

Gioconda Herrera • Carmen Gómez
Editors

Migration in South America

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Editors

Gioconda Herrera
Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences
FLACSO Ecuador
Quito, Ecuador

Carmen Gómez
Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences
FLACSO Ecuador
Quito, Ecuador

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Contents

1	Introduction: Emergent Issues of South American Migrations	1
	Gioconda Herrera and Carmen Gómez	
Part I Emerging Mobilities and Old Exclusions		
2	Extractive Economy and Mobilities. The Case of Large Copper Mining in the Antofagasta Region	27
	Carolina Stefoni, Fernanda Stang, and Pablo Rojas	
3	Between Hostility and Solidarity: The Production of the Andean Region–Southern Cone Transit Migratory Corridor	51
	Soledad Álvarez Velasco	
4	State and “Mixed Migrations”: Migration Policies Towards Haitians, Colombians and Venezuelans in Ecuador.	77
	Carmen Gómez and Gioconda Herrera	
Part II Law and Migration Policies: From Human Rights to Border Closures		
5	A Decade of Growth in Migration in Brazil (2010–2020) and the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic.	99
	Tânia Tonhati, Leonardo Cavalcanti, and Antônio Tadeu de Oliveira	
6	Contradictions and Shifts in Discourse and Application of the Refugee System in a Mixed-Migration Context: The Ecuadorian Case	121
	Jennifer Moya, Consuelo Sánchez Bautista, and Jeffrey D. Pugh	
7	The Legality of (Im)mobility: Migration, Coyoterismo, and Indigenous Justice in Southern Ecuador.	145
	Ulla D. Berg and Lucía Pérez Martínez	

Part III Racism Xenophobia and Struggles Over Migrant's Rights

8	Institutional and Social Xenophobia Towards Venezuelan Migrants in the Context of a Racialized Country: The Case of Peru	169
	Cécile Blouin and Cristina Zamora Gómez	
9	When Migrant Pain Does Not Deserve Attention: Institutional Racism in Chile's Public Health System	191
	María Emilia Tijoux Merino and Constanza Ambiado Cortés	
10	Inequalities and the Social Process of Categorizing: Migrant Work in Argentina's Garment Industry	207
	Sergio Caggiano	

Part III
Racism Xenophobia and Struggles
Over Migrant's Rights

Chapter 8

Institutional and Social Xenophobia Towards Venezuelan Migrants in the Context of a Racialized Country: The Case of Peru



Cécile Blouin and Cristina Zamora Gómez

8.1 Introduction

Until 2015, Peru did not recognize itself as a migrant-receiving country (Busse & Vásquez Luque, 2016). Although Peru, like other countries the region, has faced many changes in migration patterns including transit migration from Haiti, the self-perception as a country of emigrants was still predominant until the onset of Venezuelan migration in 2016 (Álvarez Velasco, 2020; Busse & Vásquez Luque, 2016; Lausent-Herrera, 2009). Venezuelan migrants fleeing from humanitarian, political, and socioeconomic crises have predominantly migrated within South America and especially to Peru and Colombia, the two principals' recipients with almost 1.2 million and 1 million Venezuelan migrants, respectively (UNHCR, 2021). Both countries had seen their migration dynamics transformed with this unprecedented and fast-growing migration. In the case of Peru, this migration has not been accompanied by a comprehensive rights-guaranteeing immigration policy, but rather by a confused policy characterized by exceptional and temporary measures at first, and later by restrictive measures including a visa requirement to enter the national territory and the impossibility of seeking asylum, among others (Blouin, 2021a). With the pandemic, the closure of borders and militarization took center stage.

According to the National Institute of Statistics and Informatics (INEI), in 2019, 35.6% of the Venezuelan population residing in Peru suffered some form of discrimination. Discrimination affected more women than men. Of the total Venezuelan migrant population residing in Peru who reported having suffered discrimination,

C. Blouin (✉)
Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, Lima, Peru
e-mail: cblouin@pucp.edu.pe

C. Zamora Gómez
University of Seville, Sevilla, Spain

64.9% reported incidents on the street or in public places, 48.1% in the workplace, 25.6% in public transport, and 10.9% in their community or neighborhood (INEI, 2019). Discrimination against migrants reflects a broader pattern: Peru, despite being multiethnic, has been profoundly marked by structural discrimination against Indigenous people and Afro-Peruvians (Callirgos, 2015; Drinot, 2006).¹

In this context, indicators of rejection and xenophobia towards the Venezuelan population have increased between 2017 and 2019 (IOP, 2019, 2020). These reactions, far from being uniform, are expressed differently according to gender, social class, and ethnicity (Freier & Pérez, 2021; Pérez & Ugarte, 2021), inserting themselves into the structural dynamics of discrimination in Peru (Callirgos, 2015). In addition, the category of the non-citizen as a person denied the rights associated with nationality simply because they are foreign, is configured to justify exclusion. This is in total contradiction to the supposition of universal equality and the institutional discourses in place to fight xenophobia.

The literature around xenophobia and racism against migrants is predominantly focused on South-North migration and there are few studies around the phenomenon of xenophobia in the context of South-South migration, especially in South America. In the case of countries such as Chile, Argentina or Brazil that have received migrants from the region in the last 20 years, studies have emerged in the last decade (Stefoni et al., 2017; Tijoux Merino & Córdova Rivera, 2015; Chan & Strabucchi, 2020). While there is a growing academic interest in xenophobia, research has not focused on the case of Peru, with the exception of a regional study from Oxfam International (2019) and a recently-published paper by Freier and Pérez (2021). Moreover, in the case of Peru, scholars have not explored how xenophobia and racism intersect and connect. Addressing this gap, this chapter examines xenophobia in Peru against the Venezuelan community from an institutional and social perspective, addressing how both perspectives are relational and self-sustaining in a context of racialization. On one hand, we examine the construction of an exclusive migration policy that positioned the migrant as a threat. On the other hand, we analyze the perceptions of Venezuelan migration by the local population who define migrants as a threat to their security, employment, or culture. Although aware of the importance of the media in the rise of xenophobia, this chapter focuses on how xenophobia is produced by institutional practices and their social repercussions.

We use a mixed methodology that combines literature and political-normative analysis with quantitative data analysis. The surveys conducted at the Institute of Public Opinion of the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú in 2018 and 2019 on xenophobia will be used as a primary and principal source for exploring the perceptions of the Peruvian population. Aware of the methodological limitations of surveys, we complete our analysis with recent qualitative studies on Venezuelan migration.

¹According to the 1st National Survey 'Perceptions and attitudes on cultural diversity and ethnic-racial discrimination' 53% of respondents think that Peruvians are racist or very racists (Ministerio de Cultura, 2018).

The chapter begins with an analysis of the concepts of xenophobia, racism, and hate speech. Starting with a literature review, we study the points of convergence and differences between these concepts and their distinct meaning in South America in general, and in Peru in particular. We then explain the institutional xenophobia in Peru with a study of the legal background –in both international and national arenas – and the evolution of migration policy in Peru. The third section explores social xenophobia in three main areas: employment and economy, culture, and criminality. We end by briefly giving some conclusions and suggesting some possible areas for future research.

8.2 Literature Review: Xenophobia, Racism, Discrimination and Hate Speech

Xenophobia, as defined by the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, is “fear and hatred of strangers or foreigners.” This is a classic definition of xenophobia that relates to a psychological state of hostility or fear. However, more recent research has focused on understanding the relationship between xenophobia and ethnocentrism or nativism (Yakushko, 2009). Ethnocentrism is the attitude of a social group, including a nation-state, that considers its own culture or group superior to others (Hagendoorn & Sniderman, 2001). For its part, nativism describes negative feelings towards immigrants and migration. Nativism, according to Higham (1988), is related to the idea that migration entails the loss of economic status for nationals. The hackneyed mantra is: “they take away our jobs.” This is an ideological threat, which is not supported by solid economic studies, but when supported by media coverage can spread toxically. In the nativist approach national identity is based on birth (Esses et al., 2005). In her study of illegal aliens in the United States, Nagai develops the concept of ‘legal racialization’ that produce ‘alien citizens’ with formal citizenship but who remain ‘alien in the eyes of the nation’ (Nagai, 2004, p. 8). Their belonging to a specific ethnic group defines them as permanently foreigner despite being US citizens.

Racism and xenophobia are intersecting systems of social oppression. Racism as a system of oppression is based on histories of subordination, slavery, colonialism, and segregation. According to Quijano, race has “proved to be the most effective and enduring instrument of universal social domination” (2014, p. 780). The notion of race has its origins in America where it was used by colonizers to legitimate their power and domination. The explanation for racism is found in the domination and exploitation of one social group over others. The way to justify this domination is by creating the fiction of race: phenotypic markers, such as skin color, that are visible and that allow differentiating groups of people (Castles & Miller, 1993). The category of race is, however, also malleable and has to be studied in its particular context and moment (Koopman, 2021).

The Spanish conquest of Peru in the sixteenth century created a colonial society with castes which were both legal and ethnic categories (Drinot, 2006). The independence of the country did not abolish racism, but rather created different legal and social mechanisms for excluding Indigenous and Afro-Peruvians.² Rather than using categories such as ‘white’, ‘Indian’, or ‘Black’, most Peruvian people identify others and themselves as ‘mestizos’ (Callirgos, 2015). However, far from the idea that ‘we are all mestizo’, Indigenous and Afro-Peruvian continue to be racialized. On the other hand, white skin color is associated with economic prosperity and family happiness by the mainstream media (Portocarrero, 2013). According to Portocarrero, ‘the “whitening utopia” (*blanqueamiento*) means the colonization of the imaginary of Indians and mestizos. It is a promise of recognition that encourages a strategy based on effort and perseverance’ (Portocarrero, 2013). As in Colombia, marrying and having a family with someone whiter is perceived as a good strategy to ‘improve breed (in Peru) or family (in Colombia)’ (Koopman, 2021). According to De la Cadena, Peruvian intellectuals from the highlands can be also ‘*blanqueados*’ (whitened). Their higher levels of education cover for their ‘*ser-rano*’ (highland Indigenous) phenotype (De la Cadena, 1998). In this sense, racism in Peru has shifted from race to culture and class. In Peru as in many other South American societies, race and class intersect, so classifying individuals within a racial group also means classifying them socio-economically and culturally (Callirgos, 2015).

In the case of xenophobia, the justification for oppression emanates from one’s status as a foreigner. Although phenotypic traits are not central in this definition, in many occasions’ migrants are racialized. In both discourses of oppression, a binary factor operates. Racism defines who is above and below on a scale of humanity, that is, which body is exploitable: the racialized body. Xenophobia defines who is threatened (the nationals) and who threatens them (the foreigners). This binary logic of xenophobia is influenced by the globalized fear economy (Ahmed, 2004). Both systems of oppression – like all systems of oppression – are fundamentally based on creating differences between people, and then assigning a differential value to those differences to the point of making them essential. Finally, these systems marginalize one group from the other. This is how “otherness” is built. This “otherness” plays a major role in the construction of citizenship. Sachetti pays attention to three related, but slightly different concepts: population (inhabitants), people (specific group) and nation (a, unified group with citizenship). From a legal point of view, those who hold all human, civil and political rights are citizens who belong to the nation (Sachetti, 2009). Citizenship is in this way an elevated category with respect to the resident population within national borders. Migrants, and especially irregular ones, are excluded from citizenship.

Little attention has been paid, however, to the mechanisms of racism against migrants and xenophobia in South-South migration contexts. A recent study from

²For instance, until 1980, there was a literacy requirement to vote in Peruvian national elections. This discriminatory criterion excluded a great portion of the population and especially Indigenous and Afro-Peruvians who did not have access to education (Drinot, 2006).

Oxfam International (2019) reveals that positive and negative perceptions of the effects of immigration coexist in the collective imagination of the countries where South-South migration occurs. In the case of Peru, which does not have a tradition of receiving migration, the response to South-South migration is ambivalent. On the one hand, society and institutions have responded with understanding and solidarity. This reaction can be related to the history of emigration to Venezuela but also to political discourses of welcoming which were predominant between 2016 and 2017. On the other hand, in a second moment, the association of immigrants with insecurity, the collapse of social services, and the general desire for immigrants to leave the country as soon as possible, have constituted a politics of rejection which have permeated Peruvian society (Blouin, 2021a).

Hate speech occupies a more violent place in the system of oppression. We argue that in order for a society to produce hate speech there must have been public policies permissive of xenophobia. Behind hate speech is an institutional endorsement. The idea of criminalization plays a fundamental role in hate speech towards migrants. Migrants are seen as a threat to sovereignty, public welfare, and national security (Freier & Pérez, 2021). Once xenophobia is constructed and endorsed by institutions, it is a short passage to hate speech. In contexts where migration does not occur through safe and regular channels, hate speech becomes more evident. There is a very strong link between the idea of illegality and criminality. Although it is not a crime according to International Law,³ most “illegal” migrants are considered criminals. In fact, it is the state that creates the categories of legal or illegal migrants in the production of migration law (De Genova, 2002); states promote illegality by not creating safe migration channels for some groups of “undesirable migrants” even while for other groups, state powers choose to create facilities for regular migration. This idea of illegality and criminality is augmented by border technologies. As Domenech argues, the marking of borders and their militarization, “provide a symbolic solution to the transnational phenomenon of global migration: they narrate to the citizen that the state protects against the unwanted migrant who is not welcome” (Domenech, 2018, p. 39). Thus, “otherness” is also related to physical borders which represent the delimitation between “us” and “them” at the root of xenophobia.

In this chapter, we choose to distinguish between institutional xenophobia and social xenophobia. Whereas social xenophobia refers to the ways society expresses its fear of foreigners, institutional xenophobia focuses on how institutional actors target migrants as a source of problems through formal legislation and public policies as well as discourses and practices. We use this difference to shed light on how xenophobia is expressed differently by different actors with different levels of influence and responsibility in society. Doing so allows us to highlight, on the one hand, the role of public actors in generating fear and hostility against migrants in societies through legislation, speeches, and bordering practices. On the other hand, we can

³See e.g., the Protocolo Contra el Tráfico Ilícito de Migrantes por Tierra, Mar y Aire, que Complementa la Convención de las Naciones Unidas Contra la Delincuencia Organizada Transnacional (Oficina de las Naciones Unidas contra la droga y el delito, 2005).

analyze how this mainstreaming discourse is assimilated by the population through oppressive and discriminatory behavior towards migrants.

8.3 The Construction of Institutional Xenophobia: Discourses and Practices

In 1965 the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) was signed. Although the Convention dates from 1965 and the context of apartheid, racial discrimination is still current, along with the hate speech that emanates from it. The convention concerns people who suffer discrimination on the ground of race, color, lineage, or national or ethnic origin, and its Article 4 provided the first manifestation of the prohibition of hate speech in International Human Rights Law.⁴

The part of the convention related to substantive law urges states to prohibit manifestations of racial discrimination throughout their territories. More specifically, states must endeavor to eliminate norms and/or practices that could lead to such discrimination. General Recommendation 35 of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), ‘combating racist hate speech,’ highlights that: ‘Racist hate speech can take many forms and is not confined to explicitly racial remarks’.⁵ The convention therefore recognizes that hate speech can take many forms beyond explicitly racist discourses (Jiménez Sánchez, 2020).

The Peruvian state ratified the ICERD in 1971, and article 2.2 of the Political Constitution of 1993 establishes equality before the law. The new Migration Law, which replaced the Foreigner Law (*Ley de Extranjería*) of 1991 (considered obsolete), was anchored in a vision of national security far from the protection and guarantee of migrants’ human rights (Zamora et al., 2022), but did formally recognize human rights of migrants in several areas including education, access to justice, and health. Article VIII specifically states the principle of non-discrimination: ‘The State promotes the abolition of any type of discrimination and the elimination of any type of prejudice in migration issues and rejects especially xenophobia and racism’ (our translation). This reference to racism and xenophobia is unique to this law. The legal framework around discrimination and racism in the country is fragmented

⁴Article 4 affirms that: “States Parties condemn all propaganda and all organizations which are based on ideas or theories of superiority of one race or group of persons of one color or ethnic origin, or which attempt to justify or promote racial hatred and discrimination in any form.”

⁵“The Committee considers that the following contextual factors must be taken into account: the content and form of the speech (...); the economic, social, and political climate prevalent at the time the speech was made and disseminated (...); the position or status of the speaker in society and the audience to which the speech is directed (...); the reach of the speech, including the nature of the audience and the means of transmission (...); the objectives of the speech: speech protecting or defending the human rights of individuals and groups should not be subject to criminal or other sanctions (...).” (Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination [CERD], 2013)

and mostly focused on the criminalization of discrimination. In 2000 (Ley No. 27270), the crime of discrimination was added to the Peruvian Penal Code and for 17 years the description and the motives of discrimination have been modified to better respond to new forms of discrimination. In 2017 (Decreto Legislativo No. 1323), ‘nationality’ and ‘migratory status’ were added to the large list of grounds of discrimination such as race, religion, sex, age, disability, etc.

Despite the formal rejection of xenophobia in the law, xenophobic institutional discourses and practices have increased in the last 4 years. The municipal and regional elections in 2018 (Berganza & Blouin, 2021) and the presidential election campaign of 2021 were characterized by the xenophobic discourses of several candidates. Moreover, the former President of Peru, Martín Vizcarra, declared publicly in June 2019 that ‘bad elements’ from Venezuela needed to be removed at the same time as he was promoting the need for the humanitarian visa and facilitating a massive deportation operation with the Interior Ministry (Blouin, 2021a). Similar declarations had also been made by local authorities in Lima and other cities in Peru (Berganza & Blouin, 2021).

To understand the complexities and contradictions of the Peruvian Migration Law, we use the concepts of ‘hostility policies’ and ‘selective hospitality policies’ proposed by Domenech (2020) for the Argentinian context. Both policies, though contradictory, coexist in the management and control of migration. The hostility policy ‘condenses multiple practices and representations of actors whose interventions have the effect of criminalizing and securitizing migration and borders’ (Domenech, 2020, p. 6) (our translation). Some examples of these types of practices may be new tactics of border control, deportations, or the militarization of borders. We argue that this type of hostility characterized by the criminalization and securitization of migrants is directly connected with institutional xenophobia in the case of Peru. This type of xenophobia creates fear against migrants by different means but also shapes public opinion, making the foreign population a scapegoat for the country’s structural problems such as insecurity and informality. Institutional xenophobia is also performed at different levels by different actors such as the national government, including the executive and legislative powers, and municipalities. On the other hand, the selective hospitality policy differentiates between desirable or undesirable migrants and promotes the regularization of the welcome, ‘deserving’ migrants. These concepts shed light on the heterogenous, changing, and dynamic characteristics of migration control (Domenech, 2020).

In the Peruvian case, hostility and selective hospitality measures have been present from the adoption of the new Migration Law (Decreto Legislativo 1350) in 2017 and the adoption of the Temporary Stay Permit (*Permiso Temporal de Permanencia*, PTP) for several specific groups between 2017 and 2018.⁶ The regularization

⁶The first PTP (Decreto Supremo No. 001-2017-IN) was established for foreign parents of Peruvian children who need to obtain migratory regularisation. This measure was adopted to respond to the necessities of victims of intimate partner violence who were unable to obtain a regular status in the country without the authorization of their violent husbands (Zamora et al., 2022). The following PTPs were only made available for Venezuelan migrants (Acosta et al., 2019).

mechanism of the PTP as a temporary, exceptional, and group-limited measure illustrates the concept of selective hospitality. Despite this first welcome measure, step-by-step the Peruvian government has adopted a myriad of new regulations to limit the arrival of Venezuelan migrants and their regularization in the country, including requiring new documents for entrance, a passport and visa, and limitations on the right to asylum (Blouin, 2021a). The justification for these regulations was the necessity of national security and protection of the national population. This type of justification is related to the essence of xenophobia. By creating the idea that Peru needs more regulation to protect the country from migrants, the State creates an atmosphere of fear and threat. The same new regulations of the requirement of a passport and humanitarian visa establish that some groups considered vulnerable such as older migrants or children could enter the country without complying with the regulation (Blouin, 2021a). This exception clearly expresses the categorization of migrants as either 'vulnerable' or 'criminal'. The first group needs support to enter and live in the country while the other needs to be removed. In reality, however, this form of exception is not functioning well in practice and many migrants face rejection and illegality (AI, 2020).

The xenophobic responses to migration are also composed of distinctive practices of criminalization of migrants, especially, but not only, directed to Venezuelan migrants. The rise in the visibility of expulsions by the sensationalization in the media has contributed to the climate of hostility toward this population in particular (Blouin et al., 2020). The pandemic has also been an excuse for militarization of Peru's border control at the beginning of 2021, which has reinforced the policy of hostility (Zamora et al., 2022). This militarization has also had consequences for other populations such as the Haitian migrants who were stranded in Brazil between February and March 2021 when they tried to enter Peru to continue their journey to the North of the continent (*Gestión*, 2021). We argue that militarization is highly significant in catalyzing xenophobic responses. By implementing a warlike response to migrants' movements, the Peruvian State legitimates the rejection and hostility against the invading others.

Hostility towards migrants has also been encouraged by the increase in identification raids. This practice, which occurs throughout the national territory, but especially in Lima and the border zone of Tumbes, foments fear of deportation and uncertainty for Venezuelan migrants (Blouin, 2021b). These operations are normally carried out at the behest of the National Superintendency of Migration (MIGRACIONES) with the cooperation of the police. Another important element for our analysis is the visibility of these raids, which take place in public areas such as markets and main squares. These practices are therefore not only violent towards migrants themselves but also impact the perceptions of migrants among the native population. MIGRACIONES has also signed several collaboration agreements with municipalities to promote migration control, which is particularly worrying since, in theory, migration is not within the jurisdiction of municipalities. Nevertheless, some municipalities, including the city of Cusco, have even adopted discriminatory laws to exclude Venezuelans from the labor market (Berganza & Blouin, 2021).

The institutional xenophobia is also palpable in the Peruvian Congress, where in the last 2 years xenophobic bills have proliferated (Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos Perú et al., 2020; Defensoría del Pueblo, 2020) – a tendency which contradicts the few initiatives taken by this power in relation to migration over the last decade.⁷ The projects, presented by different political parties,⁸ aim to reinforce migration control by changing the rules for deportations (Draft Law N°5625-2020; Draft Law N° 4958-2020), creating a new crime of ‘illegal re-entering’, erasing the mechanism of PTP (Draft Law N° 5349-2020),⁹ and changing the causes of deportation, including for misdemeanors (Draft Law N° 07079/2020-CR) In other words, these bills are part of the hate speech discourses and practices that criminalize migration. Moreover, none of the congressional representatives have proposed a progressive law project around migration. Overall, all of the projects have worked to consolidate the idea of migrants as a threat, contributing to the institutional xenophobia of the executive power and other actors.

8.4 Social Xenophobia

By social xenophobia, we mean the rejection of migrants by society. In this section, we analyze the perceptions and reactions of Peruvian citizens to Venezuelan migration. We support our findings with three surveys conducted by the IOP between 2018 and 2020. This section is divided into three areas: employment and economy, culture, and criminality.

8.4.1 *Employment and Economy*

As in other contexts (Rzepnikowska, 2019; Yakushko, 2009), surveys show that Venezuelan migrants are perceived as an economic threat responsible for society’s structural problems such as job shortages, unemployment, and economic crises. Indeed, the employment and economy appeared as an important source of anxiety for the native population in Lima in surveys conducted in both 2018 and 2019. The perception that jobs are being lost to migration is widespread among the native population: the percentage in agreement with the statement “Venezuelans are taking jobs away from many Peruvians” ranged between 73% (2018) and 76% (2019) (IOP, 2019, 2020). Secondly, the vast majority of respondents see the consequences of immigration on the economy as negative: the statement “the arrival of so many

⁷The Migration Law was in fact not debated in Congress since it was adopted by the Executive Decree.

⁸One of the principal problems in Peru is the fragility of its political parties. This characteristic could be an explanation for anti-migration positions in Congress (Blouin et al., 2020).

⁹This bill was archived in November 2020.

Venezuelans will harm the Peruvian economy” saw more than 70% agreement (73% in 2018 and 77% in 2019) (IOP, 2019, 2020). Regarding migration policies, between 13% and 14% (IOP, 2019, 2020) of participants agreed with the statement “allow them [migrants] to come while there is work available”. There was no substantial change between 2018 and 2019 that might explain the fear of nationals of job loss due to the arrival of Venezuelans. Some authors argue that Venezuelans are seen as competitors of the native population who are inserted in an informal labor market characterized by its elasticity and capacity to contain a large number of workers (Koechlin Costa et al., 2019).

This perception is also related to institutional xenophobia. Peru has not reformed the Law on Hiring Foreign Workers (Decreto Legislativo n. ° 689) since 1991. This law was adopted during the autocratic government of Alberto Fujimori and is accordingly anchored in nationalism and protectionism of national workers. This law limits access to employment of foreigners to 20% of a company’s payroll regardless of the size of the company. This has strong impacts on micro and small enterprises that cannot legally hire foreigners. Besides, the goals of this law contradict the PTP which was designed for labor integration.

It is also important to understand this data in the light of the socio-economic conditions of the job market in Peru and how these conditions impact both national and Venezuelan workers. At the end of 2019, 697,000 Peruvians were seeking employment, a total of 17 million workers (Gamero & Pérez, 2020). Generalized informal work¹⁰ is a principal trait of the job market in Peru (OIT, 2018) and particularly affects certain groups such as young people and women. This sector plays a fundamental role in the economy of many families since the informal sector, and especially self-employment, is an opportunity when possibilities for formal work are closed (Sánchez Barrenechea et al., 2020). The vast majority of Venezuelan migrants are inserted in this informal job market for legal and economic reasons (Blouin, 2019). According to the INEI 88.5% of Venezuelans working as employees do so without a contract (Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática, 2019). They face precarious labor conditions such as lower salaries, long hours of work,¹¹ and discrimination in the workplace (Blouin, 2019; Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática, 2019; Koechlin Costa et al., 2019).

ENPOVE data show that 6% of Venezuelans are unemployed, a much higher percentage than the Peruvian national unemployment rate of 3.9% (Bahar et al., 2020). Unemployment is 3 times higher for Venezuelan women (Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática, 2019). In this context, 20% of Venezuelans who are

¹⁰There is a large debate around the definition of “informal work”. The absence of a work contract and thus social rights such as social security is generally considered definitive of informal work. However, it is important to use a larger framework to understand the vulnerability of formal works and the impossibility of formalization of informal jobs in the Peruvian context (Cuenca & Urrutia, 2018).

¹¹According to the INEI, 69.4% of this population are over-employed, that is, they work 51 to more hours per week (38.4% from 51 to 70 h and 31.0% more than 71 h), 22.7% work between 31 and 50 h a week and only 7.9% work less than 31 h a week.

working are self-employed (Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática, 2019). For Koechlin Costa et al. (2019) self-employment among Venezuelan migrants is motivated by different causes, from past experiences to the necessities of care. The first reason for choosing self-employment is linked to the possibility of a higher salary without the control of an employer. The second reason is the necessity of a flexible schedule to take care of the family, especially for Venezuelan women who are usually in charge of reproductive tasks. Moreover, precarious work conditions and situations of abuse by employers in previous jobs are also motivations for opting for a self-employment. Another explanation would be discrimination. Direct hiring discrimination has been reported, for instance, restaurants that advertise that they are ‘looking for waitresses, not Venezuelan’ (Sánchez Barrenechea et al., 2020). Thus, the possibility of finding a paid dependent job is extremely difficult. In the case of those who find a job despite these conditions, discrimination does not disappear and is expressed through insults, humiliation, and mistreatment, directly related to their nationality, from employees, colleagues, and also clients in the case of shops and restaurants (Sánchez Barrenechea et al., 2020). In this context, many migrants find in self-employment an escape from these situations of discrimination.

Regarding the perceptions of the characteristics of Venezuelan migrant workers, we can observe several shifts during the years studied. In 2018, 74% of the respondents agreed with the statement, “the majority of Venezuelans who arrive in Peru are hard-working and enterprising people,” while in 2019 the percentage fell to 52% (IOP, 2019, 2020).

Hard work and entrepreneurship (*emprendedurismo*) are well valued in Peru because of the precarious conditions of employment and the few social programs that exist to face these conditions.¹² We also notice in several studies with Peruvian employers that the ‘bad experiences’ reported by them began to create a certain image of ‘the good’ versus ‘the bad’ Venezuelan employee (Blouin, 2019; Sánchez Barrenechea et al., 2020). This type of myth is also important in the construction of the *other*, in this case as a migrant worker. Women migrants face specific gender stereotypes such as “*roba maridos*” (husband stealers), since they are perceived as more beautiful and pleasant than Peruvian women (Sánchez Barrenechea et al., 2020). Thus, they also deal with more situations of gendered abuse and discrimination (Koechlin Costa et al., 2019; Sánchez Barrenechea et al., 2020).

The changes in this perception can also be explained by shifts in institutional discourses and practices. In 2017, the former President of Perú described Venezuelans as people in need with severe economic problems in their own country. At the same time, he promoted the PPT for (temporary) inclusion in the workforce. In a second moment, from 2018 to 2019, the Government has implemented various bureaucratic strategies to irregularize them, with a discourse related to the rhetoric of fear and threat.

This shift is also concomitant with the changes in the profile of Venezuelan migrants, and especially the level of education. The composition of Venezuelan

¹²For instance, there is no unemployment insurance in Peru.

migration to Peru between 2017 and 2019 shifted from highly educated people to more middle- and low-class migrants with little or no higher education (Blouin, 2019; Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos Perú et al., 2020). It is indeed not surprising that the percentage in agreement with the statement, ‘Venezuelans residing in the country have had a good education in their country’ dropped from 69% in 2018 to 45% in 2019 (IOP, 2019, 2020). Beyond the statistics, it is necessary to read this result in the national context of discrimination. In Peru, discrimination is a complex phenomenon that overlaps many variables such as education. Having or not having higher education in Peru is one more argument for discrimination, where most privileged people normally reach the highest level of education. As we have explained, education can be a powerful whitening factor (De la Cadena, 1998). Without education, Venezuelans are more likely to face discrimination.

8.4.2 Culture

The goal of xenophobic discourses is to discriminate between differences. In this sense, differentiation is a mere instrument that justifies different treatment. Thus, the more these differences are essentialized, the more justified the unequal treatment will be. Racist discourse postulates an essential biological determination to culture but its referent may be any group that has been ‘socially’ constructed as having a different ‘origin,’ whether cultural, biological, or historical (Anthias & Yuval-Davis, 1983, p. 67). Cultural questions remain central because they are linked with nationalism and nativism. Unlike race, which is determined by birth, culture is presented as a reality of ‘acquired nature’ (Gil-Benumeña, 2018, p. 57). This creates the paradox that the subordinate group chooses and assumes that nature. Thus, individuals themselves are held responsible for their status as excluded: ‘they do not adapt to our customs.’

In the Peruvian national reality, minorities or ethnically differentiated social groups characterized by cultural heterogeneity and linguistic plurality have differentiated access to rights due to structural and powerful strategies of domination (Callirgos, 2015; De la Cadena, 1998; Portocarrero, 2013). This problem of discrimination towards cultural pluralism is rooted in public institutions, although civil society organizations are struggling to lay the foundations for inclusive and multi-cultural citizenship. Thus, the discourse of otherness is a familiar discourse.

In this work and especially for the Venezuelan migrants in Peru, we argue that cultural difference is one of the central concepts in the creation of an *us* and a *them*. Race has been partially displaced by culture as a central concept in the creation of difference (De la Cadena, 1998). In this sense, race and culture intersect in the phenomenon of discrimination. Despite this background, few studies have focused on racial and cultural aspects of Venezuelan migration to Peru (Berganza & Solórzano, 2019). Although cultural diversity is one of the less controversial items in the

surveys¹³ there is a perception of great cultural differences among the native population.

To the question, “how similar are the customs and way of life of Peruvians and Venezuelans?” 41.3% of the respondents in 2018 answered, ‘very/quite different’ (IOP, 2019). Geographical analysis of the data shows differences between rural and urban areas: 44% in Lima-Callao and 42.4% in the urban interior agreed, while 33.8% of the respondents in the rural interior agreed. This is particularly interesting since cultural customs differ widely between rural and urban areas and the perceptions of diversity, for instance of accent or language, can be seen quite differently. However, this data can be explained by the fact that more Venezuelans live in the cities and most of them in the capital. According to the socio-economic level of the respondents, the percentages ranged between 34.4% (on the A/B economic scale), 45.6% (on the C economic scale), and 40.6% (on the D/E economic scale).¹⁴ These findings are interesting because they capture some nuances around the capacity for openness to other cultures that do not necessarily correlate on an economic scale. It is necessary to deepen these aspects to better understand the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion. The survey from 2019 that focused on Lima/Callao showed that the percentage increased: 51% of the respondents agreed that the customs and way of life of Peruvians and Venezuelans are ‘very/quite different’ while in 2018 for this city the percentage was 44% (IOP, 2018).

Regarding the perceptions around occupation of public spaces by migrants, 40% of the respondents answered, ‘yes, many’ to the following question: have you seen Venezuelans on the public highway in your neighborhood or town? (IOP, 2019). It is important to note that for Lima and Callao this percentage has not shown a significant increase (only 1 point) between 2018 and 2019, despite the increase in the number of migrants (IOP, 2020). There is a belief assigned to the Venezuelan community in Peru that Venezuelans occupy much more public space than nationals (Blouin, 2019). As in other contexts (Rzepnikowska, 2019, p. 70),¹⁵ some attributes, such as language in the case of Venezuelans in Peru, can be considered as a privilege and manner of erasing differences between “us” and “them.” However, the accent, the clothes, and the way of occupying public space constitute markers that differentiate Venezuelan migrants from Peruvians. These markers are also essentialized by media and institutional actors, permeating the collective imaginary.

Regarding intercultural issues, 54.6% agreed with the statement “Venezuelans residing in Peru should learn about Peruvian culture, customs and traditions.” The

¹³In the survey around immigration in general (IOP, 2018), 45.9% of respondent in the affirmative to the question, “does immigration strengthen cultural diversity?” Those surveyed also believe that immigration increases unemployment (79.9%); that it generates social conflicts (78.1%); that it occupies jobs (77.8%); and that it increases crime (70.1%).

¹⁴The scale of socioeconomic levels follows the values defined by Ipsos Perú. Thus, the A / B scale has an average monthly income between 12,660 and 7020 soles. The C scale shows an average income of 3970 soles and the D/E scale has a range between 2480 and 1300 soles per month (Ipsos, 2020).

¹⁵The author analyses the privilege of *whiteness* of Poles in the United Kingdom.

geographical analysis of this question shows that in Lima-Callao, where most Venezuelan people live, more people agreed with the statement (66.3%) than in the rural interior (42.3%). This difference can be explained by the fact that in rural communities there is no great concern for the dominant cultures since their own culture has been overshadowed (Callirgos, 2015; Drinot, 2006). The subordination and remoteness of rural sectors concerning the capital implies that they recognize the Venezuelan culture as a non-dominant one, against which they do not need to defend themselves. According to the socioeconomic level of the respondents, the percentages ranged between 59.7% in the A/B level; 59.9% at level C; and 49% at the D/E level. Between 2018 and 2019, for Lima/Callao this statement has slightly varied from 81% to 89%. This statement is in line with the Migration Law which establishes that foreigners must respect the historical and cultural legacy of Peru (article 10.6) and demonstrates the importance of culture as a marker of difference from the 'other'. Thus, institutional actors have also played an important role in defining how migrants have to integrate. Although the 'peruanidad' or the construction of national feeling is fragile, it has been to be defended against all odds and especially against the threat of immigration (Cutillas, 2019). Overall, hatred towards everything that has to do with "the Venezuelan," the *Venezuelanphobia*, entails presenting the whole of Venezuelans as members of a homogeneous, uniform culture, dangerous to Peruvian values.

8.4.3 Criminality

The negative perceptions around migration in Peru are, as in other contexts, linked to criminality. Freier and Pérez argue that Venezuelans in Peru suffer from a 'nationality-based criminalization which encompasses experiences where migrants are seen as a potential criminal or accused of a crime, such as a robbery or murder, based on his or her Venezuelan nationality' (Freier & Pérez, 2021). Based in qualitative and quantitative data, they found that criminalization of the Venezuelan nationality was the main aspect of nationality-based xenophobic discrimination (Freier & Pérez, 2021).

Despite the lack of data to support the supposed nexus between Venezuelan migration and the rise in indicators of insecurity (Bahar et al., 2020), the views around the link between criminality and migration have dramatically shifted between 2018 and 2019. By the end of 2018, 55% of respondents agreed with the statement that "many Venezuelans are involved in criminal activities in Peru" (IOP, 2019), while at the end of 2019 this percentage increased to 81% (IOP, 2020). This increase coincided with the shifts of migration policies discussed above, from the selective hospitality policy to the hostile policy against Venezuelan migrants. We observe that institutional xenophobia is central to this process. The discourses of municipal authorities in Lima during 2019 were especially violent against Venezuelan migrants and constituted hate speech discourses. For instance, in San Juan de Lurigancho, the most populated district in the capital, the mayor publicly

described Venezuelans as “lumpen” and criminals, urging their return to Venezuela (Berganza & Blouin, 2021). The misperception and confusion around illegality and criminality are also a source of the criminalization visible in the Congress and discourses such as the official and public announcement by the former president of the need for a humanitarian visa. This rise is also linked to the role of the media in the criminalization of Venezuelan migrants (Freier & Pérez, 2021). These results can explain the announcement of the creation of a special security unit dedicated to crimes committed by migrants in early 2020, which is an example of institutional xenophobia (Inmovilidades en las Américas, 2021).

Other important insights of the surveys are linked to the perception of fear and trust. In 2018, only 39% of respondents agreed that “the majority of Venezuelans are unreliable or dishonest people”. However, in 2019, this percentage rose to 61%. Agreement with the statement, “I am very mistrustful of Venezuelans who arrive in Peru” increased from 40% to 68%, and fear towards this population (agreement with the statement “I am afraid of Venezuelans who arrive in Peru”) increased from 24% to 52%. Trust and especially fear, as we have commented before, are at the root of the xenophobic feeling of rejection. The feeling of fear is a driver of xenophobia. The hate discourses and hostile policies have nourished this feeling of mistrust and fear. The feelings of fear and mistrust are therefore also essential data to understand the negative opinions of Venezuelan migrants and the desire for more restrictive migration policies.

Surveys show that Peruvians have asked for more restrictive policies since 2018 but with a certain shift to more restrictive policies in 2019. Despite the steady percentage in agreement with “allow whoever wants to come,” (2% in both surveys) other statements such as “apply strict limits on the number of Venezuelans who can come,” increased from 55% to 66% between 2019 and 2020. The agreement with the tougher measure “bans Venezuelans from entering Peru” almost doubled in only one year, from 17% in 2018 to 30% in 2019. These results are key to understanding the links between institutional and social xenophobia. The request for more restrictions by the population is at the same time backed up by hostile policies. Instead of disarticulating hate speeches and demonstrations of rejection, political actors use these discourses as weapons for their own political goals such as presidential political elections. The electoral campaign for the presidency of Peru, in addition to using migrants as scapegoats for citizen security problems, has ignored the needs of around one million Venezuelans who have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic in a clear demonstration of indifference on the part of the state. Proof of this is the absence of concrete proposals to guarantee the rights of the Venezuelan population in the various government plans (IDEHPUCP, 2021).

8.5 Conclusion

Although there is a growing academic interest in xenophobia in South America (Chan & Strabucchi, 2020; Tijoux-Merino, 2013; Guizardi & Mardones, 2020), research has not focused on deepening and highlighting the links between xenophobia and racism. There is also incipient research on Peru due, in part, to the recent changes in migration trends. We have examined the institutional and social xenophobia in the context of a racialized country. By doing so, we have argued that xenophobia is not only implemented by institutional actors but also reproduced by society in general. As the literature has already shown in the Global North, employment, culture and crime act as a differentiating element to create the discourse of fear of foreigners that sustains xenophobia. Public institutions and the media are principally responsible for these misperceptions.

This chapter sheds light on the economic, social, and cultural exclusions that migrants experience. These forms of exclusion are shared with other sectors of the population such as the Indigenous population. Our study suggests that the institutional xenophobia against Venezuelan migration in the country, expressed through legislation as well as informal and formal practices of exclusion such as expulsions, have portrayed migrants as invaders. We have also claimed that the data revealed by the different surveys need to be understood in light of the characteristics of Peruvian society which have long had and maintain strong structures of inequality and racism. So, the structural and complex racialization that operates in the country is also nourished by a special hatred against the foreigner who threatens the fragile sense of nationhood in Peru. Thus, we have observed the emergence of a feeling of *Venezuelanphobia* as a hatred towards everything that has to do with ‘the Venezuelan.’ These exploratory findings contribute to the analysis of xenophobia in the region and could be used to inform comparisons with other countries that share historical and social backgrounds with Peru, such as Colombia or Ecuador. Further studies should deepen our understanding of institutional and social xenophobia in the context of racialization through ethnography or other types of qualitative studies.

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Cécile Blouin is graduated in Political Science and Law (Université de Versailles-Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines) and holds a Master in European Union (Universidad Carlos III, Spain) and a Master of European Laws (Université Paris X Nanterre, France). She is currently lecturer at the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú (Lima, Peru). Until 2020, she was a researcher at the Institute for Democracy and Human Rights of the *Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú* where she

coordinated several research projects on migration and asylum policies in Latin America. Her main research interests are the study of borders, mobility regimes, and migration and asylum policies in the Andean region. She has been working for several years on Venezuelan migration in the Andes.

Cristina Zamora Gómez is PhD candidate in Public International Law from the University of Seville; and holds a Law Degree from the University of Salamanca (2015); a Master's Degree in European Union Studies from the University of Salamanca (2017); She specialized in gender violence at Carlos III University in Madrid (2018) and in gender methodologies at the Institute for Training and Research of United Nations (2018). Her research work focuses on migration, asylum policies and human rights from a decolonial gender perspective.

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