301 professors left the country, more than half of them went to other universities and research centers in other Latin-American countries –mainly Chile and Venezuela-. The rest was distributed between United States and Canada (32%) and Europe (15%) (Slemenson, 2004).

A comparable episode –although of a lesser impact- was produced in May 1969, in a period of hardening of the military dictatorship, when seventy frontline professors –in its great majority from University of San Pablo– were separated from their charges. Some of them were world known figures as the anthropologist Florestan Fernández and his disciple Fernando Henrique Cardoso, the physicist José Leite Lopez and the biochemist Isias Raw. The more repressive stage of the Brazilian dictatorship finished, and the military governments of the 1970s decide to increase the resources devoted to higher education, science and technology. In that moment, Skidmore points out, “a reversion of the brain drain of the period 1964-70 had been produced, in contrast with the continued hemorrhage caused by Chile, Uruguay and Argentina authoritarianism” (Skidmore, 1989).

### **3.2 The Exiles of the 1970s**

The exiles from the Southern Cone countries in the decade of 1970 differ from the patterns reviewed for Argentina and Brazil during the previous decades. The dictatorships which rose to power in Chile and Uruguay since 1973 and in Argentina since 1976 made a sharp cut with the previous political situation. Alain Rouquié has called this military intervention pattern as “catastrophic militarism” in opposition to the “recurrent militarism”, exemplified by the cases of Argentina and Brazil since 1930 (Rouquié, 1990). In Chile and Uruguay the military coups broke with several decades of pacific civil alternation in the government; in Argentina the ferocity of the regime established in 1976 and the deepness of the transformation that were implemented implied a drastic break with the previous authoritarian experiences.

The establishment of these regimes was accompanied by a brutal repression, which one of its many consequences was a massive departure of people linked directly with the overthrown government or that though that their personal security was in danger with the dictatorship's ascension. The universities were intervened and thousands of teachers and researchers were separated of their charges. Facing this situation, many scientists decided to emigrate. In some cases, emigration preceded the instauration of the dictatorships, either because political persecutions were already severe before the breakdown of civilian rule –Argentinean universities had been intervened in 1974, under Isabel Peron's government, and many teachers were persecuted by paramilitary organizations-, or also because some scientists had foreseen the aggravation of the situation and acted accordingly.

The emigration of professionals and scientists that took place in this context – where leaving the country was a decision taken on the basis of personal survival criteria–differs of that in which mobility's decisions were taken considering an strategic bet of the researchers, founded on appreciations of opportunities for professional development, salaries or labor conditions. But still in the cases where the decision to emigrate did not stem from an explicit

political reason, the persistence of dictatorships or of serious political conflicts contributed to make decisions that started as projects of temporary mobility into options of long term or permanent migrations. As Bolzman points out “the exile of Latin-Americans from the Southern Cone towards Europe, which started in decade of 1970, was in the origin a provisory phenomenon, transforming itself into a permanent reality” (Bolzman, 1993). Therefore, dictatorships had a direct effect over the expulsion of scientists and an indirect one, discouraging the return of those who had emigrated because of economic or professional reasons.

In most cases, the exiles had to abandon their countries with little preparation. Forced by circumstances, uprooted from their collective and personal histories, they had to adapt themselves with few resources to do so. Consequently it is not strange that in many cases the first’s years of exile were stained by the search for labor insertion, and that that insertion did not match with the one they had in their countries of origin. Nicolás Prognon observes that: “the Chilean exiles [in France] did not have the same problems to get a job as traditional immigrants had, which however did not avoid them to fall into a marked disqualification.” (Prognon, 2006).

The integration of exiles varied significantly, accordingly with the countries of origin and destination, the departure conditions, age, sex and personal qualifications, the existence of previous relationships and professional and personal contacts in the country of destination, the political movement which they belonged and their legal situation in their country of origin. The access to refugee status granted an important support to the exiles, but there were differences in the willingness of different destination countries to grant that status. The aforementioned differentiation factors led to diverse integration profiles in the host societies, which favored or restrained the possibility of defining a migratory project starting from decisions that had little of voluntary.

A series of recent works have explored the Latin-American exiles –especially the ones of the countries of the Southern Cone in the decade of 1970- trying to report their objective and subjective dimensions (Hoy, 2003; Yankelevich, 2004; Mira Delli-Zotti, 2004). A recurrent difficulty resides in the estimation and the chronology of the flows. Limitations of the sources of information—often related with the range of entry’s legal conditions of the exiles- converge with the diffusion of overestimations in the number of exiles – very far from the best founded calculations, but however used in diagnostics and specialized studies. These difficulties are also important for the specific case of scientists and engineers. An additional fact to assess the magnitude of the exile is the determination of those who bear the denomination of exiles inside of the group of the emigrants.

A study about the Uruguayan mathematicians surveys its trajectory from their training period till the decade of 1990. It is a case of a small community, but with a strong sense of institutional belonging and a high academic level. The connections with foreign groups and institutions constituted a strength in the first period of consolidation, when some young members of the Mathematics and Statistics Institute (IME) traveled abroad to improve their capacities. Some of them returned and others stayed abroad, but still they kept collaboration relationships with the IME. Since the coup of 1973 and the intervention of the University of the Republic, the situation changed drastically: almost all the mathematicians that were working at the IME had to leave the country.



The emigrants' first destination was Buenos Aires, which many abandoned when dictatorship's wave reached Argentina. Brazil, Venezuela, United States and France received the rest of the emigrants. Many of them returned since the restoration of democracy, helped by the Basic Science Program (PEDECIBA), funded by the Uruguayan government and the UNDP. Chiancone Castro identifies a Uruguayan mathematician's community with center in Montevideo and a similar size Diaspora, concentrated in United States, France and Brazil. In relationship with this Diaspora "the Uruguayan mathematicians perceived the importance of "having settled abroad", but, at the same time, the difficulties that involves the loss of the relationship "face to face", based over daily relations" (Chiancone Castro, 1997).

The Southern Cone countries were not the only who suffered the consequences of professional's exiles. The context of violence, economic crisis and indiscriminate repression in many Central American countries –principally at the beginning of the 80s- had a strong impact in the intellectual professional ambits, fueling an exodus towards United States that continues till today (Pacheco, 1993).

### **3.3 Impacts and Policies**

The impact of the exiles over scientific systems of many countries of the region was clearly negative and very important for countries who suffered more intensely the repressive wave. The emigration of scientists in the countries of the Southern Cone impoverished their universities and research centers and made difficult the intergenerational transmission of knowledge –am know how–, relationships and responsibilities. The duration of the military regimes trimmed the possibilities of return for many emigrants once the political conditions changed. Some Latin-American countries –Mexico and Venezuela- received major contingents of exiles who contributed to strengthen their own research systems (Meyer and Salgado, 2002). Also the unfavorable economic conditions of the decade of 1980 had also a negative influence, making even more difficult the return for researchers who had emigrated but were eager to go back to their native countries.

Once the democracy was recovered, several countries and international organizations carried out successfully several programs of repatriation, oriented to the groups of exiles of higher qualifications or political commitment. The International Organization for Migrations supported a program of return of skilled Latin-American personnel that contributed to the return of 11,554 people to their country of origin (Marmora, 1997). In Argentina, Chile and Uruguay repatriation programs were carried out, with projects specifically directed to the recovery of scientists (Leiva, 1999). The results of these programs varied: while in some areas some researchers returned, many exiles settled abroad during more than a decade decided to stay in the host country.

## **4. The Years of Globalization**

How did changes in globalization's dynamic influence highly skilled mobility and migration patterns for Latin-American countries? To what extent can important modifications in magnitude and composition of skilled migration flows be identified? Which has been the impact of globalization processes on the national stocks of skilled personal, in general, and of scientists and engineers? The regional trends in mobility and migration of the highly skilled can be better described in terms of continuity or of change?

In the following sections we draw a systematic picture of the regional trends of Latin-American skilled mobility and migration. In first place, skilled migration patterns are characterized for the different countries of the region. In second place, scientists and technologists of the countries of the region mobility and migration trends are been explored

with greater detail. Finally, some data concerning college students' mobility, specially graduated ones.

#### 4.1 Elements for a Description of Latin-American Skilled Migration Patterns

For the description of the description of Latin American skilled migration patterns, we consider three basic dimensions:

- a. The size of the skilled migration.
- b. The cumulative loss of skilled personnel, defined as the percentage of higher education graduates living abroad over the total number of graduates born in that country.
- c. The educational selectivity of the skilled emigration, that is to say, the percentage of people with higher education degrees over the total number of emigrants from the country.

From the integration of these two last aspects, a basic pattern on skilled migration can be established for each Latin-American country. The sources to draw this pattern are the national censuses of the countries of destination. Given that the last census round was about 2000, the data correspond to that period. The censuses of OECD countries, which constitute the principal destination for skilled emigration and also provide comparable information about the educational level reached by the ones born in foreign countries, are taken as the main reference.

##### 4.1.1 The magnitude of the skilled emigration from Latin American countries

Around the year 2000 near a quarter of the immigrants aged 15 or older living in OECD countries—more than 19 million— were born in Latin-American countries. That group was – and still is— very concentrated: 85% were living in United States. We are talking about a population with a high percentage of young men and women, with low levels of educational attainment. The proportion of higher education graduates on the population of 15 and more years of age born in Latin-American countries and living in OECD countries was 14.8%, against 24.8% of those who were born in African countries, 38.4% from Asia, 43.8% from North America and 22% of those from Europe. This pattern, as it's analyzed later, includes very different national patterns. The average is very biased by the weight of Mexican emigration that represents the 45% of the total of the Latin-American immigrants aged 15 or more.

In the following table the Latin-American countries with the bigger numbers of higher education graduates living in OECD countries are presented.

**Table 4: Stock of Latin-American and Caribbean Immigrants with Higher Education Degrees in OECD Countries, Main Countries, 2000's Census**

	Immigrants in OECD countries, 2000	
1	Mexico	474.565
2	Cuba	222.573
3	Jamaica	190.974
4	Colombia	173.270
5	Brazil	141.301
6	Peru	119.715
7	Argentina	108.162
8	Haiti	92.693
9	Venezuela	86.520
10	Dominican Republic	85.749

Source: OECD Database on immigrants and expatriates

According with 2000 censuses of the Latin American countries, the stock of Latin-American migrants in the Latin America was about 2,700,000. The border immigration predominates –Colombians to Venezuela, Paraguayan to Argentina- with a marked feminization of the migratory movements. Regarding the levels of qualification, the dominant view that migrants with a higher level of qualification move towards United States and Europe, while migration flows inside the region include people with lower educational levels requires some corrections, given that in several countries of the region it can be observed an increase of the number immigrants with more than 12 years of schooling. Although the proportion of “professionals, technicians and related technicians” in the immigration’s labor force is still low –around 13%-, it experienced an important growth along the 1990s (CEPAL-CELADE, 2006).

## 4.2 The Cumulative Loss and the Educational Selectivity of Emigration

In this section the information about the cumulative loss and the educational selectivity of emigration is systematized (Lowell, 2001). The cumulative loss is usually measured as the percentage of all the people with a higher education degree born in a given country –HRSC in Canberra’s Manual terminology- who reside abroad. This can be represented with the formula:  $Esp/Esp+Osp$ , where Esp is the number of emigrants (E) with higher education (s) of a given country of origin (p) and Osp is the resident population (O) with higher education (s) in that country of origin (p). In this case all OECD countries a taken as reference according to the demographic information provided by the 2000s census. Three categories of loss are established: low –less than 5% of the total number of higher education graduates born in one country that are residing abroad– medium –between 5 and 15% and high –more than 15%.

**Table 5: Percentage of Skilled Emigrants Born in Latin-American Countries which Reside in OECD Countries over the Total of Professionals Born in those Countries, Several Countries by Categories of Loss, 2000’s Censuses**

Countries and categories of loss	Percentage of skilled emigrants over national stocks of higher education graduates
Low (less than 5%)	
Argentina	4.7
Brazil	3.3
Paraguay	2.3
Venezuela	3.3
Medium (between 5 and 15%)	
Bolivia	6.0
Chile	5.3
Colombia	11.0
Costa Rica	6.6
Ecuador	10.9
Mexico	14.3
Peru	6.3
Uruguay	8.6
High (more than 15%)	
Cuba	28.9
Dominican Republic	21.7
Haiti	81.6
Honduras	21.8
Jamaica	82.5
Nicaragua	30.9
Panama	20.0
Trinidad and Tobago	78.4

Source: Docquier and Marfouk (2005)

Educational selectivity of the emigration can be defined as the percentage of emigrants with higher education for a given country in the total of emigrants from that country. This indicator can be formulated as  $Esp/E$ , where the denominator represents the total of emigrants. In this case, the denominator is taken as the total of emigrants aged 15 and more born in Latin-American countries and surveyed in 2000's censuses in OECD's countries. Three categories are used: low selectivity –less than 20%– medium –between 20% and 33%– and high –over 33%.

**Table 6: Educational Selectivity of the Emigration: Number of Latin American Emigrants aged 15 and More in OECD Countries by Selected Latin-American Countries, and Percentage of those Highly Skilled**

Countries	Number of expatriates	Percentage of highly skilled
Low selectivity (less than 20%)		
Dominican Republic	691.884	12,3%
Ecuador	490.267	15,4%
Haiti	466.897	19,8%
Honduras	278.593	10,5%
Mexico	8.431.381	5,6%
Nicaragua	224.531	17,9%
Medium selectivity (between 20 and 33%)		
Bolivia	72.400	30,4%
Brazil	351.878	31,7%
Colombia	682.156	25,1%
Costa Rica	76.112	24,2%
Cuba	914.501	24,2%
Panama	140.631	32,6%
Jamaica	796.046	24,0%
Paraguay	18.504	25,0%
Peru	361.506	30,2%
Trinidad y Tobago	276.934	29,5%
Uruguay	70.093	29,9%
High selectivity (more than 33%)		
Argentina	266.070	37,8%
Chile	200.366	33,0%
Venezuela	200.461	40,2%

Source: based on Dumont and Lemaitre (2005).

### 4.3 Loss and Educational Selectivity: Differences between Countries

In the following table both indicators are put together, in a typology that combines the dimensions of loss and educational selectivity. The countries with a lower level of educational selectivity are Dominican Republic, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, Ecuador and Mexico. These are all countries with a high number of emigrants that represent an important percentage of their total population: With the partial exception of Ecuadorians, the great majority of these emigrants reside in United States. This trend can also be seen as a part of an ongoing process of economic, social and cultural integration with the United States.

With the exception of Paraguay, the countries of lower losses are in general the ones of bigger size and which have more developed scientific, technological and higher educational systems than the countries with greater losses. Argentina and Venezuela's cases show an emigration trend where professionals play a very important role.

Table 7: Loss of Skilled Personnel and Educational Selectivity of the Emigration

		Loss of skilled personnel		
		High (more than 15%)	Medium (between 5 and 15%)	Low (less than 5%)
Educational selectivity	High selectivity (more than 33%)		Chile	Argentina Venezuela
	Medium selectivity (between 20 and 33%)	Cuba Jamaica Panama Trinidad and Tobago	Bolivia Colombia Costa Rica Peru Uruguay	Brazil Paraguay
	Low selectivity (less than 20%)	Dominican Republic Haiti Honduras Nicaragua	Ecuador México	

#### 4.4 Scientists and Engineers

Data concerning migration of higher education graduates reviewed in the previous section represents a general framework which requires further detail, to try to address specific groups. In this section we present some basic information on the stocks of Latin American scientists and engineers working and living abroad. The main information source to estimate the mobility and migration trends of scientists and engineers comes from US National Science Foundation statistical system. The last available data concerning science and technology personnel stock allow establishing a good estimation of the number of Latin-American scientists and engineers in United States and, more precisely, how many of them are active in research and development.

In table 8 some interesting data can be observed. Among the scientists and engineers that are active in R&D, foreign born represent the 21.5% and, among this, those coming from Asian countries constitute a 60%. Latin-Americans participation is only of 9%.

In the previous section, we tried to assess the educational selectivity of the emigration, considering higher education graduates. What is the situation when we try to estimate the selectivity concerning the personnel devoted to R&D activities? Scientists and engineers from Latin America and the Caribbean total who are active in R&D represent almost 30% of the whole population of scientists and engineers from that origin (RICYT, 2007). This proportion is substantially lower than the one observed in Asia, where Scientists and engineers active in R&D represent 42.5% of the whole. The proportion differs between Latin American countries: for Chile is 47% and for Argentina 41%.

But the most relevant comparison concerns the losses of scientists and engineers. The Latin-Americans active in R&D in United States in 1999, represented a 21% of the total of science and technology in Latin-America and the Caribbean personnel in that same year. For Central American countries that proportion was almost three times bigger. Therefore, the emigration of Latin American scientific and engineers has a more important impact than the emigration of higher education graduates.

**Table 8: United States - Human Resources in Science and Technology, 1999**

Country of birth	Inactive in R&D	Active in R&D	Total
United States	7.103.178	2.491.048	9.594.226
Foreign born	852.792	534.595	1.387.387
Europe	174.754	104.364	279.118
Former Soviet Union	21.510	12.566	34.074
Asia	428.386	317.589	745.971
<i>North America</i>	<i>67.410</i>	<i>27.033</i>	<i>94.443</i>
<i>Central America</i>	<i>14.412</i>	<i>6.495</i>	<i>20.910</i>
<i>Caribbean</i>	<i>53.767</i>	<i>19.293</i>	<i>73.062</i>
<i>South America</i>	<i>43.384</i>	<i>21.481</i>	<i>64.860</i>
Argentina	6.218	4.377	10.594
Bolivia	1.922	953	2.875
Brazil	6.212	1.845	8.056
Chile	1.651	1.485	3.136
Colombia	9.653	4.688	14.341
Ecuador	4.178	1.994	6.171
Paraguay	189	263	451
Peru	5.757	2.796	8.553
Uruguay	623	157	779
Venezuela	5.919	2.688	8.607
Africa	38.256	19.722	57.982
Oceania and other countries	10.905	6.059	16.964
Total	7.955.970	3.025.643	10.981.613

Source: NSF (1999).

The NSF data do not provide the whole picture; during the last two decades, European countries have turned into a strong pole of attraction for Latin American scientists and engineers. Spain has been and is a very important destination for highly skilled Latin-American immigrants.

Using all this different sources of information, the picture on the loss of skilled personnel can be refined. In the Argentinean case, for example, if we consider only the percentage of higher education graduates abroad on the whole population of Argentineans with higher education degrees, the numbers are not very worrying: less than 5%. But instead, if we compare the Argentineans PhDs living abroad with the total of Argentineans PhDs living in the country, the percentage exceeds the 30%. The Colombian case is even worst, to the extent that Colombian doctors living abroad are far more than those living in Colombia.

#### 4.5 Higher Education Students' Mobility

One of the most relevant features of internationalization process of higher education is the remarkable increase of higher education students' mobility. This is very important because students constitute a sector in which skilled mobility that can lead to permanent emigration (Tremblay, 2002). According with OECD estimations, nowadays there are more than three million international students in higher education institutions.

Latin-American college students are a relative small proportion of the flows towards OECD countries –around 6%. In a similar way as happened in other regions, Latin-American student's mobility has grown in the last years. The increase of the mobility of Latin-American students towards Spain stands out: Spain is the leading European destination for Latin American students. This situation contrasts with a comparatively low mobility between Latin-American countries, where the number of foreign students on the whole university enrolment does not reach the 1% (Luchilo and Albornoz, 2008).

**Table 9: Latin-American Students in OECD Countries' Universities, Total and Countries and Selected Regions, 2003 and 2007**

Countries and regions of origin	Total in OECD countries		Total in the United States		Total in Spain	
	2003	2007	2003	2007	2003	2007
Argentina	8.352	9.591	3.644	2.875	2.124	3.636
Brazil	17.886	21.520	8.388	7.284	1.374	2.106
Chile	5.320	6.152	1.723	1.605	1.296	1.473
Colombia	15.520	19.416	7.771	6.899	3.144	5194
Ecuador	4.122	6.775	2.398	2.260	870	2.611
México	20.105	25.918	12.801	14.132	2.209	3.789
Peru	7.547	12.485	3.376	3.783	1.416	3.905
Venezuela	8.746	9.560	5.333	4.623	1.368	2.371
Caribbean countries	20.016	25.971	14.533	14.140	950	1.814
Other Latin American countries	14.549	23.568	9.276	22.538	1.220	5.382
Total	122.163	154.180	69.244	80.139	15.791	33.621

Source: OECD (2005, 2009).

### 4.5.1 Graduate Studies and Stay Rates

Graduate students constitute the most relevant group of the higher education students for the development of research activities. The United States research universities are the main destination for graduate students. Table 10 shows that between 1997 and 2000, 5,635 graduate students from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Venezuela earned a PhD from United States' universities. The importance of this figure varies depending to the number of doctoral degrees granted in each country in that period. In the Mexican case, for example, the 159 Mexicans who earned a doctorate in the United States represent the 18% of all the doctorates in Mexico in 1997 and the 254 of the 2005 represent the 14%. In Brazil, contrastingly, the percentages for those years were of 4.5% and 2.3%.

**Table 10: Doctorates Awarded by United States Universities, Main Latin-American Countries and All Foreign Countries, 1997-2005**

Countries of origin	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	Total
Argentina	91	94	64	95	81	94	100	115	106	840
Brazil	159	186	205	171	169	171	161	189	206	1.617
Chile *	-	-	-	-	-	-	81	-	-	81
Colombia *	-	-	-	70	72	66	109	89	137	543
Mexico	159	192	191	248	242	221	259	231	254	1.997
Venezuela *		76	80	88	62	71	93	87	-	557
Main Latin American countries	409	548	540	672	626	623	803	711	703	5.635
All foreign countries	11.390	12.198	11.365	11.597	11.602	11.353	12.063	13.113	14.225	108.906

Source: own elaboration on data provided by "Doctors Recipients from United States Universities: Summary Report (several issues), NSF/NIH/USED/NEH/USDA/NASA

How many of the doctorates from Latin American countries that earn their degree in the United States stay in that country? The studies of Michael Finn show different stay rates between doctorate holders from various countries. Doctorate holders from Argentina, Chile, Colombia and Venezuela, show relatively high stay rates, and those from Brazil and Mexico tend to return to their country.

**Table 11: Percentage of Foreign Students Receiving S&E Doctorates in 2000 who were in the United States, 2001-2005**

Country of origin	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Argentina	61	58	55	55	55
Brazil	35	32	30	27	30
Mexico	32	29	29	30	31
Chile	49	52	49	46	49
Colombia	54	45	49	47	56
Venezuela	44	43	46	48	45

Source: Finn, 2007

This information can be complemented with the data from NSF surveys that seek to find out the propensity of recent foreign born doctorate holders to stay in the United States. The survey includes two different categories: plans to stay –interest in continuing the career in the US– and firm plans to stay –the close possibility to get a job in the US–. The Latin Americans that earned a doctorate between 2002 and 2005 show a higher propensity to stay in the US than those who earned their degree between 1994 and 1997. The data on stay rates presented in table 11 show that the proportion of doctorate holders who stayed is higher than the percentage of doctorate recipients that declared to have firm plans to stay in the same period. In others words, this gap demonstrates the existence of occupational opportunities for foreign born graduate doctorates.

**Table 12: Plans to Stay in the United States By Latin-Americans Science and Technology Doctorate Recipients, 1994-2005**

Country of birth	Number of S&E doctorate recipients from Latin American countries			% with plans to stay			% with firm plans to stay		
	94–97	98–01	02–05	94–97	98–01	02–05	94–97	98–01	02–05
Mexico	599	781	789	40,2	36,7	46,6	21,5	26,4	31,3
Argentina	244	273	321	65,2	61,2	70,7	43,4	47,6	54,2
Brazil	681	612	567	32,2	34,3	42,9	18,5	23,7	31
Chile	147	126	200	38,8	53,2	37,5	23,1	42,1	28
Colombia	178	206	322	54,5	56,8	57,5	29,2	40,8	35,4
Peru	128	111	140	71,9	62,2	71,4	42,2	38,7	45

Source: NSF (2008).

## 5. Conclusions: Continuities and Breaks

The emigration from Latin-American countries experienced a rapid growth in the first years of 21<sup>st</sup> century. Because of different reasons, the emigration flows from countries as different as Argentina, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru increased, especially those directed to Spain (De los Ríos and Rueda, 2007).

This summary of the trajectory of Latin American skilled emigration shows some continuity and also some major breaks. The main continuity is the persistence of the region as a source and not as a recipient of skilled emigration. The flows of skilled personnel from Latin-American countries are smaller than the flows from Asia or Europe, but nonetheless show a steady trend over the last decades. At the same time, Latin-American countries do not seem to have the will and the capacity to attract professionals, scientists or foreign students, from their own region or from other regions. The relative weakness of their research and higher education systems and of their firms contributes to explain this deficit, but even world class universities as University of Sao Paulo has not a strong international orientation (Schwartzman, 2006).



The most significant breaks are related to political conflicts changes and to the consequences of globalization. Over and above the persistence of local violent conflicts, the consolidation of the democratic rule in the region for almost three decades constitutes a major change. Political motivated emigration does not constitute a relevant factor to explain recent migration movements –probably with the exception of Cuba and Venezuela.

With regard to globalization, it seems clear that the international changes during the last two decades do not constitute a simple amplification of longstanding trends of the capitalist world economy. From the point of view of the mobility and migration of the highly skilled the changes affect not only the magnitude of the flows but also its main characteristics: more skilled people, from more countries and regions, travelling to more countries and regions, for a wider range of motives and different lapses, are some of the features that have changed during the last two decades. The direction and the impacts of these changes are very important, but not well understood.

To what extent can Latin-American countries manage mobility and skilled migration processes? Can they promote and take advantage of mobility's benefits and prevent migration-related losses? These questions do not have a unique answer for all Latin-American countries. However, in broad terms, it can be said that we can observe a huge gap between the structural drivers of mobility and migration –from the needs of multinational companies to Europe's demographic decline, from the growth of the internalization of universities to the diffusion of a youth culture that values change and international mobility- and the capacities of national states to deal with this trends. If countries such as Canada or Germany have difficulties to prevent the emigration to the US of their best scientists, Latin-American countries' possibilities of action are much more limited. Anyway, countries like Brazil –with strong STI policies and with high quality universities–can better manage mobility and highly skilled migration. The possibilities to control or even profit from the international flows of the highly skilled are, for other countries of the region –especially for the less developed– very small.

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# Trends and Characteristics of Latino American Skilled Migration to Spain and the United States (2000-2008)<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

*The purpose of this paper is to study the demographic profile of Latin American skilled immigrants in the United States and Spain, as well as the differences in performance in labour markets. By skilled immigrants we mean people living outside their country of birth who have completed higher education, the subject matter of this study has been the object of research from various works focused on skilled immigrants who live in the United States as their unit of analysis. Even though there is an accumulated knowledge of the characteristics of migration from Latin American countries to Spain and the United States, little by little there have been researches about the characteristics of the groups of high skilled migrants from Latin America and the Caribbean (LA&C). For that reason, it is relevant to do a comparative study on the occupational and income differentials among the highly educated immigrants on their main host countries: Spain and United States. The paper provides for updated data from two new sources of information that allow the studying of the volume and characteristics of migrants in the main countries of destination of Latin American migration: the U.S.'s American Community Survey (ACS 2006-2008) and Spain's National Immigrants Survey (ENI, for its acronym in Spanish, 2007). In the first two sections of this paper the social, economic and educational context of Latin American countries in the last two decades is briefly described. In section three herein the characteristics of both sources of data are detailed, as well as their potentialities and limitations. In section four the main trends on skilled migration in both countries of destination are analyzed; in section five, migrants' demographic profile is described and in the sixth, one the main findings in relation to the labour insertion of migrants. Finally, the last section is devoted to discuss the conclusions.*

**Keywords:** Skilled Migration, Latino American, Human capital, Labour Market.

## 1. Overview

The availability of skilled human resources with a high level of education is a major objective for those countries aiming to move forward in their development. Human capital is the basic wealth of societies in contemporary world, and for developing countries, increasing their human capital becomes a major challenge.

In the case of Latin America, since around the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century the boost to education and science and technology related activities have been proclaimed as fundamental goals. However, ever since then, lights have been taking turns with shadows.

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<sup>1</sup> A modified version of this paper was presented in the IV Congress of the Latin American Association for Population (ALAP, for its acronym in Spanish), held in Havana, Cuba, from 16<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> November, 2010. We thank Virginia Koolhaas for her translation of the original version of the said paper.

Even though the development of education and the investment in scientific and technological research have been set as goals in many countries throughout the region, the repeated dictatorships and military governments that weakened and dismantled the educational structures has been one of the retreating factors, which at the same time constituted one of the root causes for the emigration of high-skilled workforce. Over the last few decades, most Latin American countries have moved forward in their task of strengthening democracy and this constitutes the foundations for the achievement of old aspirations.

Overall, migration tends to go hand in hand with the ups and downs of the economic activity, and the general overview of the last two decades shows fluctuations through the various periods that have impacted on the migratory phenomenon. However, high-skilled migration is caused not only by these general circumstances of each country's economy, but also by other factors much more permanent and whose influence in the migratory movement requires a more subtle and more long-term analysis. Indeed, current status of education (particularly, higher education), realities and policies in terms of science and technology, industries within the labour market that employ highly-skilled personnel, and finally, one key factor, the demand of developed countries, they all must be taken into consideration. All of these are elements that require a specific study because migratory trends of individuals with such educational attainment and area of activity are ruled only partially by the general trends of the societies they belong to, and are strongly conditioned by cultural and labour factors, whose understanding goes beyond the description of the global figures of the economy. The quality and coverage of educational attainment, its financing and the functioning of the labour market in relation to integration of high-skilled personnel, both in host and home countries, are some of the additional causes to the above and may explain the differences in the tendency to emigrate.

The purpose of this paper is to study the demographic profile of Latin American skilled immigrants in the United States and Spain, as well as the differences in performance in labour markets. By skilled immigrants we mean people living outside their country of birth who have completed higher education<sup>2</sup>.

Even though there is an accumulated knowledge of the characteristics of migration from Latin American countries to Spain and the United States, little by little there have been researches about the characteristics of the groups of high skilled migrants from Latin America and the Caribbean (LA&C). For that reason, we it is relevant to do a comparative study on the occupational and income differentials among the highly educated immigrants on their main host countries: Spain and United States.

We are particularly interested in identifying the factors that have an incidence on the performance of skilled immigrants in their respective labour markets. Work performance in the labour market is measured through three different indicators. First of all, the unemployment rate; secondly, we study whether the immigrants work in positions that are consistent with their educational attainment (that is, in management, professional or technical levels); finally, we consider the earned income (including employees, self-employed and employers). A comparative analysis of the Spanish and U.S. labour markets is carried out, in which the differences in performance by place of are studied.

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<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of different definitions on skilled migration see Pellegrino (2001) or Lozano & Gandini (2009).

The subject matter of this study has been the object of research from various works focused on skilled immigrants who live in the United States as their unit of analysis (Mattoo et al 2005; Chiswick and Taengnoi, 2007; Batalava and Fix, 2008; Lozano and Gandini, 2009). This profuse production on the United States is not a surprise given the high concentration of skilled migration in that country, which makes it the main centre of attraction of these migrants. It is not a surprise either the scarcity of studies on skilled migration that have Spain as their object of study since in relative terms, this country cannot be considered as a centre of attraction of skilled migrants. Nevertheless, as described in section four herein, Spain has seen over the last decade, along with an unprecedented immigration growth, a significant increase in their stock of skilled immigrants. Moreover, we could not find any study whatsoever that focused on skilled migrants' subject, which may be related to the fact that the latter is a more attractive destination of unskilled migration.

The studies aimed at explaining the incorporation of immigrants to their host country's labour force have had an important development in migratory literature. In that respect, Batalava and Fix (2008:9) highlight that there are two approaches. The first one highlights the role played by the individual characteristics of immigrants in their adaptation to their host community, whereas the second approach emphasizes on the labour market's institutional practices which can either hinder or promote the incorporation of immigrants. This paper follows the path of the assimilation approach by focusing on how certain given characteristics (demographic, human capital related, etc) of the immigrants affect the skilled immigrants' performance in the labour market of the host country. Notwithstanding this, it is a pending task for future researches to move forward in the studying of the institutional context of the host communities since in our view; both approaches are complementary and at the same time are necessary in order to acquire a wider knowledge of the determinant factors of migrants' social insertion in their host countries.

The paper provides for updated data from two new sources of information that allow the studying of the volume and characteristics of migrants in the main countries of destination of Latin American migration: the U.S.'s American Community Survey (ACS 2006-2008) and Spain's National Immigrants Survey (ENI, for its acronym in Spanish, 2007). In section three herein the characteristics of both sources of data are detailed, as well as their potentialities and limitations. In the first two sections of this paper the social, economic and educational context of Latin American countries in the last two decades is briefly described. In section four the main trends on skilled migration in both countries of destination are analyzed; in section five migrants' demographic profile is described and in the sixth one the main findings in relation to the labour insertion of migrants. Finally, the last section is devoted to discuss the conclusions.

## **2. Economic and Social Context in Latin America over the Period 1990-2008<sup>3</sup>.**

From the economic point of view, it is clear that there is a diversity of situations in Latin America and that the heterogeneity is one of the characteristics of the region. The 80s –so-called 'the lost decade for development' by ECLAC- left deep wounds in terms of poverty and inequality.

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<sup>3</sup> This section was elaborated from ECLAC's Latin America and the Caribbean Economic Studies conducted between 2000 and 2009, the *Statistical yearbook for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2009* and ECLAC's Social Panorama, 2009.

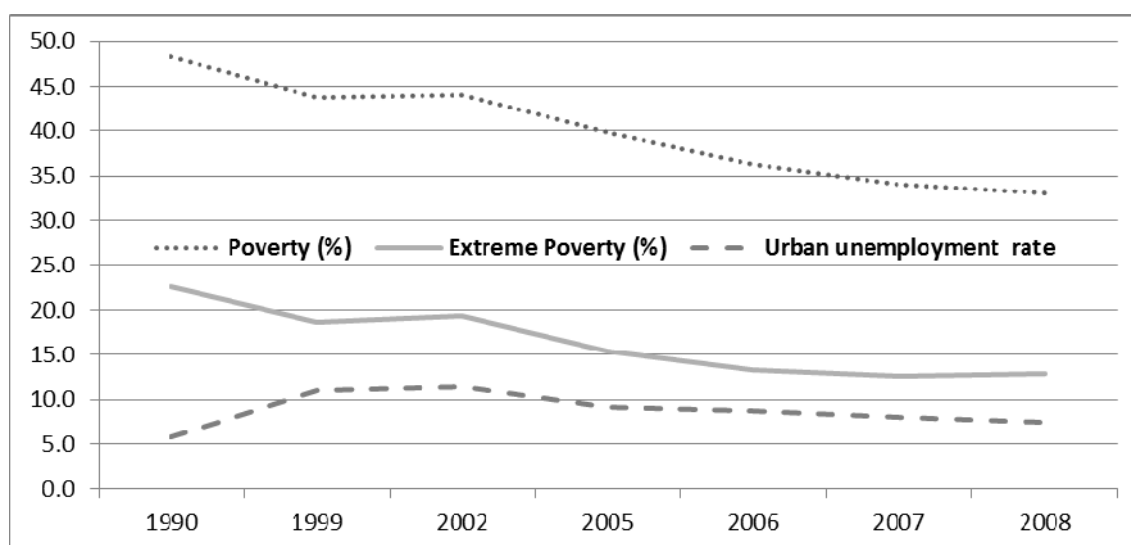
For the purposes of studying the period to be analyzed in this paper (1990 to 2008) such period may be divided into three different phases: 1) from 1990 to 1999; 2) the four-year period 2000-2003; 3) the five-year period 2004-2008.

Over the ten-year period 1990-1999, in which the open trade policies, privatization of public services and reduction of welfare policies prevailed extensively, the GDP grew globally but below the all-time rates, with fluctuations in some of the years of the period. In total, by the end of the ten-year period, the GDP per capita grew by slightly more than 13%. By the end of the period one could see the crisis coming and already in 1999 one could see a fall of the GDP per capita by 1.2%. This moderate grow was accompanied by high unemployment which remained at around 10%, ranging from 9.4% in 1990 to 10.3% in 1999. Poverty levels in Latin American countries began in the 90's showing the highest level between the period 1980-2009, since in 1990 48% of the population was below the poverty line (see chart 1). Over the decade, poverty reduction was extremely moderate: only four points between 1990 and 1999. On the other hand, the evolution of extreme poverty showed similar patterns, reaching its highest value (22.5% of population) in 1990 and reducing to 18.7% by the end of the decade (ECLAC, 2009).

The distinguishing feature of the 2000-2003 four-year period was the collapse of the policies introduced in the preceding decade, with stagnation of the GDP and GDP per capita and its fall in some of years of this period, as well as a fast growth of the open unemployment. The latter was particularly severe in various countries where unemployment came also with a deterioration of the social situation and severe political confrontations.

The worst phase of the crisis took place in 2001 and 2002 when the GDP remained almost unchanged, there being extremes cases like Argentina and Uruguay where the GDP fell by 11% in one year. The social impact was significant: open urban unemployment reached 11% in 2002 (see chart 1), there being significant differences among countries; for instance, the urban unemployment rate reached 19.7% in Argentina, 17.6% in Colombia, 15.0% in Jamaica (in 2001), 16.5% in Panama, 14.7% in Paraguay and 17.0% in Uruguay. Real wages fell in some cases below 80% of their purchasing power eight years before.

**Figure 1: Evolution of poverty, extreme poverty and urban unemployment. Latin America, selected years, 1990-2008**



Source: ECLAC (2009)



Over the five-year period 2004-2008 economic growth is seeing throughout the region at higher than all-times rates, i.e. around 5.5% annual for the GDP of the whole region and an increase of the GDP per capita of 4% annual, with the consequent reduction of unemployment and a recovery of public policies and welfare policies, especially in some countries. The growth of this period was particularly significant during the years 2004-2007 in Argentina, Cuba and Panama (about 9% annual), Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay (about 8% annual) and more moderate in Brazil (4.6%), Chile (5.1%), Colombia (5.9%) and Mexico (3.8%). The case of Venezuela is special since the economy grew at an average rate of 12% over the four-year period (18.3% in 2004) as a direct consequence of the dramatic increase of oil price.

Together with the production expansion, unemployment rate fell significantly: the region's open urban unemployment fell from 11% in 2003 to 7.4% in 2008. Particularly in those countries where the preceding crisis had reached very high levels, the reduction of unemployment was very significant between 2002 and 2008: in Argentina it went from 19.7 to 7.9; in Colombia, from 17.6 to 11.5; in Panama, from 16.5 to 6.5; in Uruguay, from 17.0 to 7.9 and in Venezuela, from 15.8 to 7.4.

Finally, from the second half of 2008 the global crisis started in the U.S. and continued through the European Union. This crisis had a limited impact on the region, there being some differences among countries; from the second half of 2009 we saw a fast recovery of the production which is consolidated in 2010 by an annual expected growth of 5.2%, representing an increase of 3.7% of the GDP per capita.

According ECLAC<sup>4</sup>, the economic growth is higher than expected. However, as usual, performance within the region is very heterogeneous. The highest growth rate for this year will be in the South American countries, with a strong presence of Brazil with a growth of 7.6%, followed by Uruguay (7.0%), Paraguay (7.0%), Argentina (6.8%) and Peru (6.7%).

### 3. The Status of Education in Terms of Science and Technology

A comprehensive analysis of this topic goes far beyond this study. For that reason, we will restrict ourselves to some relevant aspects of the communities in question, aiming to search for elements that will help us to understand the migratory phenomenon.

Government expenditure on education as a percentage of the GDP increased significantly between 1990 and 2002, growing from 2.8% to 4.3% for the whole Latin America and the Caribbean (IADB, 2006), beginning then a period of some stagnation. The increase reflects the priority on education proclaimed by most governments of the region, and there is heterogeneity by country. By way of comparison, average public expenditure within the OECD countries reached 5.8% of the GDP by 2002<sup>5</sup>.

If we look into the *expenditure per student*, given the age structure of each respective population with a much higher proportion of children and young people in the Latin American & Caribbean countries, we see that differences become even stronger. Indeed, depending on the country, expenditure may vary between US\$ 150 and US\$ 1,700 in Latin

<sup>4</sup> Speech given by ECLAC's Executive Secretary, Alicia Bárcena in a presentation of the 2009-2010 Report.

<sup>5</sup> Data extracted from World Bank's world development indicators, available at <http://databank.worldbank.org/ddp/home.do?Step=12&id=4&CNO=2>

America & the Caribbean, whereas the average expenditure in the OECD is US\$ 4,100. In addition, expenditure per higher education student within the Latin America & the Caribbean region is, on average, three times the expenditure on primary and secondary students. On the other hand, in some OECD countries expenditure on primary education is higher than that on higher education.

In order to analyze what has happened with education over the last two decades, and in particular, with higher education and the training of highly skilled personnel, it is necessary to incorporate the quality and coverage elements and its relation with the labour market, as well benchmarking against situation in the immigrants' home countries.

By the year 2000, the average years of schooling in Latin America & the Caribbean among the 15-year-old or older population had reached 6 years. This means a significant increase compared to 40 years before (3.5 in 1960), but it also reflects an important backwardness in relation to OECD countries where it was twice as much. Despite being too general, this consideration is important because it confirms that in the knowledge society, a minimum of 12 years of formal schooling is required in order to be fully integrated into contemporary society from an economic and cultural point of view.

Likewise, by 2002 the gross schooling rate in post-secondary and higher education in Latin America & the Caribbean was 27% versus 69% in countries members of the OECD (IADB, 2006). These figures set significant differences that impact on the labour market and the economic activity, and that have a strong influence on every sphere of social life, lifetime projects and the aspirations of the individuals. Therefore, they are present as factors in migratory trends of the populations to be studied.

Differences not only have to do with schooling rates among the various education levels but also with the quality of teaching. There exist very few instruments available to study this core aspect of the comparison among education systems; despite a few objections about its contents the most significant one is the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). The PISA study presents tests conducted on a large sample using statistics criteria and targeted to 15-year-old attending secondary school. Tests -conducted every three years- referred to mother tongue learning, mathematics and natural science. In Latin America the countries included in PISA so far have been Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Peru and Uruguay.

We transcribe here under a summary of the above mentioned 2006 IADB's report:

*"The quality of education is an endemic problem throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. Far from being restricted to students who are on the lower end of the socio-economic ladder, the low performance concerns schools and children from all income levels.... PISA results show that the best (and richest) participants from Latin America included in the 2002 and 2003 tests scored far below the best participants from other regions. As a way of example, in Brazil and Mexico over 50% of students have reading problems or problems to undertake obvious or routine...; this figure rises to 70% in mathematics. Similar figures for the OECD countries are 20% in reading and 25% in mathematics. In Uruguay, the best performer of the region, only 15% of students perform to international competitive levels in reading...; only 10% does it in mathematics... As for the OECD percentages they are twice as much for reading and almost four times for mathematics."*

It is evident that this situation determines, to a great extent, what then happens on the further education stages of youngsters, both in terms of coverage and quality of education.

In terms of Science and Technology indicators and, to a great extent, as a consequence of the above mentioned inequalities between the education systems of LA&C and OECD countries, deeper disparities are observed whose impact on the economy and the society have become decisive and its overcoming is a *sine qua non* condition for development.

The first element is given by the number of people devoted to research and development tasks: the average for LA&C in 2003 was 0.64 by each 1000 people in the labour force versus 8 for every 1000 people in the labour force within the OECD countries, that is to say, a relation of 1 to 12.5. There are again differences among countries of the region. In Argentina, the figure is 1.6, the highest in the region (in any case, far below than in the OECD countries), whereas in some Andine countries this figure decreases significantly. In some developed countries, the number of researchers for every 1000 people in the labour force is particularly high as a result of the continuous policies intended to increase training and creating labour conditions. Such is the case of the Scandinavian countries and Finland (where the same rate reached 14.7 in 2003). Moreover, it is worth mentioning that this difference tends to broaden since between 1995 and 2003 the increase in Latin America was about half the increase of OECD countries where the growth rate was particularly significant in some small and medium countries (Finland, Ireland, Spain, Korea) (RICYT, 2003 and OECD database quoted by IADB, 2006).

A similar situation occurs with the total expenditure in Science & Technology as a percentage of the GDP. In LA&C countries this figure was about 0.6% in 2003, Brazil being the biggest spender with 1%, whereas the average estimated among the OECD countries for the same year was 2.3%, having some countries figures above 3% (Finland, Sweden, and Japan). While in LA&C countries we saw a stagnation between 1995 and 2003 (even a strong reduction in Venezuela), in OECD countries and other countries there was a sustained growth which was particularly significant in a few selected countries (especially China and Finland, to give two examples where sizes and social development levels are very different).

In order to close this overview about a subject which calls for a much comprehensive analysis, it is proper to mention that in OECD countries two thirds of the spending in research and development are financed and undertaken by the private sector. On the other hand, in LA&C the latter is very limited and has a particularly significant impact on the creation of high-skilled jobs which is small and it is basically limited to state-owned institutions (educational, research labs, state-own companies). This is also reflected on the scarce production of patents in LA&C in comparison with OECD countries which, as a consequence, causes the industrial dependence of the first upon the latter.

To sum up, the situation of education in its different levels and the main parameters that describe the research and development activity as a whole speak for themselves in the sense that they show that incentives for training and high-skilled jobs are much higher in the Northern countries than in AL&C. This situation inevitably drives more people into choosing those activities. Moreover, the available data shows that the gap in this field between AL&C and the OECD countries tends to increase.

In addition to the above, policies and strategies for the attraction of educated and high-skilled workforce are systematically undertaken by the Northern countries. At the same time that restrictions have been imposed to the arrival of unskilled immigrants, immigration of individuals with specific training in the strategic areas needed for scientific and technological development, particularly high technology areas, continue to be stimulated, as well as in other areas needed for social development.

The economic crisis has had different consequences among Latin American regions. The barriers that developed countries have built against the arrival of immigrants as well as their attempts of repatriation and deportation are an every-day scene on the international media. However, high-skilled migration has had a better integration in the industrialized world societies; it is systematically recruited and has preferential treatment when it comes to immigration legislations. One might suggest the hypothesis that, under these conditions, highly skilled workforce emigration will continue and that a significant effort from LA&C is required, both from the economic and institutional point of view and that this effort should also be sustained in the long term in order to create the necessary conditions for its reversion.

#### **4. Data Source**

The available information on international migration -and in particular that of skilled migration- is fragmented and scarce, despite the efforts made during the last few years by international organizations such as the OECD or the World Bank. The population censuses' data are the most comprehensive data and have a universal character; with these data the most comprehensive and extensive studies have been conducted (Carrington and Detragiache, 1999; Docquier, Lohest and Marfouk, 2005). However, their flaw lies in their availability as the information is only available every ten years, the time which corresponds to the inter census period. Therefore, and given that we are at the beginning of a new census round, it is necessary to resort to using other sources of information alternative to censuses in order to have updated data on international migration and particularly, skilled migration.

In that sense, some surveys conducted by the Statistics Bureaus of those countries who receive immigrants allow for the availability of more precise and more frequent data. This is the case of the United States and Spain, countries which are relevant for the study of Latin American emigration.

This paper is sourced from two surveys undertaken by the national statistical institutes of destination countries: the American Community Survey (ACS), conducted over the three-year period 2006-2008 by U.S. Census Bureau, and the National Immigrants Survey conducted in 2007 by Spain's Bureau of statistics. Despite having different purposes and different conceptual and methodological characteristics, they both allow a comprehensive description of the demographic and occupational profiles of the skilled immigrants (defining as such those foreign-born individuals who have completed higher education). The ACS is a household survey that enables the study of the demographic and social characteristics as well as the life conditions of the U.S. population. Due to the sample's large size, in addition to the possibility of publishing three-year estimates, the ACS is a continuous source that can be seen as an alternative to the censuses. In fact, it has enabled a substantial reduction of the number of questions in the census questionnaire by producing statistically representative estimates for small geographic areas and population groups. The database used for this study contains 8,897,261 individuals, 259,824 of which meet the double condition of being born outside the United States<sup>6</sup> (immigrants) and having completed higher education. Therefore, the size of the sample offers great analytical possibilities in the sense that it enables the making of estimates by region to the interior of the Latin America and the Caribbean, and in most cases, by country of birth.

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<sup>6</sup> It includes the associated territories such as Puerto Rico.

Unlike ACS, ENI is a specific survey aimed at investigating the socio-demographic characteristics of the foreign-born population aged 16 years and over and family householders, as well as their migratory itineraries, employment and living records, family relationships and their relation with their country of origin and the Spanish society. The survey's geographic coverage is the whole Spanish territory where 15,465 immigrants were surveyed, 3,263 of which were skilled. Therefore, even though the sample size does not give the same analytical possibilities as the U.S's ACS, it is possible to make estimates by continent or regions, and – provided that the confidence intervals allow it - it is even possible to have estimates by country. Another limitation of the ENI is that because of its own nature, it does not provide information on the native population so as to compare its situation against that of immigrants. Anyway, this difficulty cannot be overcome, since the most appropriated source of data to study the job placement of Spanish population, the Labour Force Survey (EPA, for its acronym in Spanish), includes nationality information but not the country of birth. This implies that it cannot be used for the purposes of this paper or to study migration from the perspective of the countries of origin<sup>7</sup>.

## **5. Recent Trends in Skilled Migration in the United States and Spain**

Skilled migration has increased significantly in the last few decades. In fact, according to Lozano and Gandini's recent estimates, the highest growing rate of migrants in OECD countries between 1990 and 2007 came from highly educated migrants (13 years and over), i.e. about 26 million people which represent 37% of the total migrants from these countries (Lozano & Gandini, 2009:14). This phenomenon has been stimulated by policies implemented by the skilled migrants' main host countries (United States, Canada and Australia), which have been increasingly selective when it comes to grant residence permits. The above has taken place despite the efforts made by developing countries aiming to compete with developed countries for the demand of skilled human resources, thus increasing their number of human capital and strengthening their science and technology systems.

Nowadays this growing trend may be affected by the global economic crisis which is having a big impact on the economic situation of developed countries, with major consequences on the unemployment. Even though it is difficult to evaluate the current situation in terms of crisis impact on the skilled migration flows, it is evident that demographic trends and the aging of the workforce in developed countries are important to maintain the growing flow of skilled migration to developed countries.

Data stored on the OECD database, based on 1990 and 2000 censuses, have led to more comprehensive empirical studies on skilled migration. The first study was conducted by Carrington and Detragiache (1999) who estimated that within the OECD countries there was a total of 12.9 millions of highly skilled immigrants from developing countries. Out of this total, 7 million were resident of the United States and 5.9 of other OECD countries (Ibidem: quoted by Pellegrino, 2003).

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<sup>7</sup> Due to the fact that a significant portion of the Latin American population resident in Spain has the Spanish nationality or the nationality from another European Union country, using EPA would mean to inadequately record the LAC born population as migrants (natives) who might have been attained their higher degree in their respective countries of birth.

Subsequent studies made new estimates on the skilled migration to OECD countries and found an increase of skilled migration between the intra-census periods. At the same time, they concluded that the countries of origin most affected by this phenomenon are usually smaller countries, particularly the Caribbean and some African and Central American countries (Docquier & Marfouk, 2004; Dumont and Lemaitre, 2005; Lozano & Gandini, 2009).

The United States has historically been the main country of destination for Latin American migration. At the same time it has always been the main country of destination for skilled migrants from all over the world. In that sense, Lozano and Gandini (2009) see a strong concentration of skilled immigration in the United States having Latin American and Caribbean origin, a pattern which is not exclusive of Latin America and the Caribbean and thus ratifies the attraction-centre status of this country. The most frequent explanations for this attraction have put the emphasis on the dynamism of the U.S. productive system, the flexibility of its migratory policy and in particular the H1-B visa regime, and finally, its insufficient domestic supply of students interested in science and engineering (Pellegrino and Martínez Pizarro, 2001; Schaaper and Wyckoff, 2006).

The volume of Latin American immigrants living in Spain over the period 2000-2007 has more than tripled, rising from 356,634 to 1,560,119 people, which represent an absolute growth of 337.5% for the whole period, the equivalent to 23.5% annual growth. Despite the above, when we take the same variables for the skilled immigrants alone we see that the growth is even higher. Skilled Latin American immigrants in Spain have grown from a 58,906 in 2000 to 321,186 in 2007, which represents an absolute growth of 445.2% for the whole period, i.e. an annual increase of 27.5%. Notwithstanding this, as described in the next section of this paper, migration to the United States has still a more educated profile than migration to Spain.

## **6. Socio-Demographic Profile of the Skilled Latin American Immigrants in U.S. and Spain.**

Skilled Latin American immigrants residents in the United States and Spain amount to approximately two and a half million people, the majority of which (two millions) live in the U.S. Nevertheless, LA&C is the main continent of origin of the skilled immigrants in Spain (42%), followed closely by Europe (nearly 400,000 skilled immigrants each one). There is also a clear difference in the composition of the immigrants stocks by region of birth: the volume and relative weight for those immigrants born in Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean is considerably higher in the U.S., whereas in Spain the weight of the South American-born is significantly higher. To the inside of each Latin American region there are also significant differences in the composition of their stocks by country of birth. This way, while among those from the Southern Cone established in the U.S. half of them were born in Brazil, among the skilled immigrants from the Southern Cone residents in Spain there is a clear predominance of Argentineans. On the other hand, as for Andine countries, both in Spain and the United States the country with the higher volume of skilled immigrants is Colombia, although the volume and relative weight of Colombian and Peruvian nationals is substantially higher in the U.S. than in Spain where there is a much even distribution among the Andine countries (table 1).

Table 1: Skilled Immigrants in the U.S.A. and Spain by Place of Birth

Place of birth	U.S.A 2006-08			Spain 2007		
	N	% Total	% ALC	N	% Total	% ALC
NORTH AMERICA <sup>8</sup>	342,947	3.7	---	21,451	2.3	---
EUROPE	1,838,466	20.0	---	386,883	41.7	---
ASIA	4,440,880	48.4	---	54,497	5.9	---
AFRICA	484,833	5.3	---	71,384	7.7	---
OCEANIA	62,814	0.7	---	2,986*	0.3	---
LATIN AMERICA	2,008,715	21.9	100.0	390,655	42.1	100.0
<i>Mexico</i>	498,819	5.4	24.8	20,584	2.2	5.3
<i>Central America</i>	256,666	2.8	12.8	12,397	1.3	3.2
El Salvador	67,983	0.7	3.4	1,601*	0.2	0.4
Guatemala	49,740	0.5	2.5	535*	0.1	0.1
Panama	38,800	0.4	1.9	3,536*	0.4	0.9
Nicaragua	38,375	0.4	1.9	2,565*	0.3	0.7
Honduras	36,942	0.4	1.8	3,591*	0.4	0.9
Costa Rica	17,908	0.2	0.9	569*	0.1	0.1
Belize	6,918	0.1	0.3	s/d	---	---
<i>The Caribbean</i>	644,798	7.0	32.1	36,173	3.9	9.3
Cuba	202,763	2.2	10.1	27,932	3.0	7.2
Jamaica	120,663	1.3	6.0	---	---	---
Dominican Republic	89,161	1.0	4.4	5,956*	0.6	1.5
Haiti	80,596	0.9	4.0	478*	0.1	0.1
Guyana	45,309	0.5	2.3	---	---	---
Trinidad & Tobago	44,945	0.5	2.2	271*	0.0	0.1
Others	61,361	0.6	3.1	---	---	---
<i>South America, Andine countries</i>	408,680	4.5	20.3	200,354	21.6	51.3
Bolivia	20,183	0.2	1.0	22,848	2.5	5.8
Colombia	162,111	1.8	8.1	50,577	5.5	12.9
Ecuador	54,556	0.6	2.7	38,289	4.1	9.8
Peru	102,588	1.1	5.1	41,968	4.5	10.7
Venezuela	69,242	0.8	3.4	46,672	5.0	11.9
<i>South America, Southern Cone</i>	190,693	2.1	9.5	120,832	13.0	30.9
Argentina	57,608	0.6	2.9	72,163	7.8	18.5
Brazil	92,168	1.0	4.6	16,602	1.8	4.2
Chile	29,390	0.3	1.5	13,303	1.4	3.4
Paraguay	3,133	0.0	0.2	3,125*	0.3	0.8
Uruguay	8,394	0.1	0.4	15,639	1.7	4.0
<i>Latin America, unspecified</i>	9,059	0.1	0.5	315*	0.0	0.1
Total	9,178,655	100.0	---	927,856	100.0	---

\* Non-representative data

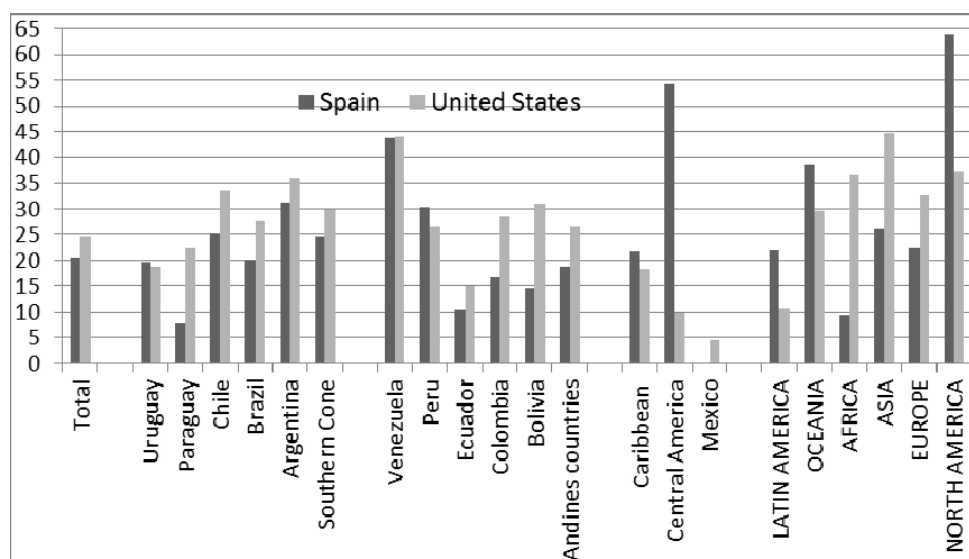
Source: Own estimates based on ACS 2006-2008 and ENI 2007 data.

Figure 2 shows the weight of skilled immigrants in relation to total immigrants by place of birth, both in Spain and the United States. We see that skilled migration in the U.S. contributes with a quarter of the total stock of migrants, whereas in Spain this portion goes down to 20%. When these ratios are observed taking into account the migration from Latin America and the Caribbean we find that in the U.S. this ratio is reduced to 10% due to the preponderant weight of Mexican migration which only represents a 5% of the skilled migrants. However, in Spain skilled migrants born in Latin American countries and the Caribbean represent 22% of total migrants from the region, a percentage which shows that Latin American migration in Spain has a slightly higher educated profile than the rest of migrants. When taking these differences to the inside of LA&C, the more educated profile of those born in the Southern Cone stands out, in addition to Venezuela's case which has a high

<sup>8</sup> Includes, Canada and Bermuda.

portion of skilled migrants in both countries<sup>9</sup>. Another confirmation that arises from studying the data presented on figure 2 is that for most South American countries migration to the United States has had a higher skilled profile than migration to Spain (the exceptions being Uruguay and Peru), a feature that is inverted upon studying Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean.

**Figure 2: Percentage of Skilled Immigrants Over Total Immigrants by Country of Birth (Population 15-year and over). Spain 2007 and the United States 2006-2008**



*Source: Own analysis based on ACS 2006-2008 and ENI 2007 data*  
*Note: in the case of Spain, Mexico is included with Central American countries.*

In relation to the structure by sex and age, skilled immigrant population from Latin America who lives in the United States and Spain is characterized by a concentration on the middle ages, there being average ages above the commonly found among migrants without at least a bachelor's degree. This gap between skilled and unskilled migration may be explained by the fact that young people at the age of pursuing university studies (with theoretical ages that go between 18 and 24) have incentives not to migrate while the whole process of their university studies begins and finishes.

One of the differences noticed when comparing both population pyramids is that skilled Latin American immigrants living in the United States have a more aged profile than Spain's (chart 3 and table 2). Indeed, while in Spain the five-year age mode is between 30-34 years old, 18% have 50 years or over, in the U.S. this group is 40-44 years old and the ratio of immigrants aged 50 years and over rises to 29%. These differences have to do with the fact that skilled immigrants in the United States have usually been for a longer time in their host country since the U.S. –unlike Spain– has been for a long time the point of destination of masses of all Latin American migration, and of skilled migration in particular. Notice that 7 out of 10 skilled Latin Americans arrived in Spain 10 years ago or less, whereas in the U.S. this figure is barely three out of ten.

<sup>9</sup> On this matter, a study by De la Vega (2003) noticed that already in the 1990s the emigration of Venezuelan scientists and technologists had increased considerably, and that the absence of policies foresaw a gloomy picture of the future (cited by Albornoz et al. 2007:33).

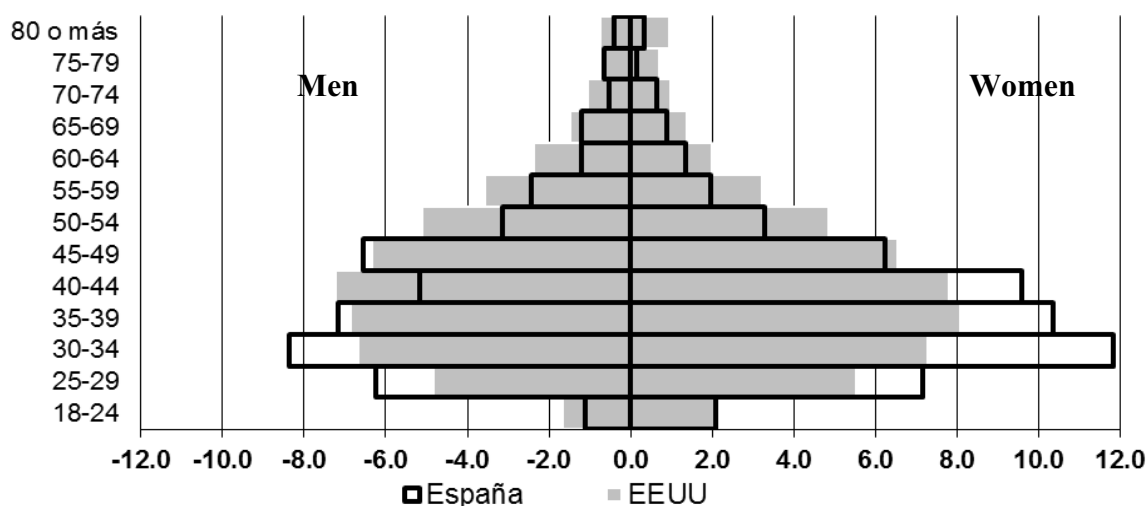


**Table 2: Age groups and Sex Distribution of Skilled Immigrants in U.S.A and Spain by Place of Birth (in percentage)**

Place of birth	U.S.A 2006-08					SPAIN 2007				
	Age distribution (%)				Female (%)	Age distribution (%)				Female (%)
	18-34	35-49	50-64	65 y +		18-34	35-49	50-64	65 y +	
NORTH AMERICA	22.6	37.0	24.8	15.6	49.5	25.9	43.7	19.3	11.2	51.0
EUROPE	22.3	36.4	25.0	16.3	49.3	32.6	36.8	18.7	11.9	51.1
ASIA	31.0	39.6	21.2	8.2	48.8	27.3	42.0	20.5	10.3	33.9
AFRICA	26.7	45.8	22.6	4.9	38.2	34.6	47.7	11.3	6.4	27.2
OCEANIA	30.4	39.4	22.4	7.8	44.2	10.4	89.6	---	---	78.6
LATIN AMERICA	28.1	42.8	21.1	7.9	51.4	36.6	44.8	13.3	4.8	55.9
<i>México</i>	36.2	44.7	15.0	4.1	47.4					53.6
<i>Central America</i>	31.1	40.6	21.2	7.0	50.3	51.0	30.2	13.0	2.1	
<i>The Caribbean</i>	21.3	40.9	25.7	12.1	54.0	26.4	49.4	15.1	8.8	58.7
<i>Andine countries</i>	26.5	45.8	21.5	6.2	52.2	38.4	46.9	11.7	2.7	54.2
Bolivia	29.0	35.4	26.2	9.4	52.0	57.2	31.3	10.0	1.4	52.0
Colombia	26.9	46.0	20.5	6.6	54.2	38.4	44.2	12.7	4.6	58.4
Ecuador	26.8	46.8	19.7	6.7	50.9	39.3	53.2	4.5	2.0	62.3
Peru	23.7	43.6	26.3	6.4	49.4	31.9	51.4	13.6	3.2	41.9
Venezuela	28.7	50.5	17.0	3.8	52.9	34.4	48.3	15.8	1.5	54.9
<i>Southern Cone</i>	29.9	41.3	20.3	8.4	52.5	32.9	43.9	15.6	7.7*	58.8
Argentina	25.4	38.2	24.6	11.8	49.2	27.2	45.0	18.7	9.1*	55.0
Brazil	35.5	43.6	16.7	4.2	55.4	53.8	31.3	11.6	3.3*	72.3
Chile	23.4	39.2	24.5	12.9	51.4	36.4	49.5	9.7	4.4*	59.4
Paraguay	30.7	44.8	19.7	4.8	49.8	72.5	16.6	10.9	---	78.1
Uruguay	22.6	43.0	16.7	17.7	49.0	25.7	53.1	11.1	10.1*	57.9
<i>Latin America, unspecified</i>	19.2	44.4	26.2	10.2	58.5	---	---	---	---	---
Total	28.1	39.9	22.2	9.9	48.9	33.9	41.7	15.9	8.3	50.4

\*Non-representative data

Source: own calculation based on ACS 2006-2008 and ENI 2007 data

**Figure 3: Pyramids of Skilled Immigrants from Latin America Living in Spain and United States**

Source: Own analysis based on ACS 2006-2008 and ENI 2007 data

Another distinguishing feature of skilled immigration and of Latin American in particular, is feminization among the younger ages and masculinization among the older ages, a characteristic that is particularly different to that of non-migration skilled population, who tends to become more 'feminine' as age increases, as a result of women's longer life

expectancy as opposed to men's. One possible explanation for this phenomenon – experienced with immigrants from other continents as well- is that enrolment has become increasingly more feminized thus new graduate cohorts have tended to be more feminine, regardless of the evolution of skilled migration rate by sex.

In general terms, data show that skilled migration from Latin American and Caribbean countries tends to be more feminine than migration coming from other continents. Even though this statement is correct both for Spain and the United States, a much even gender balance is found in the latter (there are 94 skilled Latin American male immigrants for every 100 females, as opposed to the 79 males for every 100 females found in Spain). Upon disaggregation of the information to the inside of Latin America and the Caribbean, we see again important differences among the various regions; the Caribbean appears as the region with higher female predominance in both countries (59% females in Spain and 54% in the U.S.) while on the opposite side there are Mexico and Central America.

As mentioned above, the stock of Latin American immigrants in the U.S. is considerably more aged than Spain's. Notwithstanding this, depending on the country of birth there are clear differences among Latin American and Caribbean-born immigrants. As for the United States, a longer time of residence is perceived among those born in the Caribbean, Central America and Mexico against South American-born, whereas in Spain we see a similar phenomenon with the exception of migration from the Southern Cone countries which date back to more years than Andine migration.

Citizenship status is another of the variables identified by migratory literature as connected with the differences on immigrants' insertion to the host society. Almost half of skilled Latin Americans who live in the United States do not hold citizenship of the host country, a higher figure than that of Europeans but similar to Asians', Africans' and North Americans' (Canadians). As for Spain, 40% of the Latin America and Caribbean immigrants is either Spanish citizen or from some other European Union country. This percentage is higher to the African one (36%) but lower to Asian's (45%). As one might expect, there are significant differences among Latin American and Caribbean countries that can be related to the different historical migration contexts of each country, and in particular to the possibility of acquiring the citizenship of their ascendant European immigrants. Thus, a high portion of individuals born in the Southern Cone, for example, become Spanish citizens or acquire citizenship from another European Union country as a result of the great contribution of Spanish and Italian immigrants to the population of Argentina and Uruguay and of Portuguese to Brazil (see Table 3).

The immigrants' educational attainment with higher education completed is the most different feature among countries of destination studied in this paper. While in Spain only one out of ten skilled Latin American immigrants claim to hold a postgraduate degree, in the U.S. this proportion is three out of ten (if we take the total of skilled immigrants the proportion is even greater: 39.5%). At first glance this data may lead us to think that - given that in most cases a positive association between educational attainment and performance in the workforce is observed- skilled immigrants living in the U.S. should have better performances than immigrants living in Spain. Further on this paper we will present data to contrast this hypothesis (see Table 4).

Table 3: Citizenship Status Distribution of Skilled Immigrants in USA and Spain by Place of Birth (in Percentage)

Place of birth	USA 2006-08			SPAIN 2007			
	US citizenship	Not US citizenship	Total	Spanish citizenship	European citizenship	Not a citizen	Total
NORTH AMERICA	51.6	48.4	100.0	26.7	6.9	66.4	100.0
EUROPE	63.4	36.6	100.0	17.7	40.2	42.0	100.0
ASIA	58.0	42.0	100.0	41.1	4.2	54.6	100.0
AFRICA	54.7	45.3	100.0	32.5	3.2	64.2	100.0
OCEANIA	41.8	58.2	100.0	44.7	---	55.3	100.0
LATIN AMERICA	54.5	45.5	100.0	37.0	3.1	59.9	100.0
<i>Mexico</i>	41.6	58.4	100.0				100.0
<i>Central America</i>	55.4	44.6	100.0	39.4	0.2	60.4	100.0
<i>The Caribbean</i>	71.8	28.2	100.0	50.2	1.3	48.5	100.0
<i>Andine countries</i>	47.4	52.6	100.0	33.4	1.5	65.2	100.0
Bolivia	51.5	48.5	100.0	4.9	0.6	94.4	100.0
Colombia	47.9	52.1	100.0	32.7	---	67.3	100.0
Ecuador	52.8	47.2	100.0	18.8	---	81.2	100.0
Peru	49.0	51.0	100.0	37.9	2.2	59.8	100.0
Venezuela	38.3	61.7	100.0	55.9	3.9	40.1	100.0
<i>Southern Cone</i>	43.4	56.6	100.0	38.5	7.0	54.5	100.0
Argentina	52.8	47.2	100.0	40.6	6.4	53.0	100.0
Brazil	34.4	65.6	100.0	22.7	10.4	66.9	100.0
Chile	51.1	48.9	100.0	34.8	0.7	64.4	100.0
Paraguay	46.6	53.4	100.0	17.3	---	82.7	100.0
Uruguay	49.6	50.4	100.0	53.2	12.8	34.0	100.0
<i>Latin America, unspecified</i>	66.4	33.6	100.0	---	---	---	---
Total	57.8	42.2	100.0	28.6	18.7	52.6	100.0

Source: own calculation based on ACS 2006-2008 and ENI 2007 data

Table 4: Educational Attainment Distribution of Skilled Immigrants in USA and Spain by Place of Birth

Place of birth	EE.UU 2006-08			ESPAÑA 2007		
	Only bachelor's degree	Postgraduate degree	Total	Only bachelor's degree	Postgraduate degree	Total
NORTH AMERICA	58.7	41.3	100.0	83.3	16.7	100.0
EUROPE	53.6	46.4	100.0	92.8	7.2	100.0
ASIA	59.8	40.2	100.0	87.1	12.9	100.0
AFRICA	60.2	39.8	100.0	94.8	5.2	100.0
OCEANIA	60.9	39.1	100.0	100.0	---	100.0
LATIN AMERICA	68.7	31.3	100.0	90.0	10.0	100.0
<i>Mexico</i>	73.4	26.6	100.0			
<i>Central America</i>	73.9	26.1	100.0	81.9	18.1	100.0
<i>The Caribbean</i>	66.8	33.2	100.0	88.0	12.0	100.0
<i>Andine countries</i>	66.9	33.1	100.0	90.2	9.8	100.0
Bolivia	70.4	29.6	100.0	---	---	---
Colombia	65.7	34.3	100.0	---	---	---
Ecuador	70.7	29.3	100.0	---	---	---
Peru	69.0	31.0	100.0	---	---	---
Venezuela	62.6	37.4	100.0	---	---	---
<i>Southern Cone</i>	59.6	40.4	100.0	92.4	7.6	100.0
Argentina	49.5	50.5	100.0	---	---	---
Brazil	66.6	33.4	100.0	---	---	---
Chile	56.7	43.3	100.0	---	---	---
Paraguay	67.3	32.7	100.0	---	---	---
Uruguay	59.1	40.9	100.0	---	---	---
<i>Latin America, unspecified</i>	70.7	29.3	100.0	---	---	---
Total	60.5	39.5	100.0	91.2	8.8	100.0

Source: own calculation based on ACS 2006-2008 and ENI 2007 data

## 7. Performance in the Spanish and U.S. Labour Markets

A first indicator to approach a comparative evaluation of performance of skilled immigrants in the American and Spanish labour markets is the unemployment rate. Table 5 allows comparison of Latin American and Caribbean immigrants in both countries against immigrants from other regions.

**Table 5: Unemployment Rate of Skilled Immigrants in the United States and Spain by place of Birth, Sex, Age, Period of Residence, Citizenship Status and Educational Attainment (25-64 year-Old Population)**

	U.S.A. 2006-08		SPAIN 2007		Ratio: All/ LAC nationals		Ratio: Spain/USA (LAC))
	All immigrants	LAC immigrants	All immigrants	LAC immigrants	USA	Spain	
Total	3,5	4,0	10,5	9,7	0,88	1,08	2,43
Male	2,9	3,2	9,1	6,9*	0,91	1,32*	2,16
Female	4,1	4,5	12,0	12,9	0,91	0,93	2,87
Below 35 years old	2,9	4,1	11,4	11,4	0,71	1,00	2,78
35-49 years old	3,1	3,7	16,9	9,3	0,84	1,82	2,51
50-64 years old	3,6	3,7	2,9	6,8*	0,97	0,43*	1,84
Up to 10 years of residence	4,2	4,7	12,8	7,9	0,89	1,62	1,68
+ 10 years of residence	3,1	3,5	6,5	3,6*	0,89	1,81*	1,03
Citizen	3,0	3,1	8,6	7,0*	0,97	1,23*	2,26
Non-Citizen	4,0	4,8	12,0	11,5	0,83	1,04	2,40
Undergraduate studies	3,8	4,1	11,2	7,9	0,93	1,42	1,93
Postgraduate studies	2,9	3,3	4,7	1,0*	0,88	4,70*	0,30

\* Non-representative data

Source: Own calculation based on ACS 2006-2008 and ENI 2007 data

The first conclusion that arises from table 5 is that unemployment rate among skilled immigrants is substantially lower in the U.S. labour market than in Spain's. This statement is valid for all skilled immigrants as well as for those born in LA&C. In fact, the rate seen for LA&C immigrants in Spain is more than twice the rate seen in the U.S., and in the case of women it is nearly three times higher. A correct interpretation of the above data would require to bear in mind three statements: 1) Open unemployment for the whole population is usually far below in the U.S. than in Spain, which diminishes the difference noted<sup>10</sup>; 2) the way of measuring unemployment is not the same in both data sources, as the ENI 2007 may possibly underestimate the unemployment level because it does not include the same number of control questions than the ACS<sup>11</sup>; 3) the above data are from before the global crisis

<sup>10</sup> As mentioned before, the data source used for Spain does not provide information on the unemployment rate among native population. However, the Active Population Survey (not used in this paper because it lacks information about the country of birth) shows an average unemployment rate (for the whole population) of 9.4% for the period 2006-2008, with a 8.5 value in 2006, 8.3 in 2007 and 11.3 in 2008. On the other hand, the U.S.'s ACS 2006-2008 shows an overall unemployment rate of 6.4. These figures show that the differences observed between both countries in terms of skilled population are the same than when all the population is considered.

<sup>11</sup> The ENI 2007 performs only the following question (with the option to mark more than one option): "In which of the following situations were you last week (Working, Looking for work, Studying, Retired/Pensioner, Devoted to household chores, Permanently disabled, Other situations)". Some of the questions included in the ACS questionnaire are: "LAST WEEK, did this person work for pay at a job (or business)?"; "LAST WEEK, did this person do ANY work for pay, even for as little as one hour?"; "LAST WEEK, was this person on layoff from a job?"; "LAST WEEK, was this person TEMPORARILY absent from a job or business?"; "Has this person been informed that he or she will be recalled to work within the next 6 months OR been given a date to return to

brought out in 2008 which had a strong impact on the overall unemployment as well as by industry and which raised the open unemployment to rates of about 10% in the U.S. and about 20% in Spain. In addition, despite the various measures taken to reactivate the economy in both countries, unemployment remains stable at very high levels. From the perspective of the analysis made in this paper, it is not possible to make predictions about the effects that such a major phenomenon will have on those countries' skilled immigration in the coming years, although it seems that the impacts will be of significance.

The second element to highlight from table 5 is that unemployment among Latin American and Caribbean immigrants in the U.S. is higher than that of skilled immigrants from other continents, whereas in Spain it is the other way round: LAC immigrants tend to be in a more advantageous situation in comparison with their peers from other regions of the world. Indeed, unemployment level among all skilled immigrants in Spain is 8% higher than the unemployment level of LAC born immigrants, whereas in the U.S. the opposite phenomenon occurs: total skilled immigrants show an unemployment rate 12% lower than that of LAC immigrants.

Data shown in the table above also confirm the expected relations among variables: women, those who have less time of residence in the host country, those who do not have citizenship and those who have only a first level degree are those who tend to show the highest unemployment levels.

Available data suggest that skilled immigrants coming from LA&C are those having the highest underutilization of their workforce in the U.S., in the sense of the relationship between educational attainment and place in the labour market. In this respect, one can also find big differences among countries and regions of the continent: those coming from Central America and Mexico have a worst performance than those from South America and the Caribbean. Among South American natives there is a better inclusion of immigrants from the Southern Cone than those from Andine countries; moreover, there may be noticed a more successful inclusion of Argentineans and Uruguayans than Brazilians. These findings are confirmed even when controlled by attributes such as sex, age, time of residence, citizenship status or educational attainment. In particular, as expected, men, middle-age individuals (35-49 years old), those who have been living in the U.S. for at least 10 years, hold the citizenship status and a master's degree or doctorate, show higher percentages of performance in skilled occupations.

When results obtained for the United States and Spain are compared there appears that the gap between educational attainment and job qualification is larger in Spain, where in general terms, there is a lower percentage of immigrants employed in skilled occupations (38% vs. 54% in the US). LA&C immigrants show a worse performance for this indicator in both countries: the rate of immigrants working in skilled occupations goes down to 44% for U.S. residents and 35% for Spain residents.

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work?", "During the LAST 4 WEEKS, has this person been ACTIVELY looking for work?", "LAST WEEK, could this person have started a job if offered one, or returned to work if recalled?"

As previously mentioned, the above difference is affected by the fact that skilled migration in the U.S. has a higher average level of education than Spain's thus a more accurate comparison would require to control in detail by educational attainment (PhD, Master's degree, Bachelor's degree, etc). Unfortunately, the available information for Spain only allows disaggregation by those who have a postgraduate degree from those who do not have one, without making a distinction by type of postgraduate degree (diploma, master's degree, and doctorate). Even with such limitations the descriptive statistical analysis shows that, both among skilled immigrants that only have a bachelor's degree and those with postgraduate courses completed, the percentage of individuals employed in skilled jobs is higher in the U.S (44% for the first group and 68% for the second one) than in Spain (33% and 62%, respectively). However, when the analysis is restricted to Latin American and Caribbean immigrants alone, we see that this gap is maintained for those with a bachelor's degree but it the opposite for those who hold a postgraduate degree: in Spain, the percentage of employed immigrants in skilled jobs rises to 65% versus 58% seen for the same group in the U.S.

**Table 6: Percentage of Skilled Immigrants in USA and Spain who work in Management, Professional or Technical Occupations (Skilled Occupations), by Sex and Place of Birth (Population Between 25-64 Years Old)**

Place of birth	USA 2006-08			SPAIN 2007		
	Male	Female	Both	Male	Female	Both
NORTH AMERICA	70,4	58,6	65,2	85,0	57,2	70,3
EUROPE	62,9	51,6	58,0	50,5	34,5	41,9
ASIA	63,8	46,8	56,0	41,6	21,7	35,1
AFRICA	54,0	50,9	53,4	24,2	46,5	30,4
OCEANIA	64,0	55,7	60,8	100,0	75,0*	80,4
LATIN AMERICA	44,7	42,6	44,2	43,6	28,0	34,8
<i>Mexico</i>	35,7	34,7	36,0	68,9	32,8	50,6
<i>Central America</i>	39,3	39,5	39,9			
<i>The Caribbean</i>	50,5	52,2	52,0			
<i>South America, Andine countries</i>	47,3	38,7	43,1	31,5	24,0	27,4
Bolivia	47,2	37,0	41,1	---	---	---
Colombia	48,8	40,1	44,3	---	---	---
Ecuador	41,2	35,3	38,7	---	---	---
Peru	41,1	37,9	39,8	---	---	---
Venezuela	58,2	39,6	48,8	---	---	---
<i>South America, Southern Cone</i>	55,8	42,3	49,2	57,5	34,2	43,6
Argentina	63,8	54,4	59,3	---	---	---
Brazil	49,0	34,7	41,8	---	---	---
Chile	59,1	48,1	53,7	---	---	---
Paraguay	49,1*	32,9	42,2	---	---	---
Uruguay	66,8	41,4	54,0	---	---	---
<i>Latin America, unspecified</i>	51,6	53,5	52,3	---	---	---
Total	59,1	47,4	54,0	44,8	32,2	38,3

\* Non-representative data

Source: Own estimates based on ACS 2006-2008 and ENI 2007 data

**Table 7: Percentage of Skilled Immigrants in USA and Spain Occupied as Managers, Professionals or Technical by Educational Attainment and Place of Birth (population 25-64 years)**

Place of birth	EE.UU 2006-08		ESPAÑA 2007	
	Only bachelor's degree	Postgraduate degree	Only bachelor's degree	Postgraduate degree
NORTH AMERICA	56.3	76.4	68.0	88.1
EUROPE	47.4	69.1	42.0	64.5
ASIA	44.9	71.1	31.9	68.1
AFRICA	43.3	67.6	28.7	69.4
OCEANIA	52.9	72.3	80.4	---
LATIN AMERICA	37.2	58.3	32.1	66.8
<i>México</i>	30.7	48.0		
<i>Central America</i>	33.9	55.7	47.5	85.3
<i>Caribbean</i>	45.1	64.9	31.5	45.2
<i>South America, Andine countries</i>	36.2	56.5	24.6	57.7
Bolivia	38.9	48.3	---	---
Colombia	37.8	56.5	---	---
Ecuador	32.8	51.5	---	---
Perú	32.7	55.4	---	---
Venezuela	39.8	62.8	---	---
<i>South America, Southern Cone</i>	38.2	64.9	41.1	86.7
Argentina	47.2	71.1	---	---
Brazil	32.9	58.0	---	---
Chile	42.9	68.2	---	---
Paraguay	31.5	60.6	---	---
Uruguay	44.1	69.5	---	---
<i>Latin America, unspecified</i>	49.5	61.0	---	---
Total	43.7	68.4	36.7	67.2

Source: own calculation based on ACS 2006-2008 and ENI 2007 data

## 7.1 Earnings

One of the most important indicators that account for the inclusion of immigrants into the labour markets of their host societies is what they earn for their work.<sup>12</sup> The purpose of this section is to study the differences on earnings among the skilled Latin American migrants, both in Spain and the U.S., as well as their relation to natives<sup>13</sup> and migrants born in other regions.

Data confirms that having completed the university studies has a positive effect on the income level of the immigrants both in the U.S. and in Spain. In both cases skilled immigrants have higher earnings than unskilled, this situation being more evident in the U.S. where skilled immigrants' earnings is 2.1 times higher than those of unskilled, whereas this ratio reduces to 1.2 in Spain.

As for the skilled immigrants it is possible to state that income levels are significantly higher among U.S. residents than those living in Spain. This relation is maintained even when the region of birth is considered, which indirectly confirms the importance of the wage factor in order to account for the attraction drawn by the U.S. to highly skilled workers in the international migratory context.

<sup>12</sup> For the purposes of this paper all earnings are considered, whether as wage-earner or self-employed worker. Earnings are compared according to the Purchasing power parity (PPP) taken from OECD's methodology manual.

<sup>13</sup> Unfortunately the data source used in Spain's case does not allow comparison with native populations as it is survey on immigrant population. The more appropriate source for that matter is the Active Population Survey but it has the inconvenient of not providing information about the country of birth and thus the only possible definition of immigration is by using the nationality variable, which would mean a greater inconvenient for the study of Latin American migration.

As a whole, skilled immigrant residents in the U.S. earn an hourly income whose median value reaches the 23 US dollars, whereas for those residents of Spain it is 9 US dollars (see table 8). The income gap by sex confirms the differential in favour of the U.S., showing the same pattern in both countries since men earn on average higher incomes than women. The analysis according to the other control variables considered in this study (age, period of residence, citizenship status and educational attainment of migrants) ratify the differential seen in favour of the United States.

If skilled immigrants born in Latin America who live in the U.S. and Spain are compared against total skilled immigrants of both countries we find some gaps in income levels. These differences are more evident in the U.S. where the median earnings for skilled immigrants in that country is 23.1 US dollars, whereas if we consider only Latin Americans, the median goes down to 18.3 US dollars (relative difference 26% higher). On the contrary, in Spain LA&C immigrants earn a median hourly income of 8.2 US dollars against 8.9 US dollars earned by the whole skilled immigrants of the country (relative difference 9% higher).

**Table 8: Median Hourly Earnings by Sex**

	All skilled immigrants			Skilled immigrants born in LAC			Ratio: All/AL&C-born		
	Both sexes	Male	Female	Both sexes	Male	Female	Both sexes	Male	Female
U.S.A.	23.1	26.2	19.9	18.3	19.2	16.8	1.26	1.36	1.18
Spain	8.9	9.8	7.8	8.2	9.4	7.2	1.09	1.04	1.08
Ratio: USA/Spain	2.60	2.67	2.55	2.23	2.04	2.33	-	-	-

Source: Own estimates based on ACS 2006-2008 and ENI 2007 data

To conclude the earnings differentials analysis it is necessary to look inside LA&C. In that respect, a similar pattern to the above is found both in Spain and the U.S. with the same indicators of performance in the labour market analysed before: immigrants from the Southern Cone are in a better position than their peers born in other countries of Latin American and the Caribbean. Moreover, data proved that in both countries, as expected, the immigrants with the higher income levels (table 9) are those born in the more developed regions (Europe, North America, Oceania).

**Table 9: Median Earnings of the Skilled Migrants in Spain and the U.S. by Place of Birth**

Place of birth	USA 2006-08		SPAIN 2007		Ratio Hourly earnings USA/Spain	Ratio Hourly earnings vs. Europe, North America and Oceania	
	Annual earnings	Hourly earnings	Annual earnings	Hourly earnings		USA 2006-08	Spain 2007
Europe, North America and Oceania	56,000	25.5	17,984	10.1	2.52	-	-
Africa and Asia	53,000	24.2	14,987	7.9	3.06	0.95	0.78
South America, Southern Cone	42,000	19.4	16,785	9.4	2.06	0.76	0.93
South America, Andine countries	37,000	17.1	14,987	7.9	2.16	0.67	0.78
Central American and The Caribbean	40,000	18.3	14,987	8.9	2.06	0.72	0.88

Source: Own estimates based on ACS 2006-2008 and ENI 2007 data

Skilled immigrants born in the Southern Cone, Central America and Caribbean who live in the United States earn a median income which is twice the earnings of their peer's residents in Spain (relative difference of 106%). On the opposite side, the regions where the gap is wider are Africa and Asia since their nationals living in the U.S. earn three times more than those living in Spain (relative difference of 206%). On the other hand, the relative difference among Spain and U.S earnings for those born in the Andine countries is close to the levels shown for those born in other regions of Latin America (116%). In short, we see that even though Latin Americans in the U.S. tend to earn higher salaries than their fellow



countrymen/women in Spain, in relation to immigrants born in other regions of the world, the more disadvantageous situation is attenuated in Spain since in African and Asian immigrants that country tend to receive lower salaries than those born in Latin America (the exception being those from Andine countries who show an identical median earning).

## 7.2 Earnings Differentials in the U.S by Occupational Group

The ACS is more appropriate than the ENI for an in-depth study of the characteristics of the labour market for skilled immigrants as, among other characteristics, it gives detailed information by occupational group and by industry. This is a great advantage because it enables a deeper study into the American labour market and to examine data in a *disaggregated way so as to identify the economic sectors within the labour market where earnings are more beneficial or detrimental for immigrants. Therefore, a short summary of the results obtained for United States with regard to the income gap according to the work carried out by those professionals working in highly-skilled occupations.*

In general terms, data shown on table 10 confirms that in the U.S, immigrants from Southern Cone countries have higher earnings levels than their peers Latin American born in other regions. Hence, median earnings observed among those born in the Southern Cone countries are significantly higher than median earnings of the whole Latin Americans, particularly among the occupational groups of Business & Financial, Computer & Mathematics, Architecture & Engineering and Healthcare. In more aggregated terms, Latin American & Caribbean immigrants tend to have lower earnings than the immigrants as a whole, including those from Africa and Asia, except for the Community & Social Services and Education occupations.

**Table 10: Median annual earnings by skilled occupational groups and place of birth (25-64 year-old population). USA (U.S. dollars, in thousands)**

Occupation	North America	Europe	Asia	Africa	Latin America & Caribbean	Mexico	Central America	Caribbean	Andine countries	Southern Cone	Foreign-born	USA
Management, Business and Financial	80	71	60	59	54	50	50	58	50	63	60	65
Computer and mathematical	80	76	73	65	63	60	70	62	60	73	72	68
Architecture and Engineering	84	75	75	63	60	60	63	60	60	70	73	72
Life, Physical, and Social Science	64	57	52	46,8	48,7	50	47,7	50	44,3	47,8	53	53,2
Community and Social Services	40	35	32	33	36	36	39,5	37	33	36	35	36
Legal Occupations	90	75	62	50	55	54	50	60	50	48	65	80
Education, Training, and Library	40	38	25	35	36	34	35	41	32	31	33,5	40
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media	39	38,5	39	35	35	36	26	40	35	31,2	37,2	39,6
Healthcare Practitioner and Technical	60	60	68	60,6	58	57	60	60	50	60	64	55

Source: Own estimates based on ACS 2006-2008 and ENI 2007 data

Another interesting reading of the above table is that there is no clear pattern as to the income gap between immigrants and natives. While in some occupational groups a wage differential in favour of the native population (those in business and finance, legal occupations, arts and education) is seen, in other occupations there is a clear differential in favour of the immigrant population (computer and mathematical occupations and healthcare). Anyway, a more precise analysis would require to control at least the effect of the educational attainment (postgraduate degree or not), a variable that is statistically significantly related to the income level and more generally to the labour market (those who hold a master's degree or PhD show better performances than those who only have a bachelor's degree). This task can only be performed by controlling by occupational group but only at continent level, that is, without disaggregating to the inside of Latin America and the Caribbean.

Table 11 presents information that allows confirmation of the various patterns observed throughout this paper. Firstly, the educational attainment seems to have a significant effect on the income obtained by immigrants for their work. In all occupational groups of the United States and for all places of birth, we can see a wage gap in favour of those who have a postgraduate degree against those with only a first level degree (bachelor's degree). Secondly, the tendency repeats once again: immigrants from developed regions (Europe, North America, Oceania) have higher income levels followed by Asians (with the exception of those who work as professors and teachers), whereas African and LA&C born immigrants fall behind in a lower level.

**Table 11: Median annual earnings (in thousands of dollars) of skilled immigrants by occupational group, place of birth and educational attainment (25-64 year-old population)**

Educational attainment	Occupational group	Place of birth			
		North America, Europe and Oceania	Asia	Africa	Latin America and The Caribbean
Only Bachelor's degree	Management, Business and Financial	70	57	52	52
	Computer and mathematical	75	70	60.5	62
	Architecture and Engineering	78	70	60	60
	Life, Physical, and Social Science	53	50	48	49
	Community and Social Services	35	35	32	35
	Legal Occupations	50	50	50	43
	Education, Training, and Library	30	24	30	33.7
	Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media	42	45	40	40
Postgraduate degree	Healthcare Practitioner and Technical	53	60	54	54
	Management, Business and Financial	91	80	70	70
	Computer and mathematical	85	80	75	77
	Architecture and Engineering	85	85	72	70
	Life, Physical, and Social Science	65	60	55	58
	Community and Social Services	42	38	38.8	44
	Legal Occupations	100	90	70	77
	Education, Training, and Library	50	40	50	49
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media	48	48	34.8	40	
Healthcare Practitioner and Technical	84	95	90	72	

Source: own calculation based on ACS 2006-2008 data

## 8. Concluding Remarks

The purpose of this paper was to identify the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of Latin American immigrants in the two countries that concentrate the greater

Latin American immigration: USA and Spain. In both we saw a growth of skilled migration that is related to an increase of the education attainment of Latin American population.

Data studied throughout this paper shows that there are significant differences in the profiles of skilled migration according to their country of birth, thus confirming that there is a high heterogeneity among the countries of origin of Latin American immigrants as had been previously highlighted by migratory literature.

Nevertheless, a few trend changes may be observed. One of them refers to the fact that Latin American migration has historically been identified with a predominance of men<sup>14</sup>, a feature that has tended to reverse and it is even accentuated in skilled migration. The predominance of women in skilled migration, which is particularly higher among young female migrants, is an interesting phenomenon which should be the object of specific studies. In this direction, it would be interesting to study more thoroughly this subject in order to find out what are the occupational groups and industries within the labour market in which skilled female migrants from Latin America and the Caribbean work, since in aggregated terms, remuneration of skilled women immigrants living in the U.S. and Spain is lower than men's, that is to say, the same phenomenon observed for the overall migration applies to women alone.

One of the conclusions from this study is that both in the United States and in Spain there is great number of migrant professionals working in occupations that do not match their educational attainment, which confirms findings from previous studies in the United States (Mattoo et al., 2005; Batalova and Fix 2008; Lozano and Gandini, 2009).

Even though it is advisable to bear in mind that this phenomenon is not exclusive of host countries' labour markets, and that very often this situation may take place in the home countries as a reason to emigrate<sup>15</sup>. The underutilization produced by the placement in the host labour market of the lacking workforce reduces the possibility of compensating the losses of the countries of origin through diaspora policies (Lozano & Gandini, 2009). Moreover, the gap between training and occupation seems to be quite bigger than the underutilization level of the highly-educated workforce that may exist in LAC countries. As a way of example, take the case of Uruguay, where we were able to establish that while 61.5% of immigrants with higher education work in skilled occupations in the United States, this rate rises to 78% for those professionals that remain living in Uruguay.

For LAC-born migrant's residents of the United States, the above information suggests that the underutilization phenomenon is more serious than for other regions. This confirms the need to implement public policies that foster better use of the skilled human resources, both from the home and host countries' perspective. In particular, one of the implications for the countries of destination that arise from this confirmation is to move forward in the reduction of institutional restraints that prevent formal recognition and acknowledgment of migrants' educational credentials.

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<sup>14</sup> In a few exceptional cases there has been a predominance of women among Latin American migration, but in such cases women integrated the migratory flow of workers belonging to domestic and personal services.

<sup>15</sup> One of the dimensions of the phenomenon in the countries of origin analysed by most available literature has to do with the capacity of the domestic labour market to absorb the increasing offer of skilled human resources as a result of the expansion of the educational systems as it might produce an oversupply of professionals and professors in the countries of origin that would cause a fall in their salaries and consequently a rise in the tendency to migrate (Lozano & Gandini, 2009:34).

Another significant conclusion refers to the heterogeneity among LAC emigrants with regard to their performance in their countries of destination labour markets. We saw that immigrants from the Southern Cone countries adapt more successfully to high skilled occupations whereas those born in the Andine countries and Central America show higher difficulties of insertion. Following the prevailing explanations among the skilled migration available literature, these performance differences by place of birth may be related to an accumulation of human capital more favourable to those of the Southern Cone. Particularly, this gap in performance has been associated with certain characteristics of the countries of origin such as higher education spending, the quality of the education system, the good command of the language and the way it is used in the information systems, the similarities between the education system of the home and host country and the opening of migratory policies (Mattoo et al., 2005; Batalova & Fix 2008 and Lozano & Gandini, 2009). In future research it would be interesting to further study the effect of each of these factors on the insertion of migrants in their host countries.

The comparison between United States and Spain as places of destination for skilled Latin American migrants confirms that the U.S. labour market is a more attractive destination than Spain in terms of the conditions of the economic activity, the occupations and roles and the economic rewards earned by migrants. However, when we take into consideration the relative position of LAC-born against the rest of immigrants we see that in the United States Latin American and Caribbean are in a more disadvantageous position than the rest of the immigrants, a situation that is not seen in Spain.

The explanations that seem more reasonable to understand this phenomenon have to do with certain individual characteristics that are common among Latin American migrants and facilitate successful adaptation to their host community (mother tongue, historical and cultural proximity) as well as with other factors of governmental nature (similarity among home and host countries' educational systems, a similar skilled labour market, better chances to have their educational credentials acknowledged, migratory policies, etc). These hypothesis, however, require further empirical research in order to be verified, as previously mentioned.

It is difficult to make future predictions about the evolution of trends that have prevailed in the last few years. On the one hand, it is clear that there are factors that have an impact on the long term, as well as economic factors, related to the structure of the labour markets, to the organization and level of educational systems and science and technology policies, which remain and that may lead to think that migratory trends of skilled workers from Latin American countries will continue. In addition to these factors we must take into account the active policies undertaken by Northern countries (U.S.A., Spain and others) towards attracting skilled workforce in order to make their own economies and research and development system function. It all indicates that these policies will prevail due to underlying, economic and demographic reasons, despite some oscillations based on cultural issues, rejection of foreigners and difficulties in terms of residence documentation and papers.

On the other hand, oscillations and uncertainties about the economic evolution of main countries may slow down and even change the trend, as observed in the last few years as a result of the international crisis that started in the U.S. and then disseminated to the rest of industrialized countries. Recently, we have seen emerging economies grow in much higher rates than rich countries, unemployment fall to lower levels and thus a new situation has arisen that if accompanied by skilled personnel retention policies in their countries of origin, it

could contribute to a reversion, though partial, of the general trends that have been observed over the last few decades.

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# Diaspora Inquiry: Search for a Method

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## Abstract

*This paper is conceived through engaged reflexivity during my research with (Indian) diaspora community in Montreal. The narratives suggest that people in the diaspora are not bound by borders and neither do they shift their loyalties between their country of origin and the country of settlement but they create forms of participation and representation that defy these assumptions. In these ways they create a transnational social space that gives people opportunities for selective assimilation in their country of settlement. This transnational social space is inundated not only by people in the diaspora but also by associations and practices for social justice as manifested with “doctors without borders,” “sociologists without borders,” “activists without borders,” “feminists without borders,” “architects without borders,” and their like. The paper also shows the transnational dimension in which diasporic subjectivities make meaning of their everyday experience(s). Using four epigraphs from my field-notes, which have divergent tangents to the similar contexts of being in the diaspora, I suggest transnational critical ethnography, synergized by different loops of research bricolage, for diaspora inquiry.*

**Keywords:** Diaspora, Transnational, Ethnography, Globalization, Bricolage.

## 1. Introduction

The title of this paper, partly drawn from one of Jean-Paul Sartre’s work<sup>1</sup>, is my attempt to suggest new direction for research with diasporic subjectivities. I do not claim deep familiarity with Sartre’s work, but in line with evolving criticality, I submit to philosophy as a “method of inquiry” in social sciences. Both philosophy and method of inquiry are modified because they are applied in changed social situations or with a renewed focus. My concern in this paper is to engage - (1) with the changed global-transnational reality that shapes the lives of people in the diaspora as well as (2) with the evolving discipline and practice of qualitative research (see Denzin and Lincoln, 2005).

The first question entails how best to study people in the diaspora, especially when life experiences are marked in signifiers of “beyond?” Bhabha (2004:2) argues that

*...we find ourselves in the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion. For there is a sense of disorientation, a disturbance of direction, in the “beyond” ...*

The emphasis on “beyond” is to highlight, both, the life experiences of people in the diaspora, as well as methodological dilemma to study them. The above can become apparent when one tries to imagine the life experience of a woman born in India, who migrated to Qatar (Middle East) with her parents at the age of five, attended university in the U.S., and is now working in Australia. This individual, in one lifetime, had to pay attention to cultural

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<sup>1</sup> Sartre, Jean-Paul 1963 *Search for a Method* (translated by Hazel E. Barnes) New York: Vintage Books.

practices in more than one nation-state. Her experiences cannot be generalized as universal, but, at the same time, they are global. She might feel powerless in certain social situations, while feel privileged in another, depending on the social categories of gender, religion, class, sexual preference, and other variables in different nation-states. Her situation might appear trivial to someone who understands the shaping of social practices in most nation-states under the imperial guise of globalization.

I agree that although neo-liberal forces, under corporate schemata, design policy from above, but longstanding cultural practices of different societies (read, nation-state) shape everyday life experience of people. Moreover, it is through the nation-state that the imperial designs of globalization work. The argument is in line with my contention that although the power and hold of the nation-state has diminished in the contemporary era, national culture still shapes its citizenry. Nevertheless, my arguments are not based on my hunch but, as I confess, they are conceived out of my engagement with my research participants. I made ethnography as my point of my entry because as Walcott (1999) argues ethnography combines research design, fieldwork, and various methods of inquiry to produce historically, politically, and personally situated accounts – descriptions, interpretations, and representations of human lives. I understand that ethnography was initially defined by Radcliffe-Brown (1952) as the “descriptive account of non-literate people.” Nevertheless, as I understand, contemporary ethnographic research foregrounds the agency involved in its interpretative practices and erodes the asymmetrical binary power relations with researcher and the researched. My connivance with ethnography is with the vigour of bricolage (Kincheloe and Berry, 2004), which allows me to understand notions of complexity and multi logicity that shape the life of people in the diaspora. Eclectic processes such as bricolage aspire to highlight theoretical interdisciplinary and epistemological innovation.

My “search for method,” therefore, is guided by diasporic context, philosophy<sup>2</sup> as a method of inquiry, ethnography for social justice, and bricolage as a map or guide. The intent is to move beyond “add-on criticality” and the lure of post-modernism, toward reflexivity and context illumination. In attempting to visualize my research, I use “crystallization of the study” following Richardson and Pierre (2005). Their point as I construe it is that like crystals, the inquiry reflects externalities and refracts within itself, generating extraordinary colors and patterns, and thereby synergizing the research process and understanding. I see crystallization of the study as an illustration of the bricolage process. As I try to understand field empiricism, I look at different ethnographic approaches and elucidate why I think transnational ethnography should be employed to study people in the diaspora. As a bricoleur, I allow myself to follow feedback loops, and in my attempt for “deep thought structure,” I try to show the influence of different sources and approaches on my inquiry.

## 2. Process and Predicaments

I begin with four epigraphic narratives from my fieldwork. I must reiterate that all names of individuals and institutions have been changed for the purpose of anonymity. (1) I met *Shreya* through another participant in my study. Her restlessness reminded me of my earlier self. In a way, my ontology is behind the selection of my research participant and also influenced my inclusion of *Shreya*'s story. *Shreya* was born in India and came to Canada at the age of three

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<sup>2</sup> According to Dunayevskaya (2002) philosophy makes explicit what is generally implicit in everyday experience of history.



when her parents migrated. Needless to say, the choice to migrate was not her own. *Shreya* is pursuing her undergraduate degree in commerce. Her father was proud of her until it came to his notice that she was in love with an Italian boy. He blames himself and his wife for not imparting correct values in their daughter. He thinks he has been pre-occupied in trying to make ends meet since the family's migration, at the expense of his involvement with his children. He is worried about his family's status among the Asian Indian community in Montreal and believes this situation would not have happened if he had stayed back in India. His response justifies Said's (1994:3) argument that appeals to the past are among the most common strategies in the interpretation of the present. Although such appeals create a catalogue for cultural identification, the potential of such appeals to change the present is debatable.

Coming back to *Shreya's* account, I also learned that her younger brother, who was born in Montreal, does not have any serious problem with *Shreya's* choice of romantic partner. There can be several interpretations of this situation. Taking a lesson from critical hermeneutics, I look at the socio-cultural context and feel that while *Shreya* and her brother, who have grown up in Canada, value personal choice in mate selection; their parents have been socialized in Indian culture and fear the unknown. Their parents have lived in Canada for almost two decades, but they affix primacy to the "way of life" they learned in India. In the last eighteen years, *Shreya's* family have visited India several times and have seen Indian socio-cultural changes, but the Indian values of *Shreya's* parents are still the ones with which they grew up.

Personal choice in mate selection and the transnational dimension surfaces in the ongoing legal case of Jaswinder Kaur Sidhu (*Jassi*)'s murder. *Jassi*, a beautician of Punjabi descent in British Columbia, went with her parents to Punjab (India) to attend her cousin's wedding. There she fell in love; her romance proceeded with her elopement, and subsequent marriage. Her parents did not approve of this marriage and plotted against their own daughter. She was murdered by hired assassins in Punjab and her husband/lover is in prison on the strength of dubious claims by his dead wife's relatives. The case has gained glaring media attention and has been captured in a cinematic representation titled *Murder Unveiled*. My incentive to write about this incident comes from my desire to highlight the extent to which parents and relatives can go if Indian diasporic youth choose their mate against parental wishes. While I have no first-hand information about *Jassi*, cases that are less extreme, like that of *Shreya*, come up regularly.

(2) As the next epigraph will show, two different cultural practices (for example, the home and host context) can condition consciousness in two different ways. They can also influence social relationships as I construe with my participant-observation with the *Jacobs*. When I contacted her over the phone, Mrs. *Jacob* asked me to visit them on the following Saturday as it was their daughter's birthday. I was hesitant but then Mrs. *Jacob* explained that it was a "community" (Malayali community) birthday party for their daughter (*Neena*). This was new to me and I was obviously excited. *Neena* has made a deal with her parents wherein she respects her parents' friends (who are mostly first generation immigrants), and her parents permit her to have get-togethers with her friends.

The experiences of such families need to be examined holistically and underlying complexities cannot be documented in numbers but rather in the meaning they entail. A few months later, I read Jhumpa Lahiri's novel *The Namesake* (2004) where I found the central

character Gogol going through exactly the same kind of situation as *Neena*. Lahiri's novel *The Namesake* is about an Indian family in the U.S., where Lahiri delineates the experiences of the child of a family in the diaspora. Gogol, the central protagonist, tries to adjust with his peers in Boston and his family who moved to the U.S. from India. Like the parents of Gogol, Lahiri travels to India frequently. To what extent does frequent travel to the place of origin have an effect on life in the diaspora? This can be a topic of discussion elsewhere. Also, the validity of an ethnographic detail and the imagination of a fiction writer should be discussed further. As a bricoleur, I recognize the ethnographic loop and the way Lahiri's fiction, based on her experience in the diaspora, adds valuable insights to my observation.

(3) Another participant-observation can be brought from a busy Sunday afternoon at a Hindu temple in Montreal. A spiritual leader had come from India and around four hundred people had gathered for the sermon. There I met and exchanged salutations with a few families I knew through my research. Among them were *Mohit* and *Pooja*, aged twenty and seventeen respectively, with their parents. They were dressed in ethnic Indian attire and most elders seemed affectionate towards them. Their dress and their salutation, using arm movement and a bob of the head, in fact the whole rhythm of their bodies, minimized their difference with others at the temple. There were not many Asian Indian youth at the temple but the discourse of religion across transnational borders or international labor migration was significant: professionals from India in Montreal gathered to listen to a spiritual *guru* from India.

An example of ethnographic study in a transnational context, which might further illuminate the above observation, is by Gamburd (2000). Her book *The Kitchen Spoon's Handle* is based on a common Sinhala proverb which humorously conveys the limitations of women in a patriarchal society. Gamburd's study highlights gender and class dimensions of Sri Lanka's migrant housemaids in the oil-rich Persian Gulf, and offers a counterpoint to social myth. My observations commit me to an understanding that in the present era of mass migration and emerging trans-culturality,

*One of the effects... has been the creation of radically new type of human being: of people who root themselves in ideas rather than places, in memories as much as in material things: people who have been obliged to define themselves-because they are so defined by others-by their otherness: people in whose deepest selves strange fusions occur, unprecedented unions between what they were and where they find themselves. (Rushdie, 1992:124)*

With Rushdie I comprehend the "otherness" manifested in consciousness (*Shreya's* parents), social relationship (*Jacob*), and body (*Mohit* and *Puja*). Based on participant-observation, qualitative research is generated by the critical constructivism of the researcher. (4) Mrs. *Kulkarni*, a participant in my inquiry, was always worried about her two sons growing up in Canada until she and her husband decided to enroll them in a prestigious English residential school in India. They visit their children every year in India and last summer the boys returned to Montreal for a visit. Mrs. *Kulkarni* believes that the residential school offers her sons both a rigorous formal education and an immersion in Indian culture and values. Alsop (2002) argues that the "foreign" (meaning the adopted "home" country) is amorphous and unstructured. According to him, the adopted home lacks the inner template that the place of origin seems to provide, and is just a mirage or projection.

Residential schools for Non-Resident Indian (NRI) youth have proliferated in India during the last few years. These schools charge exorbitant fees but they project themselves as

providing engagement in Indian culture and values along with a rigorous education in the English language. I would like to analyze this case together with that of international graduate students in North American Universities. As I tried to make sense of Mrs. *Kulkarni's* quest, I thought about my aspirations when I decided to come to McGill University for my doctoral studies. Life unfolds in different ways, creating contexts and aspirations that exist “beyond” the borders of nation-states, academic disciplines, or dreams.

These four epigraphs have divergent tangents to the similar contexts of being in the diaspora. In the first (*Sbreyya*), the location of “home” has shifted but the mooring of culture and values is still the place of origin, while the second (*Jacobs*) presents negotiations in cultural differences through different social practices. Both the third and fourth narratives show increasing choices for people in the diaspora through transnationalism. These narratives also suggest that people in the diaspora are not bound by borders and neither do they shift their loyalties between their country of origin and the country of settlement, but as Levitt (2001) argues, they create forms of participation and representation that defy these assumptions. These new ways of life create a transnational social space that gives people opportunities for selective assimilation in their country of settlement.

The transnational social space is inundated not only by people in the diaspora but also by associations and practices for social justice as manifested with “doctors without borders,” “sociologists without borders,” “activists without borders,” “feminists without borders,” “architects without borders,” “lawyers without borders,” “reporters without borders,” and their like. While I construct people in the diaspora as oppressed by various “power blocs” of their adopted countries and the countries of their origin, I see the above-mentioned associations as fighting the power and oppression of nationalistic discourse. The diaspora is both an alternative and an intermediary at a time when the role of nation-state is being relegated to the wishes of neo-liberal agendas (Raj, 2006).

Any methodology to study such subjectives (read, diaspora) should involve a set of processes, procedures, and techniques for decolonizing the imagination beyond the apartheid of western academic knowledge. As mentioned earlier, bricolage allows multiple epistemologies to intertwine, enabling interpretation within critical praxis. Bricolage in practice within transnational context will be illustrated later in the essay. Before that, as in the next section, the grounding of the research process within the qualitative and ethnographic approaches must be outlined. Explaining the nuances of such approaches is not paramount, but it is hoped that it will help moor the epigraphs mentioned earlier and also to help to further the discussion.

### **3. Qualitative Dimension and Ethnographic Approach**

Qualitative research crosscuts disciplines, fields, and subject matters and has a distinguished history in each discipline. As Denzin and Lincoln (2005) posit, contemporary qualitative research has produced sites for critical conversation about democracy, race, gender, class, nation-states, globalization, freedom, and the community. According to Denzin and Lincoln, earlier moments of qualitative research are still operating in the present, either as legacy or as a set of practices that researchers continue to follow or argue against. Kincheloe (2003) shows the multidimensionality and purpose of qualitative research at three levels, namely, the subject-matter being researched, the research process itself, and the researcher. Each

dimension stresses the importance of human agency and thereby attaches issues of social justice within the conversation for knowledge production.

Ways of evaluating qualitative research are often debated, and positivist scholars question qualitative research design, analysis, and evidence. Suggestions abound for multi-site case study and triangulation, but again these suggestions pull critical ethnography back into positivistic designs. Therefore, I do not attach undue importance to evaluating qualitative research, and within the critical research paradigm I attach any/all validity to the synergism of post-formal research and social justice (Kincheloe, 2003, 2004). The open-ended nature of the qualitative research project provides ample scope for resistance against attempts to impose a single, umbrella like paradigm over the entire project. Synergizing ethnography with bricolage, one can interplay participant-observation with other loops. I have used fictional texts and glaring social incidents as shown briefly in the previous section of this essay. This is how I feel we can evaluate any qualitative research.

Walcott (1999) places ethnography as a preferred label for a set of activities with the researcher present in person. Critics argue that all humans do what ethnographers do, but the critics fail to understand scope of rigor in qualitative research through ethnography. Rather than look at the ripples on the pond, ethnographers “get” inside and bring the detailed analysis by “being there” and reading the lives of people like a texts. In the present time, the life experience of people can be understood by accepting the context that encompasses several ripples like that in a pond and includes transnational practices, spanning the borders of nation state and geographical communities. Transnational practices became obvious to me with each passing day in the field situation.

Different styles of ethnography have arisen because the researcher can and does inscribe the same material in many different ways, using various formats, styles, and genres. Fine (2003) points out that ethnography can have two dimensions: - the first is the extent to which field observations attempt to address central theoretical issues, as opposed to providing a substantive analysis of a particular phenomena; the second refers to the extent to which a rich and detailed account of the site being observed is presented, as opposed to the inclusion of a few instances of data to bolster one’s analytical points. Fine also proposes “peopled ethnography” as distinct from personal and postulated ethnography. According to her, in ‘peopled ethnography’ social text is neither descriptive narrative nor conceptual theory but rather the understanding of the setting and its theoretical implications that are grounded in a set of detailed vignettes, based on field notes, interview extracts, and the texts that the group members produce. The detailed account coupled with the ability of the reader to generalize from the setting is at the heart of this methodological orientation. It is most effectively based on observations of an interacting group or a setting in which one can explore social behaviour. In this methodological orientation, it is not the individuals being observed who direct our interest, but rather their position within a group or social system – the set of actors and their “peoples” – that guide the ethnographic analysis, interpretation and description.

Fine’s arguments allow me to be vigilant as an ethnographer while making sense of different social categories and situations. In educational research, as Antikainen and Komonen (2003) observe, life courses allow the establishment of the foundation of educative process. Most often the interpretation is mine but I have tried to follow the double hermeneutic nature of sociology where the social phenomena is first interpreted by the participant and then by the researcher. The “fractured future” in qualitative and ethnographic

research (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005) has given enough scope for new approaches. Snow, Morrill and Anderson (2003:181-200) propose what they call “analytic ethnography.” They adapt Lofland’s (1995) original idea and, in contrast to the traditional interpretative style that attempts to get at the crux of “what is going on,” Snow et al move to a more formal approach that seeks to identify the cognitive rules underlying behaviour, and the more recent postmodern preoccupation with individual voices and experience. This methodological direction seeks to develop systematic and generic understandings and propositions about social processes. I locate Snow et al (2003) within my engagement with criticality as they stress an understanding of why social issues unfold as they do. Contrary to most ethnographic vignettes, Snow et al allow me to reduce the gap between observation and the analysis of positivistic advocacy.

It is not easy to move beyond positivistic schema although ethnography has, in recent years, moved to encompass accounts of global processes. The most striking feature of the present age, according to Molyneux (2001), is the increasing globalization of civil society, strengthened by transnational networks and global media. In his quest to understand this transnational process, Burawoy (2000 & 2001) proposes “global ethnography” that defies the role of isolated ethnographer as conceived by most anthropologists and as context-blind by most sociologists. This illusion exists because ethnographers, in trying to pursue the classical anthropological or sociological approach, remain engrained in the pre-history of ethnography. Burawoy (2001:148) remarks that “global ethnography reacts not only to the illusions of the present but also to the blindness of the past. It is driven from the standpoint of participants located at the interaction of the most remote forces, connections and imaginations.”

Burawoy (2000) stands against institutional and isolated ethnography, but in trying to encompass everything using his “extended case method,” he has gone a bit far and has diffused the context of ethnographic research. Based on my understanding of the diasporic context, I reason for the usage and importance of “transnational ethnography” in the following section, using my reflexive engagement with the different sites of my inquiry. If deconstruction is something that happens inside, transnational ethnography is an attempt to show deconstruction at work in an ethnographic approach to field research led by the tensions and contradictions experienced in the field. It is geared towards opening, expansion, exposure and gives a new twist beyond the confines of the boundary. Like deconstruction, transnational ethnography is set in motion by reflexivity and an attempt to address emergent issues, to respond to them and to be responsive.

#### **4. Transnational Ethnography: Research and Reflexivity**

I must reiterate, as do the four epigraphs and their corresponding anecdotes, that the “lives of people in the diaspora are not bound by borders” (Pessar, 1999) and neither do people shift their loyalties between country of origin and country of settlement. However, as Levitt (2001) argues, they create forms of participation and representation that defy these assumptions. Signposting these new ways of life creates transnational social space that gives people opportunities for selective assimilation in the country of settlement or commitment to the culture of the country of origin. Any comprehensive study of the diaspora, therefore, necessitates field commitment as well as the ability to link narratives (that highlight the transnational social space) with social theory. I must add that this is necessitated as a result of socioeconomic and cultural formation of the last century which created the contemporary

diasporic subjectivities encompassing transnational discourse. Due to the same, subjectivities have changed from nation-state, ethnic, multicultural to transnational.

To further illuminate my last point, I must mention the Indian version of Mattel's Barbie doll. During my last visit to India I came across dozens of sari-clad Barbies in a supermarket, female American bodies with red bindi on their foreheads. One side of the doll's box read, "Dressing in an all-seasons classic sari with exotic borders, Barbie is totally at home in India." This was not an Indian version nor an attempt at American cultural homogenization, but a transnational formation of the neo-liberal consumer culture. The Mattel Corporation had put Barbie "at home" in India with a marketing strategy in which the Euro-American female body had been given Indian "all season" attire. In the contemporary period, the power to shape culture through products and practices has been hijacked by transnational corporations like Mattel.

The power of transnational irony to profile the current cultural configuration arises when we find Asian Indians watching Bollywood films in their apartments in New York; or when Pakistani cab drivers in London listen on tapes to religious sermons delivered in mosques in Pakistan; or when Italians in Montreal are glued to large television screens to watch a soccer game between Germany and Italy. Transnationalism begins with defying marked borders, and it has deterritorialization as its base. Deterritorialized groups face the challenge of defending their interests in the global order, not just in the host society but also in the countries of their origin. This is possible due to the fact that deterritorialisation creates space that liberates people oppressed within the confines of the nation-state (Appadurai, 1991).

Appadurai (1999:196-197) convinces us "that a new style of ethnography can capture the impact of deterritorialization on the imagined resources of lived, local experiences." This new ethnographic practice should take into consideration the contemporary social context and must delve into understanding the modus operandi of power in such a framework. Although global forces, connections, and imaginations (Burawoy, 2000) shape diasporic subjectivity in the present age, the diaspora also includes people who migrated from their "homeland" during the colonial period. Indian labourers indentured to the plantation economy during British colonialism are a case in point. Other examples from the present times are the Indian H-1B visa holders in the U.S. who live away from their nation-state to make the most of life opportunities. Emigration under indentured contracts preceded the current global configuration, and their cultural practices are largely drawn from the country of their origin. The presence of the Creole language in Fiji or the celebrations of Holi in Trinidad are evidence of this point.

Transnational ethnography should be useful to understand diasporic networks, associations, trust, solidarity, and collaboration, as well as the configuration of power through consciousness, social relationship, and the body. One of the earliest usages of transnational ethnography was Thomas and Znaniecki's (1984) *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*. It links, as most studies on migration do, the sending and receiving context of communities, as well as the intervening configurations. Other examples of research and publication include: (1) Levitt's (2001) *The Transnational Villagers*, which offers a detailed account of how ordinary people keep their feet in two worlds at the same time and create communities that span borders; (2) Levitt's and Walcott's (eds.) (2002) *The Changing Face of Home*, which offers a rich amalgam of articles detailing the transnational lives of second generation

immigrants; and (3) Grewal's (2005) *Transnational America*, which inspects the cultural flows and advocacy for democratic citizenship that allows "America" to be imagined differently.

As Froner (2003:17) argues, a growing number of scholars are "documenting transnational practices, ideologies, and social fields as a way to understand the migration experience." My attempt to highlight transnational ethnography should be seen as an attempt at deconstruction within the current ethnographic tradition. In simple terms, deconstruction is about the responsible breaking of the nutshell of fixed meanings and boundaries. For Derrida, deconstruction is set in motion by self-reflexivity and is an attempt to address emergent issues by responding to them. My argument for the importance of transnational ethnography developed with research reflexivity. In the research process to study diasporic subjectivities, as in any ethnographic study, I understand that the self is the first step, and as Meek (2003) maintains, unconscious mental processing is a necessary part of qualitative research and underpins what is called "reflexive processing." Yet, often, we do not recognize that our own disguised and personal information has crept into our research. As the lack of literature on "unconscious mental processing" shows, this is not a favoured topic of discussion in research circles, although it can serve several positive ends. I understand with Appadurai (1991) that the global has become ethnographic in both the experiences of people and in the production of the social mechanism of these experiences. As such, ethnographers need to take into account the transnational connections or the post-national imagination.

According to Jordan (2003:82-99), "critical ethnography engages with the concept of nation-state, chooses from a vast array of theoretical positions, analyzes power relations, deals with reflexivity and has the pursuit for emancipation as its central tenant." With such schema in mind, transnational ethnography should also be considered as an attempt to use critical ethnography for the study of diasporic subjectivity. An ethnographer who examines the socio-cultural practice and its effects is in fact "reading" the society as a text. S/he observes, describes and interprets the text that s/he reads. The ethnographer then documents the interpretation as text that is read by others. Text is important in the life-long journey of an ethnographer but the context is essential too. Without the context, an ethnographer will not have a chance to read society as a text or produce text to be read. Therefore, the centrality of the ethnographer and the way s/he reads the social text (transnational for people in the diaspora) and writes manuscript text becomes important.

Participant-observation is another important method of inquiry. Observation is "the fundamental base of all research methods" (Alder and Alder, 1994:389). As an ethnographer, my role in participant observation was to further negotiate and understand the context and the diasporic practice. Schutt (2001:270-272) argues that participant observation is a method in which natural social processes are studied as they happen. In this research method, by observing people and interacting with them in the course of their normal activities, the researcher tries to avoid the artificiality of experimental designs and the unnatural structured questioning of survey research. This technique also encourages consideration of the context in which social interaction takes place, of the complex and interconnected nature of social relations, and of the sequencing of events.

One also needs to conduct in-depth interviews with the respondents. However, unlike the more structured interviewing that may be used in survey research, these should be intensive or in-depth interviews with open-ended schedules. The presumption is that a qualitative researcher is not supposed to know the range of answers that respondents might

give, and should seek to hear the answers in the respondents' own words. Rather than asking standard questions in a fixed order, intensive interviewers allow the specific content and order of questions to vary from one interview to another (Schutt, 2001). The interviewing can begin with an outline of the topic, the gathering of background information, the building of rapport and then delving into "grand tour questions" (Miller and Crabtree, 1999) meant to elicit lengthy narratives. The interviews should be conducted in a setting chosen by the respondents, and each respondent be given a "memento" as thanks for taking the time to participate in my project.

## 5. In Retrospect

The attempt in this paper is to move beyond established tradition in qualitative research to study diasporic subjectivities mainly because of the ever changing context in contemporary society. The emphasis on ethnography with bricolage is to allow several lines of sight. Through different contour of sight, as Berg (2004) mentions, researchers obtain a better, more substantive picture of reality- a richer, more complete array of symbols and theoretical concepts, and a means of verifying many of these elements. Most researchers prefer to call it triangulation, estimating their work to be in the center of a triangle which helps situate as well as navigate the research. However, as Richardson (2005) points out, triangulation carries with it "fixed points," is two-dimensional and limits it to three corners of a triangle. Richardson suggests the use of "crystallization." She argues that contextualizing with the figurative central imaginary of crystal shows the dynamism of the research, its multidimensionality, and its variety of perspectives and approaches. Multiple perspectives envisaged through crystallization will allow one to "get behind the facts" (Kincheloe, 2001).

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### **International Migration and Diaspora Studies (IMDS)**

Project is a research facility at the Zakir Husain Centre for Educational Studies (ZHCES), School of Social Sciences (SSS), Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU). The project also hosts the *Research Programme in International Migration* instituted at the Centre by an agreement between Jawaharlal Nehru University and the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA), Government of India. The project aims to conduct and facilitate research on major migration themes of significance in Indian as well as global contexts. The focus is to undertake research on various economic, social, political, cultural, and educational aspects of globalisation and migration; and to initiate collaborative interactions with other academic institutions and international organisations on major migration issues. The emphasis of these initiatives is on creating an interface between academia and policy making through workshops, conferences, teaching modules, publications, hosting of visiting scholars and other interactive pursuits.