

Living in Latin London: How Latin American Migrants Survive in the City

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Carila



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This report can also be downloaded from:

<http://www.geog.qmul.ac.uk/staff/mcilwaine.html>

or

www.carila.org.uk

A. INTRODUCTION

'London is a city of opportunities to work, but at the same time it is very sad. You arrive here like a chicken who doesn't speak English, you look at the houses, the buses driving on the wrong side of the road. For a long time, you feel completely lost, people try and talk to you in the street and you don't understand what they're saying, you're completely out of your orbit'

Mario, Bolivian, a chef, undocumented, living in Brixton

These words of Mario encapsulate the contradictory feelings that Latin American migrants in London feel when they first arrive; on the one hand, London fulfills their dreams of being able to get a job and make money or escape persecution, while on the other, they are completely disorientated by the new culture, system and ways of doing things, not to mention the language.

Latin Americans are one of the fastest growing, but also one of the most invisible migrant groups to the UK and to London in particular, where they are concentrated. Despite a long history of ties between the UK and Latin America both diplomatically and in terms of trade and commerce, only since the 1970s has there been any significant migration of Latin Americans. Linked partly to the reputation of the UK as a country where human rights are protected, Latin Americans have been seeking refuge from dictatorships, repression and violence in their homelands for several decades. However, as London has emerged as one of the most important global cities in the world, it has also become an attractive place for people to come in search of work. Beginning with Colombians as the pioneers of large-scale migration to the UK, arriving first in search of refuge, and then economic betterment, the Latin American population has been growing steadily, especially since the late 1990s.

Forming what has been called one of London's new migrant groups¹, Latin Americans have begun to play an important role in the multicultural landscape of London. Not only is their presence felt in the rise of salsa clubs, restaurants and carnivals, but Latin Americans are playing an increasingly important economic role in the functioning of the global city of London. Although they are still concentrated in the service sector of the urban economy, and mainly in elementary occupations especially in cleaning, their importance in the business sector is growing. This can be seen in the thriving Latin American enclaves of Elephant and Castle in the South of the city and Pueblito Paisa or Seven Sisters market in the North.

Yet, despite this growing importance, very little is known about Latin Americans in London (or the UK more broadly). This is partly because they remain a fairly small population compared with Africans, South Asians or Eastern Europeans, because they are not categorised officially as an ethnic minority group, and because many are undocumented. Having said this, informal estimates suggest that there might be as many as 1 million Latin Americans in London alone (see below). Yet information is scarce. There are a few studies of particular nationality groups (Guarnizo, 2006 on Colombians; James, 2005 on Ecuadorians; Sveinsson, 2007 on Bolivians), but very little beyond small-scale ethnographic work on Latin Americans as a whole (Carlisle, 2006). This study aims to address this lack of information,

¹ Usually denoting those who have migrated since 1990 when migration to the UK diversified beyond the Commonwealth and the European Union (Kyambi, 2005).

focusing particularly on the ways in which Latin Americans survive in the city, from a primarily socio-economic perspective.

More specifically, this report forms part of a wider research project on the 'Coping practices of Latin American migrants in London' directed by Dr Cathy McIlwaine, Queen Mary, University of London, funded by the Leverhulme Trust with support from Carila Latin American Welfare Group. The aim of this aspect of the research with Carila was to examine how Latin Americans survived in an expensive city like London, and to explore the main problems facing them as a group. In addition, the research aimed to identify the role of migrant associations in helping to reduce the vulnerability of this population, as well as the types of projects needed for the this group, identified by migrants themselves. The focus was on 'ordinary' migrants rather than elites, concentrating on those who had arrived in the last 10 years.

The report concentrates on 20 in-depth, semi-structured interviews with Latin Americans associated with Carila mainly as beneficiaries, but also as volunteers, as well as three focus group discussions comprising 17 migrants. It also refers to a further 50 interviews where relevant (conducted as part of the wider project). While a range of Latin American nationalities were included in the focus group discussions, the interviews concentrated on Colombians, Ecuadorians and Bolivians. Colombians were chosen as one of the largest group of Latin Americans in London, as well as one of the most established.² Similarly, Ecuadorians were included as another established sizeable group, while Bolivians were chosen as one of the most recently arrived nationalities to the capital.

After an outline of the background of Latin American migration to London, and an outline of the methodology and profile of the migrants included in the sample, the report outlines the reasons and nature of migration, the role of immigration status, and the process of settling in the city. It then considers how migrants survive in the city economically and socially, before exploring the role of migrant organisations, connections with home countries and a summary of the main problems facing migrants. It then concludes with a discussion of the types of projects that Latin Americans consider to be important in order to improve their lives in London.

² Some suggest that Brazilians are now the largest Latin American group (see below). However, they are largely excluded from this study because of language differences, and the fact that they tend to be in a minority in terms of use of organisations such as Carila.

B. BACKGROUND

The history of Latin American migration to London and the UK

Latin American migration to the UK has a long history stretching back over 200 years. London in particular has been home to many founders of Latin American independence, together with diplomats, writers, artists, political activists and business people. Evidence of the first visitors from Latin America date back to the 1780s when exiles from the Spanish colonial regime came to London not only to flee persecution, but also to lobby for independence in the New World (and included such figures as Bernardo O'Higgins) (Miller, 1998). As the independence movements gathered pace in the early nineteenth century, more exiles migrated to London in search of political freedom. At the same time, economic ties were being forged between London and Latin America as the first loans for new countries were negotiated in the City of London. Once independence was established, diplomats began to arrive in London, many of whom were also writers. Commercial links with Latin America flourished in the 1860s as merchants began to specialise in particular businesses such as Peruvian guano and Chilean nitrate. British companies increasingly invested in Latin America with estimates in 1913 suggesting that Britain invested between £750 million and £1,000 million primarily in Brazil and Argentina, but also in Chile, Uruguay, and Mexico (*ibid*: 6). Official statistics of this time also illustrated that the numbers of Latin Americans in London was small. For instance, the 1861 census recorded 541 Latin Americans, increasing to 778 in 1871 and declining to 638 in 1901 (Decho and Diamond, 1998: 126).

After reaching a peak in 1914, the economic relationships between London and Latin America declined with the First World War, the Great Depression and the Second World War. However, London remained a safe haven for Latin American exiles, reflected in the increasing Latin American born population appearing in the census of 1951 (over 4,000) to over 17,000 in 1991 (Miller, 1998: 8). As more Latin Americans arrived in London, so interest in Latin American culture increased especially in terms of literature and music. The repression of the military governments in Brazil, Chile and Argentina in particular in the 1960s and 1970s, led to the creation of important exile communities in London (together with Uruguayans and Bolivians). However, only since the 1970s has there been significant migration from Latin America to the UK.³ In addition, migration before this time had primarily been of the elites rather than more 'ordinary people'. At this time, it was Colombians in particular who arrived as a result of the work permit system to take-up jobs in domestic service, as au pairs and in catering. After 1980 more arrived to join relatives and friends despite the end of the work permit system. After 1986 there was an increase in Colombians seeking asylum as the conflict in their home country worsened. Once visa requirements were introduced in 1997, asylum applications decreased despite another rise in 1999 (Bermúdez Torres, 2003; Cock, 2007; Román-Velázquez, 1999). Since the 1980s, increasing numbers of Ecuadorians, especially in the 1990s, Peruvians, Brazilians, Argentineans and more recently, Bolivians have begun to arrive in London, moving mainly because of the economic crises in their home countries (Carlisle, 2006: 236).

The growing numbers of exiles and economic migrants was reflected in the establishment of migrant organisations in the late 1970s and early 1980s. While the oldest organisations were established with the aim of campaigning against

³ From 'Workers, Liberators And Exiles: Latin Americans In London' 21/09/2006, retrieved on 24 June 2007 from: <http://www.untoldlondon.org.uk/news/ART40466.html>

military dictatorships in Latin America, they gradually became more concerned with the socio-economic realities of Latin Americans residing in London. For example, Carila began as the Campaign Against Repression in Latin America in 1977, later becoming the Latin American Welfare Group in 1983. According to Alba Arbelaez, the co-ordinator of Carila, the name was retained to represent the collective made up by a range of Latin American human rights and solidarity groups (including the Central America Solidarity Group, Group Support of Peru, Colombia, Argentina and Uruguay and the Centre of Help for Cuba, and the Committee for Human Rights of Paraguay). The following year, the Latin American Women's Rights Service was also established by a group of women who had also been active in the solidarity movements of the 1970s. Similarly, the Indo-American Migrant and Refugee Organisation (IRMO) was established from the Chile Democrático group in the early 1990s once democracy was returned to the country. Also formed in 1977 was the Latin American Advisory Committee which was instrumental in the creation of Latin American House in Kilburn which provided a home for most of the Latin American community organisations of the time (including Carila, the Latin American Workers Association and Latin American Advisory Committee) (Cock, 2007)

How many Latin Americans are there in London today?

The simple answer is that no one knows. Official estimates are usually based on the 2001 Census which notes the combined population of Colombians, Ecuadorians, and Bolivians in London as only 11,863, with Latin American nationalities together making-up 46,325 (see Tables 1 and 2). Arguably more accurate is the Office of National Statistics Labour Force Survey that in June 2006 estimated that there were 18,000 Colombians (an increase from 8,000 in 1997), 25,000 Brazilians (an increase from 4,000), 4,000 Argentineans (an increase from 3,000), 1,000 Chileans (a decline from 2,000), and 16,000 Guyanese (19,000).^{4, 5} However, these official statistics are widely believed to be gross under-estimates mainly because of the high proportion of undocumented Latin Americans and their invisibility as a population in London (and the UK more generally). As noted above, this also relates to the fact that Latin Americans are not a separate category in ethnic group classifications, being designated instead as 'other', and thus making it difficult to build-up a profile of their situation.

Table 1: Official estimates of Colombian, Ecuadorian and Bolivian migrants living in London

<i>Country</i>	<i>Total number</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
Colombia	9035	3732	5303
Ecuador	2301	1054	1247
Bolivia	527	235	292
<i>Total</i>	<i>11863</i>	<i>5021</i>	<i>6842</i>

Source: 2001 Census from Finella (2005: 34, 56, 74)

Having said this, in recent years, there has been some attempt by researchers and activists to try and make more accurate predictions about the size of the Latin American population. From the UK government perspective, the recent strategy paper by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on Latin America (FCO, 2007: 5)

⁴ Retrieved on 24 June 2007 from <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/StatBase/Source.asp?vlnk=358&More=Y>

⁵ It is important to note that the situation of Guyana is different to other Latin American nationalities; as a former colony called British Guiana, its people speak English and have Commonwealth status in the UK.

suggested that there are between 700,000 and 1,000,000 Latin Americans visiting or living in the UK, including 200,000 Brazilians, 140,000 Colombians, 70-90,000 Ecuadorians and 10-15,000 Peruvians (see also Buchuck, 2006).⁶ The majority of this population resides in London. Unofficial estimates put these numbers higher. Among the few studies of specific Latin American national groups in London, James (2005: 3-4) estimates that there are between 30,000 - 75,000 Ecuadorians, Sveinsson (2007) suggests that there are between 15,000 - 20,000 Bolivians, while Guarnizo (2006: 8) estimates that there were between 50,000 - 70,000 Colombians (although McIlwaine, 2005 suggests that there could be as many as 150,000). Certainly, interviews with embassy officials and representatives from migrant organisations seem to corroborate the higher estimates. For example, Myriam Bell who runs the Carila telephone Helpline that provides advice on a range of immigration, welfare, housing, health and education issues, and which acts as a good barometer of the current situation of Latin Americans in London (and in the UK more widely), confirms that the higher estimates are probably broadly accurate. What is less contested is that the proportion of Latin Americans living in London is increasing and has been growing recently. While official figures show this in terms of both census data (Decho and Diamond, 1998) and passenger survey data (Mitchell and Pain, 2003: 7), this is also reflected in commentaries of migrants themselves and the demand for services identified by migrant organisations.

While most recent Latin American migrants to London have migrated for economic reasons, there is also a sizeable refugee population. Because of the armed conflict, it has mainly been Colombians who have claimed asylum in the UK. Having said this, asylum has become much more difficult to claim over time, especially since 1997 when visas were introduced, with the application and success rate declining rapidly since the beginning of the century. Between 2002 and 2004 asylum applications from Colombians declined by 45% from 420 applications in 2002 to 120 in 2004 with the refusal rate being extremely high (McIlwaine, 2005: 11). This has continued today; for 2006, there were 50 applications from Colombians, 10 from Ecuadorians (the only 2 countries mentioned) and 60 from 'other Americas'. Only 5 from Colombia were recognised as refugees, with a further 5 from 'other Americas' granted discretionary leave. Overall, between 2004 and 2006 there has been a decline in applications with 120 from Colombians, 35 from Ecuadorians, and 130 from 'other Americas'.⁷ As noted in an earlier report on Colombians, it is not surprising that so many Latin Americans are choosing to enter the UK illegally and not to apply for refuge due to the high rate of refusal of asylum claims (McIlwaine, 2005: 11).

⁶ Indeed, these figures appear to be taken directly from Buchuck's online article.

⁷ Asylum Statistics, First Quarter 2007 United Kingdom, Home Office. Retrieved on 25 June 2007 from <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs07/asylumq107.pdf>

Table 2: Official estimates of Latin American migrants living in London

<i>Country</i>	<i>Total number</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
Colombia	9035	3732	5303
Ecuador	2301	1054	1247
Bolivia	527	235	292
Argentina	2557	1102	1455
Belize	216	74	142
Brazil	8162	3381	4781
Chile	2054	919	1135
Cuba	536	268	268
El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras	441	164	277
Mexico	1595	672	923
Panama, Nicaragua, Costa Rica	344	138	206
Peru	1738	631	1107
Suriname, Guyana, French Guiana	14,938	6212	8726
Uruguay	370	167	203
Venezuela	1511	673	838
Total	46,325		

Source: 2001 Census from Finella (2005)

Emigration from Latin America

There are 20 million people from Latin America and the Caribbean living outside their country of birth. Seven million are residing legally in the US, with 3 million within Latin America and the Caribbean and a further 10 million in other countries (with concentrations in Spain, Italy, the UK, Australia, Japan, Canada and the Netherlands) (IOM, 2005: 90). Indeed it is now widely accepted that migration from Latin America to Europe is diversifying substantially especially since 2000 (ECLAC, 2006b). While Spain remains the most common European destination for Latin Americans, especially Colombians and Ecuadorians (Pellegrino, 2004), the UK is growing in popularity.

As noted above, Latin Americans have migrated to the UK for a range of reasons relating to an intersection of political freedom and economic opportunity. The tightening of immigration controls in the US after September 11 has also made Europe more attractive for Latin Americans (Pellegrino, 2004). In contrast, Latin Americans have left their homeland because of political repression, especially in the 1970s and 1980s, with economic instability and poverty dominating the reasons for leaving in the 1990s and 2000s (IOM, 2005; Pellegrino, 2004). For Colombians in particular, the armed conflict that has been raging for the last 40 years has prompted widespread internal displacement as well as international migration to Venezuela, Panama, the US, and more recently to Europe (to Spain, Italy and the UK) (Bermudez Torres, 2003, 2007; Guarnizo, 2006; McIlwaine, 2005; Moser and McIlwaine, 2004, 2006). While political instability has also affected Ecuadorians and Bolivians, they have not experienced civil war, and so economic factors have been more important in their reasons for leaving. The economic crisis in Argentina in 2002 was especially important for Bolivians who had traditionally migrated there; they had to find alternative destinations as the opportunities in Argentina disappeared (Bastia, 2005).

In terms of the socio-economic situation in the three Latin American countries, there has been a broad deterioration or stagnation, with Bolivia the hardest hit with growth rates of GDP of only 1.3% (ECLAC, 2006a: 61). Urban unemployment in all three countries grew between 1990-1999 and 2000-2005; in Bolivia from 5.3% to 8.0%, in Colombia from 11.6% to 16.5%, and in Ecuador from 9.4% to 10.8% (ECLAC, 2007:56). In terms of poverty, Bolivia had among the highest poverty rates in the continent with over 63.9% of the population living below the poverty line in 2004 (an increase from 52.6% in 1989). Yet rates were also high in Colombia (46.8% in 2005) and in Ecuador (48.3% in 2005), although these reflected a decline from 1989 (*ibid.*: 64). In light of this situation, it is hardly surprising that people are leaving their homeland in search of better economic opportunities and freedom from conflict and repression. Indeed, in Bolivia, in 2000, 4.1% of the population had migrated, in Colombia, 3.4% had emigrated, while in Ecuador, 4.8% had left (ECLAC, 2006b: 15). This suggests that violence and conflict, while important in promoting migration abroad, are not necessarily the most critical factors.

In terms of who is migrating from Latin America, it is important to point out that it is not the poorest sections of the population who are unable to afford to migrate abroad. In the case of Colombia, poor, mainly rural people who have been displaced by the armed conflict have ended up as Internally Displaced People (IDPs) (who numbered around 2.5 million people at the end of 2002) (IOM, 2005: 94). With most information available for the case of Latin American migration to Spain, it appears that majority of migrants are engaged in economic activity, with small numbers of children and elderly, reflecting the fact that this is a relatively recent wave of migration. Migration flows to Spain and to the UK are also feminised (see Tables 1 and 2). In the case of the former, it has been noted that this is due to the demand for female labour in domestic service (Pellegrino, 2004), although more men migrate once women are settled and send for their husbands and children. Migrants are also usually fairly well-educated with the majority being educated to secondary level and beyond. In Spain, as elsewhere in Europe, Latin Americans tend to be concentrated in the service sector of the labour market (*ibid.*).

C. METHODOLOGY AND PROFILE OF THE MIGRANTS

Methodology

The research on which this report is based draws on qualitative, in-depth semi-structured interviews conducted with 20 Latin Americans linked with Carila in some way as beneficiaries, workers or volunteers. This forms part of a larger study based on in-depth interviews with a total of 70 Latin Americans. In addition to the in-depth interviews, 3 focus group discussions were carried out with 17 people, again all linked with Carila in some way. The staff at Carila were also included in the research through formal or informal interview and discussion, together with the members of the Management Committee. All the research was carried out between November 2006 and May 2007.

The sample for the in-depth interviews was constructed using non-purposive sampling techniques; in the case of those associated with Carila, staff members contacted beneficiaries to ascertain if they would be willing to be interviewed, and if so, these were followed up. The other 50 interviews were conducted with a wide range of people identified through a range of snowballing techniques and different networks. As a result, there is a wide diversity of migrants included in terms of residence, background and experience. Interviews lasted anywhere between 1 and 3 hours and covered a range of difference issues related to life in home country, migration experiences, arrival in London, work histories and current employment conditions, social networks and perceptions of problems faced by the community (see Appendix 1). All the interviews were recorded and transcribed and then analysed using a range of coding mechanisms. The focus groups were conducted with people associated with Carila, and mainly beneficiaries. Each discussion lasted for at least an hour and a half, and involved open-ended discussion as well as the use of some participatory appraisal techniques such as listing, participatory diagramming, causal flow diagrams, and institutional mapping (see Moser and McIlwaine, 1999 for details).

Profile of the Carila migrants

The 20 in-depth interviews on which the report focuses includes 10 Colombians, 6 Ecuadorians and 4 Bolivians (see Table 3). The 3 focus group discussions included 3 Colombians, 4 Ecuadorians, 2 Bolivians, 6 Peruvian, 1 Chilean and 1 Brazilian (see Table 4). In terms of gender, the Carila interview sample included 5 men and 15 women, while the focus groups included 5 men and 12 women.⁸

⁸ The imbalance reflects the fact that women are more likely to seek the services of Carila compared with men.

Table 3: Profile of Carila migrants

<i>Name (pseudonym)</i>	<i>Nationality</i>	<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Immigration status</i>
Edgar	Colombian	Unemployed (benefits)	British citizen
Edilma	Colombian	Remittance agency/ cleaner	British citizen
Sebastian	Colombian	Laundry worker	ILR
Alicia	Colombian	Au pair	Student visa
Clarena	Colombian	Housewife	British citizen
Clara	Colombian	Cleaner	ILR
Tomas	Colombian	Cleaner	ILR
Esperanza	Colombian	Cleaning manager	ILR
Sara	Colombian	Student	Student
Isabel	Colombian	Cleaner	British citizen
Eduardo	Ecuadorian	Boxing trainer/ volunteer (benefits)	ILR
Adriana	Ecuadorian	Unemployed	British citizen
Santiago	Ecuadorian	Disabled (benefits)	British citizen
Fany	Ecuadorian	Cleaner	British citizen
Libia	Ecuadorian	Cleaner	ILR
Lida	Ecuadorian	Student/cashier in supermarket/volunt eer	ILR
Helena	Bolivian	Cleaner	Student (dependent of husband)
Alba	Bolivian	Housewife	Undocumented
Fernanda	Bolivian	Nanny	Diplomatic visa
Manuela	Bolivian	Cleaner	ILR

The Carila interviewees had an average age of 37 years, the youngest person interviewed being 25 and the oldest 51. In terms of the arrival of these migrants, they were all fairly well established, with 8 arriving since 2000 and 12 between 1995 and 1999. The vast majority had arrived in the last 10 years. The migrants were also generally well-educated, with all having at least secondary level, and 8 having some form of tertiary education either at college or university. This was reflected in the jobs that people previously had in their home countries such as accounts clerk, secretary, lorry driver, taxi driver, hairdresser, and administrator. In terms of immigration status, all but one was documented. This partly reflects the fact that this group is associated with Carila which has been assisting them to secure their status. Two had student visas, one was a dependent of her husband who had a student visa, one had a diplomatic visa as she used to work at the Bolivian embassy, while the rest had either Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) or were British Citizens. Reflecting Carila's location in North London in the Borough of Islington, the majority also lived in the vicinity, with the exception of three who lived in Greenwich, Streatham and Chelsea. Finally, in terms of economic activity, 4 were unemployed and receiving benefits, 1 was disabled and receiving benefits, 2 were students, while of those who were employed, 10 worked in cleaning or caring; 2 were au pairs, 7 worked as cleaners and 1 was employed in a laundry. One woman had a part-time cleaning job but had also just established her own business in the form of a remittance-sending agency, and another was a cashier in a

supermarket as well as studying. Finally, the woman who was undocumented was a housewife, but she also did odd jobs such as sewing and cleaning.

Table 4: Participants in the focus group discussions

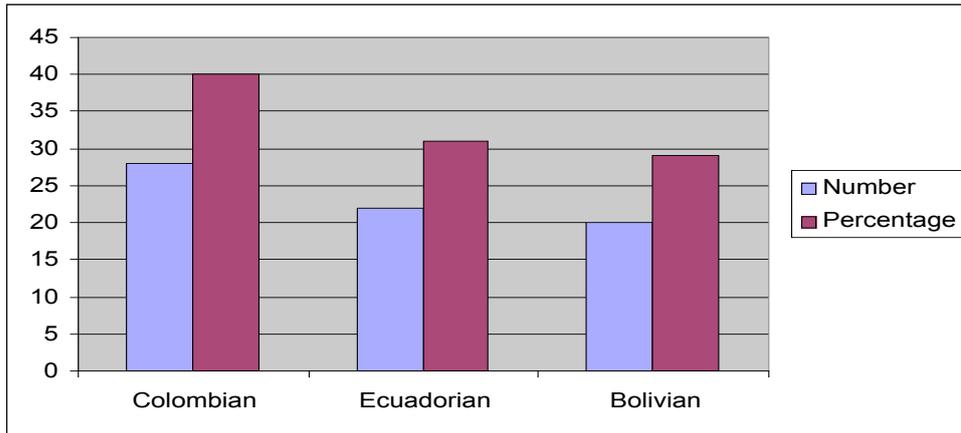
<i>Gender</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Nationality</i>
GROUP 1		
Female	29	Brazilian
Male	18	Bolivian
Male	39	Peruvian
Female	44	Colombian
Female	41	Ecuadorian
Female	28	Ecuadorian
GROUP 2		
Female	41	Ecuadorian
Male	24	Peruvian
Male	39	Peruvian
Female	45	Peruvian
Female	25	Colombian
Female	67	Chilean
Female	34	Peruvian
GROUP 3		
Female	29	Ecuadorian
Female	29	Bolivian
Male	34	Peruvian
Male	47	Colombian
Female	43	Peruvian

Note: 1 Peruvian man participated in Group 1 and Group 2

Profile of the total sample

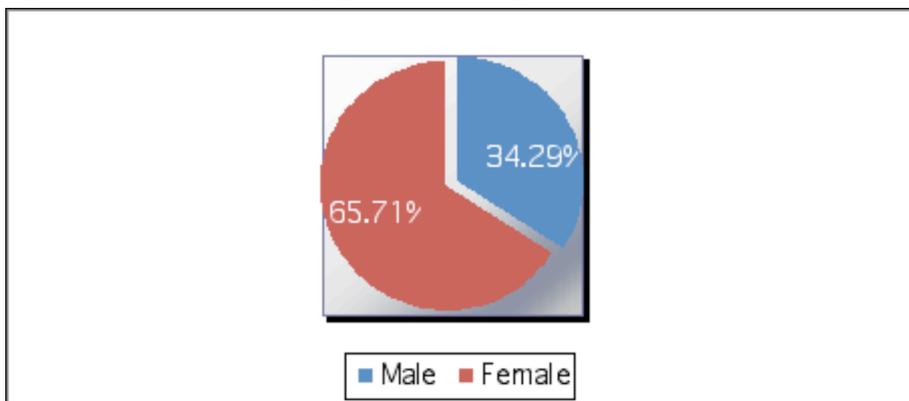
In terms of the sample as a whole, it is useful to outline some basic characteristics. This sample of 70 migrants included 28 (40%) Colombians, 22 (29%) Ecuadorians and 20 (21%) Bolivians (Figure 1; also Appendix 2). In terms of gender, 26 were men and 44 were women, which broadly correlates with the fact that officially, there are thought to be more women than men (Figure 2; Table 1 above).

Figure 1: Distribution of migrant nationalities



Source: 70 semi-structured interviews

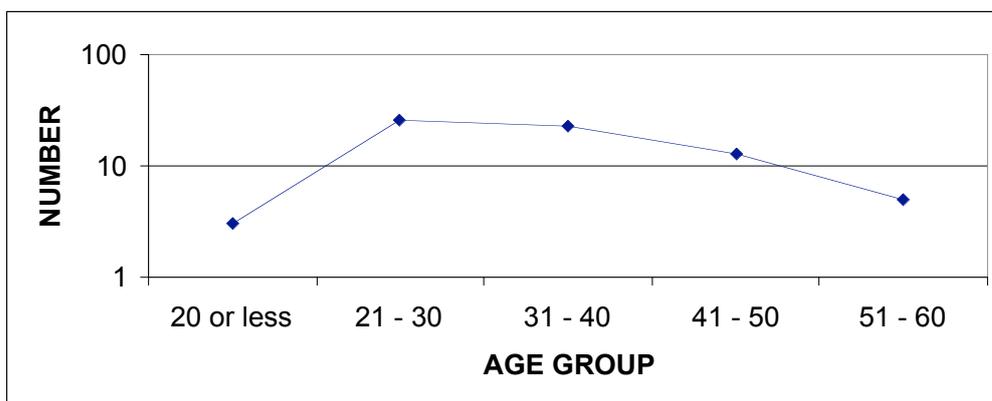
Figure 2: Distribution by gender of migrants



Source: 70 semi-structured interviews

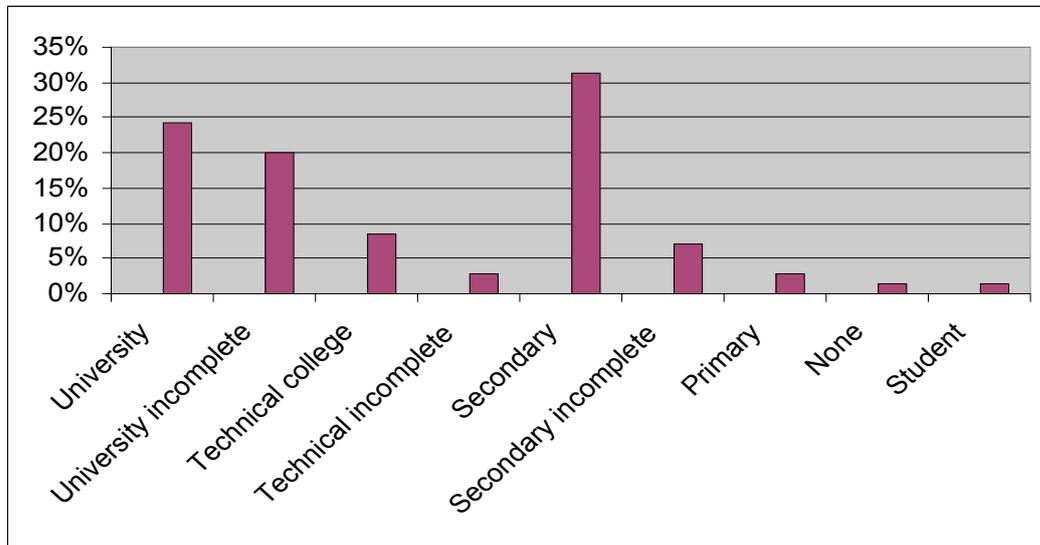
As for age, most interviewees were between 21 and 30 years of age, followed by those between 31 and 40 years. No one over 55 was interviewed, nor anyone under 16 years. As such, the majority of migrants were in the economically active age group (Figure 3). The migrants were also well-educated overall, with most having been educated in their country of origin. Almost a quarter had completed their university education (24% or 17 migrants), while a fifth had attended university for some time (20% or 14 migrants). Together this means that 44% (31 migrants) had some form of university education. The vast majority of the rest had either college or secondary level education, with only 3 migrants having either primary level or no education at all (Figure 4).

Figure 3: Distribution of age among migrants



Source: 70 semi-structured interviews

Figure 4: Education level among migrants

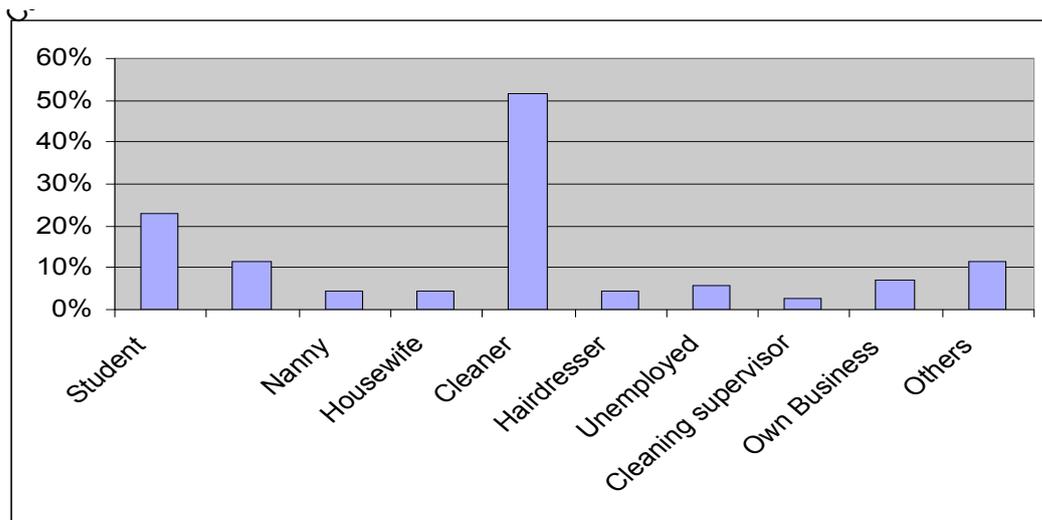


Source: 70 semi-structured interviews

Despite these high education levels, migrants were concentrated in elementary occupations, with over half working in the cleaning sector (51%) in banks, offices, houses or the retail sector. Many had 2 or 3 different jobs, often with different companies. Only 2 of the interviewees were cleaning supervisors. A further 8 (11%) people worked in cafes or restaurants, with 3 people looking after children. 3 were hairdressers, and 5 had their own businesses (usually a restaurant, café or small hairdressing salon). A further 5 worked in a range of different jobs such as newspaper seller, laundry workers, or factory worker. Three women were housewives, while 4 were unemployed and survived on benefits. Finally, 16 (22%) were also studying English as their main occupation, although all the students also worked as well, usually in cleaning or in cafes (Figure 5).⁹

⁹ This 16 is probably an over-estimate because many people said that studying was their main occupation because they had student visas and as a result, were not allowed to work more than 20 hours per week. However, it transpired that many did actually work more than this in order to make ends meet.

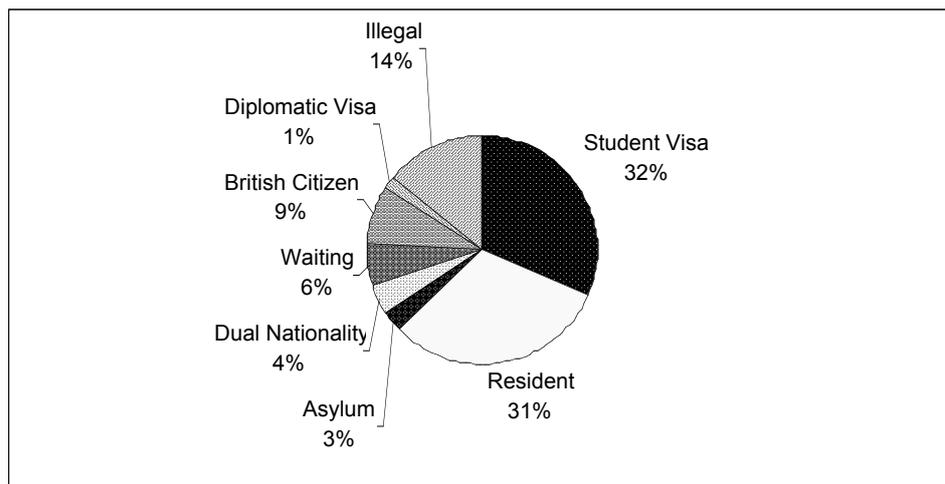
Figure 5: Occupational distribution among migrants



Source: 70 semi-structured interviews

Although the nature of migrants' legal status must be explored with caution because people were unwilling to disclose whether they were undocumented in some cases, the vast majority reported that they were living in the country legally (60), with only 10 reportedly undocumented. 22 people had student visas (31%), with a further 22 stating they had residence acquired either through securing asylum, by marrying someone who was documented, or by having Spanish passports (legally or illegally). Six people had British passports, with a further 4 waiting to hear if they had passed the citizenship test in order to gain citizenship, and a further 2 were refugees. Finally, one person had a diplomatic visa, and 3 had dual nationality (Figure 6). One important pattern to note in relation to status is that the Bolivians were the most likely to be undocumented (6 out of the 10), with 4 Ecuadorians not having papers.

Figure 6: Immigration status of migrants

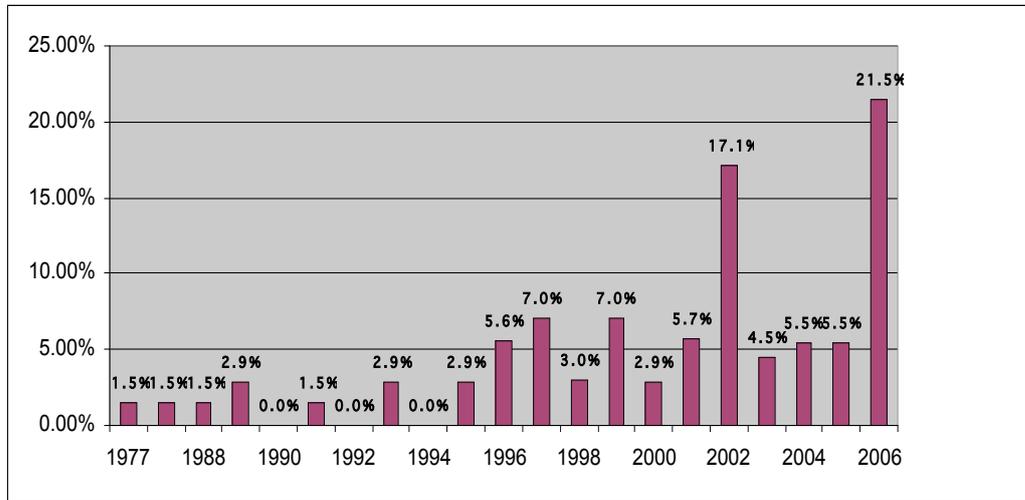


Source: 70 semi-structured interviews

In terms of when the interviewees arrived in the UK, the majority had arrived in the previous 10 years, although one Colombian woman came as early as 1977, and 12 arrived in 1992. However, the majority had arrived since the year 2000, with

one-fifth arriving since 2006 (21.5%); these were mainly students and mainly Bolivians (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Date of arrival among migrants



Source: 70 semi-structured interviews

Finally, Latin Americans lived throughout London although there were distinct concentrations in Lambeth, Stockwell, Camberwell and Brixton in the South, and in Holloway, Finsbury Park and Seven Sisters in the North. More specifically, 37 migrants lived in areas in South London (53%), 20 in North London (29%), 6 in East London (9%), and 5 in West London (7%). Most lived in private rented houses, or most commonly, rooms in rented houses with other Latin Americans, often in overcrowded circumstances (whole families living in 1 room).

D. MAIN FINDINGS

1) THE DYNAMICS OF MIGRATION

Leaving Latin America

Migration to the UK and to London in particular represents an escape from some form of hardship and oppression. This might be economic hardship, lack of opportunities or the need to escape persecution and violence. The vast majority of Latin American migrants in the current research were fleeing or leaving some form of unsatisfactory situation rather than migrating as an 'adventure' or rite of passage, with the exception of some of the students. In most cases, people had migrated because of a combination of interrelated factors in order to meet some unmet needs. There were important differences according to country of origin. Reflecting the ongoing armed conflict in their homeland Colombian migrants were much more likely than Ecuadorians and Bolivians to have left their home country for reasons associated with the civil war. Having said this, some Ecuadorians and Bolivians had left because of political persecution, but these were a minority. Instead, economic factors were more important for them, especially for Bolivians who reported the most acute economic difficulties back home.

More specifically, many Colombians had experienced persecution and threats as a result of the political violence in their country. Most were associated with the political Left such as trade unions, but some had been linked with the armed forces. Sebastian from Palmira, had previously worked as a taxi-driver. Although he wasn't deeply involved with politics, he had distributed some leaflets for the Liberal Party. As a result, he was threatened by paramilitaries (he thinks although he is still not sure). On one occasion he was chased in his taxi which resulted in a crash that wrote off his taxi, while he ended-up in hospital. Although the taxi was insured the company would only pay half the amount one year and half the following. Sebastian lost his livelihood but continued to be threatened. When he received his second payment from the insurance company, he decided to use the money to leave Colombia with his family not only to escape the persecution, but also because he needed to be able to make a living. Sebastian's case was not unusual in reflecting a close interrelationship between the economic and political reasons for migrating among Colombians; often problems linked with political violence undermined peoples' ability to generate an income or make a living (see also Bermudez Torres, 2003; McIlwaine, 2005).

As noted above, however, some Ecuadorians and Bolivians had migrated on grounds of political persecution, although this was much less common and more difficult to convince the Home Office of their case. Eduardo from Ecuador had left, among a range of reasons, because as a former bodyguard of a member of congress who had been murdered, he had been threatened and he felt that his life was also in danger. Manuela, from Bolivia, had been involved in trade union and community politics and especially in protests against privatisation. After being imprisoned without charge for a week, and after receiving no help from anyone in the union or elsewhere and returning to her house to find all her papers stolen, she decided that it was unsafe for her stay in Bolivia: 'there was no justice, I received no help, so I decided to leave, I didn't want to keep on struggling'.

The most common reason for leaving Latin America was the lack of economic opportunities. While the vast majority of people had some form of employment or business in their home countries, these were often precarious or badly paid or involved working extremely long hours. Esperanza, from Colombia, owned and ran

a restaurant in her home town. Although she admitted that economically she was better off than most people in that she earned the equivalent of 3 minimum wages, she was exhausted by the work: 'I lived so stressed out because I was alone and in order to earn these 3 minimum wages, I worked Sunday to Sunday for 6 years and in this time I only had 3 days off ... my decision was to look for better opportunities in my life'. However, the case of Esperanza also highlights the difficulties in disentangling the reasons for migration. Her husband had been killed in the armed conflict and she was left with sole charge of her daughter who was studying at college and who wanted to become a doctor. Esperanza knew that she wouldn't be able to pay university fees from the restaurant: 'Since she as a little girl, she wanted to study medicine, and I was wracking my brains trying to think how I would pay for it'. So she realised that she would have to migrate abroad, leaving her daughter behind to study.

Some had more specific economic problems, such as bankruptcy or the need to repay debts. In the case of Libia from Ecuador, she migrated for both reasons; she had a small shop in Quito which had been broken into and all her merchandise stolen. She was left bankrupt and indebted to her suppliers, and so, in her words, 'I had to travel because we couldn't pay back our debts from the shop ... the economic situation in our countries has always been bad, there were no sources of work in Quito'. Similarly, Santiago, also from Quito, said that he had never had fixed work because of the difficult economic situation: 'the situation in our country was really hard, there was no work ... there priority is given to young people in jobs'. One of the many reasons why Tomas left Colombia was also because of the lack of economic opportunities. He talked about how people only worked in order to subsist, and that they often had to do lots of small jobs to survive; again, like Santiago, he noted that once someone was over 30 years of age, it was impossible to get work.

Even when people migrated for personal reasons, economic factors usually emerged as influencing movement in some way. Alba, from Bolivia, left with her 2 children because her husband had moved to London 2 years previously (he had British nationality through a paternal grandfather). He said that he missed them and that they should come to be with him. In London, Alba found herself in very precarious circumstances living with her husband and children in one room in a hotel, with her tourist visa having run out. Despite her problems, she felt she couldn't return to Bolivia. Among many reasons, she said that the country was in a terrible state economically and politically: 'the situation is bad, it's terrible, so bad that my sister is leaving for Argentina to live, she has sold her house, her business.' Interestingly, she also noted that there was increasing racism against *mestizo* people from Santa Cruz (like herself) since Evo Morales, of indigenous origin, became president. She said that they were being driven out of the country by indigenous people. Other claims of racism were made by Carla, from Ambato in Ecuador (from the larger sample); she was of black descent and she said that one of the reasons she left was because of the terrible insults and discrimination she suffered as a result of being black.

As with the case of Alba, many people left because of a range of different family reasons, either to join family who had migrated before them, or because of family problems in their home countries. Lida from Ecuador left because her father died (her mother had passed away when she was young) leaving her alone and very lonely: 'My father died and after that it was very difficult for me, the loneliness, the sadness, and my sisters were married, I was the only one left single. For me there was no meaning to my life, and I thought that the best way to recuperate

was to leave'. Fernanda from Bolivia had an equally sad story in that she had a miscarriage, after which her boyfriend left her; the only way for her to deal with her grief was to leave the country.

The attraction of the UK and London

While escape from hardship, persecution or problems was fundamental in the process of migration, Latin Americans were also attracted to the UK and to London. Among those claiming asylum in particular, people reported that the UK had a global reputation as a place where human rights are protected and where the rule of law is maintained. Manuela from Bolivia said: 'I had read that London was a place where they respected human rights and where they followed the law'. In turn, many reported that it was easier to claim asylum in the UK than in other countries, as Edilma from Colombia noted: 'it was the country where it was easiest to claim asylum. There were more rights for us because we had a child'. Part of this for those fleeing violence was that London had a reputation for being safe and secure. Tomas, from Colombia, for instance noted:

'I like the calmness and security of life here. Like everywhere, there is delinquency, but not like I have seen. If you go out in the street, there's a 90% chance that you will get home safely, in contrast, in Colombia if you go into the street, there's a 90% chance that you will be attacked'.

However, the attraction of London as a place of refuge and safety was also closely bound-up with the existence of other relatives who had settled before them. The majority of people who had claimed asylum had previous contacts, mainly family members, already living here. Edilma, from Colombia, for example, also had her sister living here, while Eduardo, from Ecuador, had his ex-wife and son living here. Aside from those claiming asylum, the vast majority of migrants had some form of contact in the country before they arrived, however distant in some cases. As in the case of Alba from Bolivia, others came to join close family members, usually women coming to join their husbands. Helena, from Bolivia, came a year after her husband together with her son and daughter. Her husband had first migrated to London as an employee of the Bolivian embassy. Yet, he soon realised that he wasn't being paid very well so he returned to La Paz. However, he wasn't able to find any permanent work, so he decided to return to London to work and to learn English. Having said this, some people arrived completely alone. Manuela arrived at Heathrow airport in London from Bolivia without any contacts with her children and claimed asylum at the airport. In these cases, people were invariably sent to live in hotels while their asylum case was being processed. The other situation where people are more likely to arrive alone is when they migrated as students with the sole purpose of studying.

Indeed, education was another major factor attracting people to the UK and to London. The need to speak English in order to get on in life has certainly permeated the consciousness of Latin Americans. While some young people came to London specifically to learn English as part of their university studies (many universities require proficiency in English as a pre-requisite for attaining a degree), others came later in life as a way of potentially improving their life chances. The UK was often preferred over the US as a place to study English, first, because 'pure English' was spoken, and second, because it was more difficult to obtain a visa for the US, especially after 9/11 (see below).

However, the most common reason for choosing the UK was the perception of abundant economic opportunities available. People had heard that it was easy to find work, and that it was possible to work without being able to speak much

English (i.e. in the cleaning sector - see below). Linked with availability of opportunities was the promise of high wages. As Tomas from Colombia noted: 'Here in London money is really strong compared with the peso, and you work like a madman here'. The case of Esperanza outlined above was also influenced by the promise of earning more money. Her brother told her before she migrated: 'here you will earn more and probably have to work less'.

The other place that was also cited as a potential destination among migrants was Spain, reflecting the large-scale migration of Latin Americans there in recent years, and especially of Colombians and Ecuadorians (Bermúdez Torres, 2007; Catarino y Oso, 2000; Pellegrino, 2004). However, many migrants reported that they chose the UK over Spain first, because there was perceived to be less racism against Latin Americans in London, second, because there was thought to be better economic opportunities in London compared with Spanish cities such as Madrid and Barcelona, and third, because Spanish rather than English was spoken and the education system was deemed to be inferior to the UK. Clarena from Colombia noted that compared to Spain: 'there are more opportunities to study here, because of the English, because English is really important for everyone, for the children. If you have children, you have to think in their future and English is really important for them'. Some also lived in Spain before moving to the UK, but were often attracted to London because of the availability of jobs. Mario [from the larger sample], a Bolivian, lived in Spain for 3 years:

'But it's not the paradise that people say. There's no work there, most people work in agriculture, you have to harvest and you have to be really strong, also when it rains there's no work. You can't work in cleaning like here in London. Not everyone has the patience to look after the elderly. There's some work in construction, but you need papers and in my case, I didn't have them'.

The process of entering the UK

Latin American migrants entered the UK by various routes, with some differences according to nationality. People often went to great lengths to get in, in some cases risking their lives and their livelihoods - many had to sell their homes and borrow money in order to pay for the tickets.

As noted earlier, Colombians were the most likely to claim asylum, with Bolivians the least likely (in the study as a whole only 1 Bolivian had claimed asylum). Furthermore, Bolivians are the only nationality among the three groups that still do not require a visa before entering the country. Among those who had migrated in the 1990s, many had claimed asylum after being in the UK for some time. For instance, some had arrived on a tourist visa to start with and then made an asylum claim once they realised that it was possible. Among more recent migrants, asylum was claimed at the airport, resulting in them being sent to a detention centre or to a hotel as in the case of Manuela, from Bolivia, who lived for a year and a half in the hotel in Holloway Road where she was sent straight from Heathrow. Especially common was entering on a student visa or converting a tourist visa to a student visa in order to stay in the country. Some Bolivians also noted cases of travel agencies in their homeland promoting the UK as a destination where it was possible to get work. Manuela reported that travel agencies were offering packages to people to migrate to the UK to work. However, this cost millions, with people having to work for at least two years in London to pay off their debts. Yet, people still kept coming, saying that the debt was an investment in their future.

Another common method of entering the UK was via Spain, illegally and legally. In some cases, people used people traffickers either based in their home countries or in Spain, who sold them false Spanish documents. Edilma recalled how she had her visa application for the UK turned down in Colombia, so she and her husband recruited the help of a trafficker in Colombia: 'A man helped us, it turned out to be really expensive, but it was quick, about a month. We paid the money, and all innocent but very anxious, he brought us. He brought us with other names via Spain'. Legal migration of Latin Americans from Spain is now becoming more common because of the increasing number of people with legal documents obtained through the various amnesties there. Some also had experience of entering in a clandestine way. Clara from Colombia recounted how, while she managed to buy false papers in Spain and to enter the UK with these, her boyfriend could not. He bought a false passport in Spain and went to the airport where he was asked to wait by immigration. He panicked and fled the airport. After 2 months in Spain with no money, he ended-up being smuggled into the UK hidden in the back of a lorry: 'he was smuggled in. He said it was horrible, he could hear the police sniffer dogs outside the lorry. When he got here he cried from happiness and from nerves'.

Even when people had claimed asylum, the process was not straightforward. The vast majority of people had to wait a minimum of a year and a half to have their cases heard, with many waiting as long as 8 years. Many lived in hotels during their wait, often in a state of high anxiety. Clarena from Colombia remembered how they had lived in a hotel for 9 months having been sent there directly from Heathrow. She found it very difficult: 'it was really hard as there were people from different countries with lots of children. People arrived from everywhere and the hygiene was very difficult, I had to clean the bathrooms all the time, and the kitchen, it was really uncomfortable'. Similarly, Manuela also remembered living in a hotel: 'it was very stressful ... it was dangerous to enter and leave ... it was hard. The letters were really traumatic, saying that we couldn't move, that we couldn't work.' Indeed, people reported how frustrating it was not being able to work while waiting for asylum claims to be processed. Edgar from Colombia stated:

'I was 30 years old when I arrived ... I was full of life with nothing to do, it's not right, you have to work while you are able. I don't agree with asking for benefits and that you are kept like that, although they are a great help to people, you have to work, you have to give people dignity. It puts people in a totally different situation not to be working'.

2) IMMIGRATION STATUS

Not surprisingly, immigration status is one of the most important issues of life and survival for Latin Americans in London. For those who had 'papers' and for those who didn't, immigration status dominated their lives in a host of different ways. Although only 10 people in the total sample were officially undocumented, others were in various stages of documentation, or what is called 'semi-compliance' and/or knew lots of people who were undocumented. In addition, many people had experienced living without papers or waiting to hear about asylum claims and thinking they could be deported at any time. Clarena, from Colombia noted: 'The Latin community here has lots of problems. Most Latinos that I know are illegal'. Box 1 highlights how, together with language (English), status is one the main problems affecting the community. As one of the participants in this focus group reported: 'legal status affects everything, the work you get, access to services and your state of mind' (see below).

Box 1: Prioritisation of problems facing the Latin American community (discussed by a group of 2 male and 4 female adults aged between 18 and 44 of Colombian, Brazilian, Bolivian, Peruvian and Ecuadorian origin)

Language = 1 (joint)
Status = 1 (joint)
Lack of health services
Lack of decent work
Lack of affordable, quality housing
Mental health problems – stress and depression
Pressure from a consumer society

Although many of those interviewed had obtained legal status, most of the Carila sample actually had their asylum cases rejected. However, all of them were then able to get their papers through the Family Amnesty programme where those who had at least dependent child in the UK and had claimed asylum before 2 October 2002 were eligible to apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain.¹⁰ This gave them full rights to remain in the UK and to work.

For those who were undocumented, life was extremely difficult. Clara, whose boyfriend was smuggled into the country and who remained undocumented complained: 'It's really sad, we haven't robbed anyone, we haven't killed anyone and yet we have to do things badly. I'm not saying we would kill to be honest, but we like to do things well'. People live in a state of permanent anxiety about being deported that affects other aspects of their lives. Again, Clarena noted: they [the undocumented] live in constant fear, they work and only wait to be deported. Because of this, they work without stopping so that when they are deported they have something'. Alba from Bolivia who was undocumented reiterated the effect of this stress on her mental health as well as her lack of access to health services: 'I am ill from nerves, I'm very stressed, everything gets to me, and unfortunately I can't go to the doctor because I'm illegal ... I'm so scared that I'll be caught and arrested and deported'.

¹⁰ For a full outline of the conditions of this 'concession' which by November 2005 had benefitted 16,870 families in the UK see <http://www.ncadc.org.uk/resources/familyamnesty.html>

3) SETTLING IN LONDON: CHANGING CULTURES, CLASHING CULTURES

Immigration status has a major bearing on the way in which people are able to settle in London. Obviously, if people have the legal right to live in the UK, then their settlement process will be much easier than those who are illegal or who are waiting to hear about asylum claims that might be rejected. However, moving from Latin America to Europe and to the UK in particular is often a major shock for people to cope with. Many people reported feeling completely disorientated in London when they first arrived.

The words of Edgar from Colombia who arrived in 1997 as a political refugee eloquently reflect the feelings of such disorientation:

‘It’s like being born again, it’s to begin again, you don’t know the language, the language is the most difficult, no, it is the system that is totally different, the addresses are totally different. The truth is that when you come here you return to being born, it’s like a small child that you have to tell everything to, do this, do that. But eventually you learn and every day you realise that this is a very organised country that provides a lot of opportunities and you can learn a lot, a lot, a lot’.

Many found settling difficult because their perceptions of London were very different from the reality they found on arrival. Liliana, a Bolivian (from the larger sample) said: ‘In our country you see people who live abroad but no-one really knows what happens outside the country or realise that people create fantasies’. Edilma from Colombia also noted: ‘People say that they work in a bank but they don’t say doing what [i.e. cleaning]’. The issue of culture change emerged as an important theme from the focus group discussions, and often in a more negative light. One of the groups of 3 women and 3 men aged between 29 and 47 and of Colombian, Ecuadorian, Bolivian and Peruvian origin, identified the changes in family, music, food, the rhythm of life, customs and housing as being the main areas of change. They said: ‘Here everything is really fast, there’s no time for anything, you get home at night and you haven’t done anything but you’re tired’. In terms of housing: ‘housing is a problem and a change. Here, you have to share very small spaces and with people from other countries. This is something that we have never done in our own country’. Also, ‘the dining room is also important, it’s the place where you can talk about what you want. Here there’s no dining room, there’s not even a space where you can eat together’. Another group also identified food, language, climate (the cold and rain was a problem for almost everyone), loneliness, exploitation and discrimination as the major elements of cultural change that were difficult to adapt to (Box 2).

Box 2: Dimensions of culture change (by a group of 2 male and 4 female adults aged between 18 and 44, of Colombian, Ecuadorian, Bolivian and Brazilian origin)

Nutrition	_ linked with poor health _ linked with depression
Language problems	
Difficulties in adapting to climate	_ linked with poor health
Loneliness	_ linked with poor health
Exploitation	_ mainly in the workplace
Discrimination	_ mainly by the Latin community _ much less by British society

Again, the issue of mental health was identified as being extremely important. Loneliness was linked with depression, psychological problems and general levels of ill-health. Also, related with the issue of illegality, people complained about the stress of waiting to hear about their status. A Peruvian woman in one of the focus groups noted: 'there are a lot of people here who are sick, but once they get their papers or they return home, they get better'. Also extremely significant was the migrants said that cultural change varied according to gender. Although both women and men experienced problems with anxiety, stress and pressure associated with legal status and adapting to a new culture, many also felt that it was easier for women to adapt than men. This was primarily related to the fact that women had access to jobs in London which they didn't necessarily have in their home countries, and that often it was easier for them to find work. Women also felt that they had more freedom in London which men often found very difficult to accept. Overall, it was felt that men experienced a decline in their status more than women (see below) (see Box 3).

Box 3: The effects of changes in culture through migration for women and men (by a group of 2 male and 4 female adults aged between 18 and 44, of Colombian, Ecuadorian, Bolivian and Brazilian origin)

Effects of change in culture for women (legal)

- Easier for women to find work
- Women with children have more access to services (health and education)
- Women have more job opportunities (cleaning, working in houses)
- Women have more liberty
- But negative effects for professional women in particular – end up working in cleaning.
- Depression

Effects of change in culture for men (legal)

- Difficult for men to get jobs
- Change in the level and status of their lives
- Difficult to accept changes in women (linked with freedom)
- Some humiliation in having to do cleaning jobs
- Some opening-up of ideas about roles for men in the home

4) MAKING A LIVING IN LONDON

As well as having to cope with cultural changes in terms of the way of life, food, climate and changing gender relations, surviving in London centred around generating some form of income. As has been identified in other studies (Bermudez-Torres, 2003; Guarnizo, 2006; Lagnado, 2004; McIlwaine, 2005; Sveinsson, 2007), and above, Latin Americans are heavily concentrated in the cleaning or caring sector. In the Carila sample, of the 13 who worked, 12 were working in the cleaning sector in some form, either full-time or part-time cleaning of offices, cleaning houses, as an au pair or nanny, or in a laundry. Only one person worked outside the sector as a cashier in a supermarket. Even if people were not currently working in cleaning, everyone had some experience of the cleaning sector. Most cleaners worked for large, often multinational cleaning companies who worked on a sub-contracted basis (see also Lagnado, 2004). Latin Americans worked in all sorts of offices such as large banks in the City, government offices, such as the Department of Trade and Industry, in shopping centres, schools, department stores and so on.

This often contrasted with people's previous jobs in their home countries. Several were professionals, having worked as an engineer and an accountant, while others owned their own businesses (such as a book shop or a restaurant), or were managers of businesses (such as running a clothes shop). Only one person had previously worked in domestic service - Fernanda from Bolivia. It also reflected a high level of de-skilling in relation to people's education levels in that all the Carila sample had attained secondary education as a minimum, with 4 having some participation in a university degrees, and the others having attended higher education college. The main reason for this was lack of language skills in terms of speaking English and the fact that non-EU qualifications are rarely recognised. Therefore, as working in the cleaning sector or in cafés and restaurants usually does not require much English, it is perhaps not surprising that Latin Americans ended-up working there.

This is further facilitated by the use of ethnic networks to access jobs. Everyone in the Carila sample and the larger sample secured their jobs through friends and contacts rather than advertisements or job centres. Sebastian got his current job in a laundry through an old friend from Colombia: 'A friend of mine worked there first, he is from the same city where I come from, he even lived in the same *barrio* ... when I told him I didn't like my job in the coffee shop, he said don't worry brother, if you like I'll ask my boss if you can work with me, and so I'm there today'. While most reported that they found jobs fairly easily, many said that it was becoming more difficult over time, especially since employers were being stricter with the papers that are now required (i.e. all originals etc.). Others also complained about competition from other nationalities and especially from Poland and other Eastern European countries. Tomas, a Colombian, recounted how he got his current cleaning job 6 years ago at a time when there were no Eastern Europeans and it was much easier to find work. He said that in the past there were mostly Latins working with him, yet now it is mostly Poles and Slovaks. This squeeze on the labour market meant that people were using unorthodox methods to access jobs. Carla, a cleaning supervisor (from the larger sample) reported that people were beginning to sell their jobs (for £50). This was especially common when someone was returning to their country for a while and wanted to keep their job open while they were away.

Access was even more of an issue for those who were undocumented. In these cases, it was reported how people bought, borrowed and even rented papers in order to be able to work. Often these types of papers were false; an undocumented Bolivian woman told how she borrowing false documents from another woman with whom she shared a house (who was herself a cleaning supervisor). Also for undocumented migrants, it was often only possible to get only a few hours work; Tomas noted that in the past people came from Colombia with no papers, 'becoming indebted in the process owing 15 or 20 million *pesos*, but they always got work. Now they only get 2 hours'.

An important characteristic of cleaning jobs is that most are part-time, working for a few hours at a time. Therefore people had to '*madrugar*' (get up early) in order to work from 4-7am or 5-7am in one job, and then to work again in the evening after businesses closed, often 8-10pm or 7-11pm depending on shift patterns. While most had 2-3 jobs, others had 4-5 and worked extremely long hours (up 16 and 20 in some cases). As a result, many reported being exhausted by their work. An Ecuadorian, Ricardo (from the larger sample) noted: 'Sincerely, I am dead with work, I am really tired, I sleep only 4 hours a day'. Working unsociable hours was also difficult, especially for women, who complained of having to travel around London in the dark when there are a lot of drunks and delinquents in the street. At the same time, it was often the only way that some women could work because of childcare responsibilities. With cleaning, it was often possible to work very early and very late and still take the children to school and collect them again.

Wage levels were generally low. While some reported not earning the minimum wage (£5.35 per hour at the time of study), these were mainly those who were undocumented and working illegally. Average wage levels were £6 per hour, yet this is much less than the Living Wage for London (£7.20) which calculates how much it costs to actually live in the city.¹¹ The highest hourly wages were in private house cleaning that only women reported doing. Here, it was possible to earn between £6 and £10 per hour. Yet there was also competition from Eastern Europeans in this sector which reportedly depressed wages. Edilma from Colombia complained that Latin Americans asked for between £6 and £8 per hour, yet Polish and other Eastern Europeans would clean for £3-50 - £4 per hour.

Exploitation was also widespread in the cleaning sector. Most common and incredibly frequent was people not being paid for the work they had done. This happened either when people worked on probation without a contract, and after the probationary period they were dismissed without pay, or when people were undocumented or didn't have the right to work, and so were dismissed without pay in the knowledge that there would be no legal comeback. Manuela from Bolivia recalled a job she had at a university: 'after working there 2 months of going out in the early morning they asked me for my work permit and my bank account, I only had a National Insurance number, they got me like that. I cried with anger. I made allegations, but I got tired and they won'. People also complained about being exploited because they didn't speak English. Sara, from Colombia recounted a previous job she had at McDonalds:

'In McDonalds, I was treated really badly, and I didn't speak English very well and they put me on the till. The customers treated me badly and I gave the wrong orders. Then they sent me to clean the bathrooms and to collect rubbish in the streets around the block. They made me do everything, they

¹¹ <http://www.livingwage.org.uk/campaign.html>

take advantage of people's needs and make people do everything. They paid me £5 per hour and in 1 year, I didn't receive a rise'.

Frequently, people complained about exploitation at the hands of their own people. Edilma said that she knew a Colombian supervisor who told her manager that she contracted 15 people, but she only employed 10 (Latin Americans). She kept the extra money and made the 10 employees work harder.

Reflecting Sara's comments, lack of respect in the workplace was also a major problem for working migrants. People complained that they were ignored in offices. Tomas said that in the offices where he cleaned no-one even looked his way: 'When I go into the smoking room and they see that I'm going to clean "all their sh*t", they don't even move so that I can clean'. Alvaro, a Bolivian from the large sample reiterated this:

'In these countries, rich people think that someone who cleans is the worst, the lowest because we deal with dirt. Some might speak to you in the office but outside they don't know you. We Latins always want to say hello to people when we see them, but they don't do it because we are cleaners'.

Perhaps not surprisingly in light of these comments, people try to validate the jobs that they are doing, especially if they have never been accustomed to this type of work (which is the majority). Men and women alike said that they had never cleaned in their life, and so it was really hard for them to do cleaning jobs in London. Edgar from Colombia stated:

'Unfortunately, because I didn't know the language, I had to clean, this was really hard. In my life, I had never done cleaning, but to arrive and to have to dust, to wipe, to brush-up, it affects your self-esteem, you feel really, really bad, bad because you come with the idea of improving your life ... not that the work is dishonourable, it's fine, it's a job, but the truth is, it's very difficult when you have a certain status in life, a good standard of living, and having to clean is very difficult'.

Interestingly, men seemed to be more affected by dealing with this decline in status and having to clean than women, even those who admitted to never having cleaned before. Isabel said that she would be ashamed to do such a job in Colombia, but here, she said it was normal. In her country, people who cleaned were the poorest in society, but in London, she said she didn't mind, unlike others who constantly complained about it. Thus, women tended to be much more pragmatic about cleaning, and tended to value it more as a job. Helena from Bolivia, formerly a hairdresser in La Paz, enjoyed her work cleaning in houses and in offices, mainly because it was flexible so that she could combine it with childcare and because it made her feel valued:

'Here, I feel useful, people value what I do, they say I work well, I clean well, and I feel good when they say this. My husband is never going to tell me that the house looks nice, that I cleaned well, that I ironed well, never. Therefore, I feel good when I clean for others and they value my work'.

These differences are obviously rooted in the nature of traditional gender roles where men are not accustomed to cleaning, as well as the fact that women often find that working gives them freedom and a purpose (see below).

While some men did not mind cleaning, most found ways of justifying the fact that they found it humiliating. Everyone said that it was what all Latins did, some said that if they thought about their savings it made it OK, or that it had made them grow-up as a person. One man, Dario from Bolivia (from the larger sample) made a

joke of cleaning: 'They say that the first thing Latins find here is an English woman, that she has a name, the same for everyone, she is called Hoover, it's the first woman that you have and you will never separate from her. She will always be behind you'.

Generally, there was little occupational mobility within cleaning. However, there was some movement in that people often mentioned having started their cleaning career washing dishes in a café or a restaurant, and then moving on to cleaning offices. In some cases, people then became cleaning supervisors (although several complained that the extra money wasn't worth the additional responsibility), but this also required people to have a fairly good grasp of English. In a rare case, Clara spoke of her husband's occupational mobility; he began work in a restaurant washing dishes, then he became a chef's assistant, then he began to work with the Jewish community in a frozen food company as a warehouse operative. He then began to work as a driver, and now he works in the office as a secretary.

In a few cases, people had started their own small cleaning business. José, for example, had been living in London for 9 years. Three years ago he set-up a small window-cleaning and carpet-cleaning business with another Colombian friend, with savings he had from his office cleaning. They did mainly domestic work, but also had a few contracts as well. The other main area of business development was establishing small shops to serve the Latin community, especially hairdressers, or setting up cafes or small restaurants. For example, Edilma, from Colombia, had just set-up a small 'remittance shop' (*tienda de giros*) in a well-known Latin American market with another Colombian woman. She was just starting out and had kept on her part-time cleaning job for 2 hours in the morning.

More common entrepreneurial pursuits were people who had extra jobs on the side. This included things like painting and decorating, refereeing football matches, dress-making, singing at social events, running small food stalls at events, giving manicures from home and so on. Many felt that they had to do these things in order to survive in London, especially because of the extremely high rents and cost of living (that few had anticipated before they migrated). Also important is that Colombians tended to be more likely to establish businesses than other nationalities, with Bolivians the least likely. This is partly evidenced by the fact that in Seven Sisters market, 40-45 of the total 60 units are rented by Colombians. One of the reasons for this greater business activity is that Colombians are the most settled population and the Bolivians the least. Thus, Colombians are more likely to have accumulated savings or know how to access credit. Colombians were also the least likely to say that they were going to return home and so were more likely to want to find a more sustainable and satisfying way of making a living compared with cleaning. This said, an Ecuadorian woman also said that this made Colombians more materialistic and more likely to live for today and spend a lot of money on clothes and having a good time.

One final way that a small minority of migrants was able to survive was through access to state benefits. This applied only to those who had full refugee and citizenship rights. Indeed, of the Carila sample, only 4 people depended on benefits, and this included someone who was very ill and thus disabled and a man who was a single-parent. Rather than depend fully on benefits, those who were eligible were more likely to receive specific benefits such as Child Benefit, Housing Benefit, and Working Tax Credit that supplemented low incomes. Indeed, this was an area where Carila had been invaluable as an institution in helping people become aware of their rights in terms of accessing certain types of state

assistance. Overall, people were keen to stress that they didn't want to depend on the government, and that there was greater dignity in working. It was common for people to renounce their benefits once they had settled. Tomas felt that he was justified in claiming some benefits in order to survive while he was waiting for his asylum claim to be processed but that then people had to work, to pay taxes to pay back these benefits. Esperanza from Colombia also said that she was ashamed to claim benefits, and that it was hard to live off them.

Thus, making a living is not easy for Latin American migrants regardless of the skill levels they arrive with. Although many migrants are initially attracted to London because of economic opportunities, the vast majority of people ended-up working in the cleaning sector at some point in their work trajectory. Generally speaking, those most recently arrived were most concentrated in cleaning. In turn, this tended to correlate with nationality. For instance, of the 20 Bolivians in the total sample, 12 were cleaners, 1 was a window-cleaner, 1 a nanny, 1 a chef, 1 a hairdresser, 1 making food to sell and 1 waitress; 2 women were housewives because they had young children (see also Sveinsson, 2007). Those who had broken out of cleaning had arrived in London earlier, usually before 2000. While patterns among the 22 Ecuadorians were not that different, there was a little more diversity; 12 worked as cleaners, 2 in catering, 1 was a window cleaner, 1 a hairdresser, 1 a nanny, 1 was a cashier in a supermarket, with 3 unemployed and 1 running a small restaurant.¹² Also, Ecuadorians were more likely to have more than one different job such as cleaner and catering assistant. As with Bolivians, those who had diversified had lived in London longer; the woman who had the small restaurant first arrived in 1995. Thus, Colombian migrants were the most diversified in terms of the occupations, despite a continued concentration in cleaning, caring and catering; 8 worked as cleaners (as their main job), 5 in a café or catering, 1 in a laundry, 1 as a nanny, 1 as a paper distributor, 1 in a factory, 1 ran a religious centre, 2 were full-time students, 2 were housewives, 2 were unemployed and 4 owned their own business (see also Guarnizo, 2006). This also included a significant proportion of students who worked and studied at the same time. It also under-estimated cleaning because a lot of people claimed catering or café work as their main job but also worked between 2 and 4 hours a day as cleaners. Again, those with their own businesses had been in London for a long time, all but one in the late 1980s.

¹² The main job is counted here.

5) SOCIAL NETWORKS AND SOCIAL CAPITAL

Social networks and social capital (the latter referring collectively to values and norms revolving around trust and co-operation, social networks, and social organisations) have long been known to be crucial within migrant communities both in source and destination countries (Landolt, 2001; Levitt, 2001; Menjivar, 2000; Portes 2003 on Latin Americans in the US). Latin Americans in the UK are no exception. However, it is important to deconstruct the types and nature of these networks as people's perceptions of them and their reality are often contradictory.

The first type of social capital generated among Latin Americans are family and friendship networks that facilitate migration. As noted above, these are extremely important in facilitating migration in the first place with the vast majority of people having family members or friends in the UK before they move (with most having family - usually brothers, sisters or cousins). Indeed, only a small minority knew no one before they arrived in London, all of who had to flee their country because of political problems and subsequently claimed asylum. As a general rule, contacts provided information for migrants before they left their country (and not always entirely accurate - see earlier). Then, these networks provided people with initial lodging, with many allowing friends and family to stay with them until they found their own place.

Another critically important form of social capital was assistance in finding jobs. As noted above, all the Latin Americans in the samples recounted how they obtained their jobs through friends and contacts all of whom were other Latin Americans. Especially important were Latin American cleaning supervisors who invariably employed other compatriots (see also Datta et al., 2007a). However, this form of assistance was expected, and didn't prevent people from complaining about lack of support. Alba, Bolivian, noted how the manager of the hotel where she lived, who was Colombian, had helped her out through giving her small sewing jobs knowing that she was looking for work. Yet, her analysis, like many, was contradictory:

'he tried to help me, therefore the Latin people in this way have helped me a lot, but with other Latins, I couldn't say because I don't relate to them ... in this way us Latins are very united ... but others can also take advantage, that's how they are'.

Related to this are friendship networks in London. It was notable that people developed their friendships only among other Latin Americans, and especially within their own nationality groups. Few had any British or indeed any non-Spanish speaking friends. People also commented on the very small size of their friendship networks even among their own people. Indeed, one of the most common replies when people were asked about their friends was '*yo no soy muy amiguer/o*' (I'm not a very friendly person). It was common for people to say they had only 2, 3 or 4 friends whom they trusted and saw on a regular basis; beyond that, people were very wary about extending their friendships. Helena from Bolivia reflected the broad pattern: 'I'm not very friendly. I don't trust people, to tell them things ... I can't make friends very easily, for me it's difficult, I always have friends, but friends, friends, close friends, maybe 1 or 2'.

The reason for this lay in a general lack of trust within the Latin American community (trust is a major dimension of social networks and a key component of social capital). People repeatedly complained about the envy (*envidia*) among Latin American migrants, reportedly rooted in the fear that some people would

progress further than others in their jobs, in terms of how much they earned, or in securing legal status. Sebastian, from Colombia, noted: 'above all we suffer from envy and we aren't able to see another person get ahead because we always want to think badly of them. I don't think like this, but I've noted it in others, among Latin Americans'. Similarly, Tomas, Colombian, said that this undermined a sense of union within the community: 'there's no union, there's a tremendous amount of envy'. He went on to say that this was linked with the fear of undocumented people being denounced to the authorities: 'If you realise that someone is undocumented, and if someone is really bad in their heart, they will report them, this is because apparently the government here pays people to report those who are undocumented'.

People also complained that this mistrust was associated with people being 'two-faced', especially in the workplace and in relation to money. Isabel stated that the Latin community was just 'envy and gossip' saying that people only helped each other when it suited them:

'They help when there is a new immigration law or something, and in jobs they help you get them as well, but when it comes to money, everyone looks after themselves. Those with the advantage over others will take it. It's like in the jobs, I've seen among Colombians that they will take money from one another. Some help you get jobs while others don't'.

Eduardo, Ecuadorian also said: 'among Latins there is sometimes competition, division, there is no Latin humanity. Often supervisors take advantage of their employees because they are illegal even though they are their compatriots. Latins should be more united, but here, they just talk badly of one another'. As a result, people are very secretive. Clara said:

'I tell you, here, your worst enemy is the same Colombian. Don't talk to anyone, don't tell anyone about your situation, if you do, you'll be reported. I had my papers but it was a taboo to tell anyone they had arrived. Everyone comes here in the same way, and it's ridiculous that no-one talks about it, it's a world of lies'.

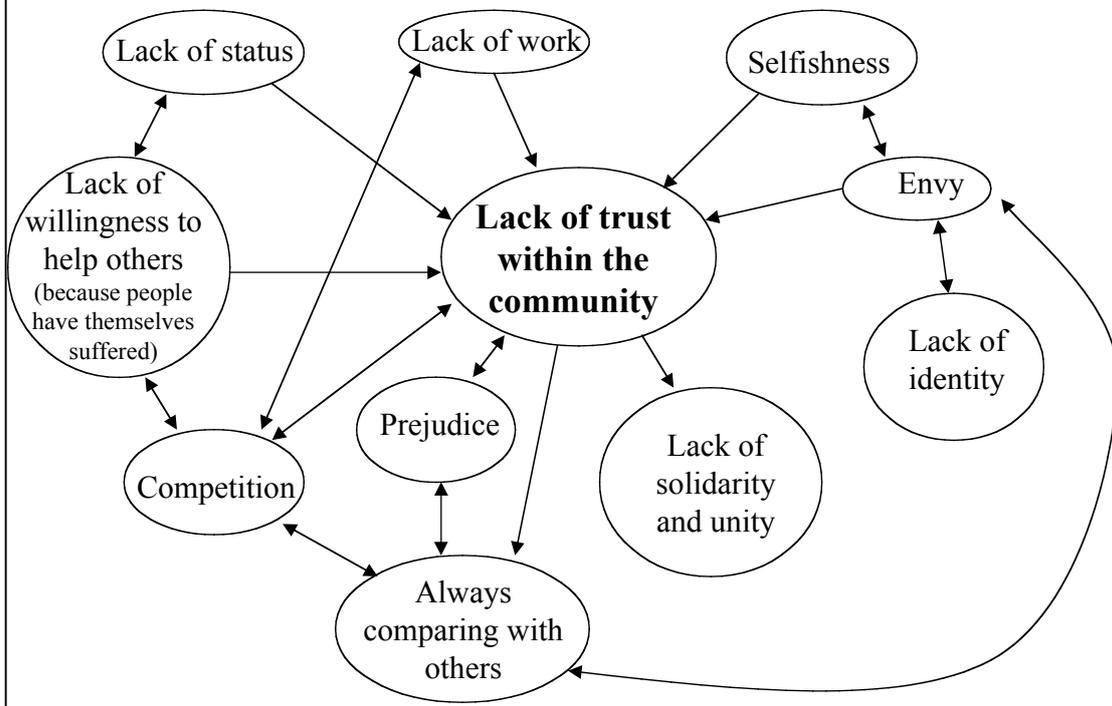
Certain places were also associated with gossip and fear. Somewhat ironically, places such as the Elephant and Castle (Elefan) and Seven Sisters market (El Pueblito Paisa) where the main Latin American shops, cafes and remittances agencies were located, were also identified as places full of gossip and where it was thought that people were more likely to be caught by the immigration services. Isabel said:

'Seven Sisters is a place where you can't go, it's tremendous, it's all about making gossip. They talk about who came the week before with such and such a woman ... they say, this young guy takes drugs, this other one is illegal. That's what Colombian do there'.¹³

Indeed, while all Latin American migrants admitted that they had been to places like Elephant and Castle shopping centre and Seven Sisters, most said that they didn't spend much time there. They went only to send remittances or packages, or to buy Latin products that they couldn't get elsewhere.

¹³ Gutiérrez (2007) notes that Seven Sisters is also known as 'Seven Chismes' (Seven Gossips).

Figure 7: A causal flow diagram of the lack of trust within the community (by a group of 5 women and 2 men aged between 24 and 67 of Peruvian, Ecuadorian, Colombian and Chilean origin)



Many of these sentiments are reflected in Figure 7 that was drawn in one of the focus groups discussions. Also significant in the notion that because people themselves have suffered they don't want others to. This also suggests that this lack of trust is peculiar to the migrant experience rather than to something related to national identities. This is further reinforced when compared with how many people described their lives in their home countries before migrating - they stressed that, despite the economic or political problems, they were very close to their families, that they had a lot of friends and their lives were based on human interaction, especially on going out with friends, going to parties and so on.

There were also interesting differences among the nationality groups. Generally, Colombians were thought to be the most united in London, although this perception was often made on the part of other Latin Americans. Libia, an Ecuadorian said:

'I think that the Colombian people are more united ... for us in general there is selfishness which sometimes also includes getting jobs. For example, when you try and help someone, people won't collaborate, the Ecuadorian doesn't help much'.

However, Colombians themselves saw other nationalities as more united. For instance, Edilma who was Colombian said 'there is a lot of envy, they [Colombians] don't help each other, Ecuadorians are more united'. Colombians in particular, suffered from stereotyping linked with drugs; they repeatedly complained about others making comments about Pablo Escobar, drugs and so on. Although non-Latins were more likely to make these jibes, Colombians also did this among themselves. Esperanza said that 'such is the level of envy among Colombians, that if you have something nice, people will say that you are involved with drugs'. None the less, Colombians were very sensitive to these unfair stereotypes and as a

result, were often reluctant to mix with anyone other than Colombians (see also Guarnizo and Diaz, 1999; Guarnizo et al., 1999; McIlwaine, 2005). Furthermore, José, who owned the window-cleaning business, admitted that they told British people that they were Spanish rather than Colombian when they were trying to get business.

Bolivians also tended to distrust their compatriots as well (see Sveinsson, 2007) often only helping people out in order to secure jobs. Alvaro (from the larger sample) stated: 'I think there is a lot of envy. The Colombians help each other out, but the truth is that here, I've never received any help from a Bolivian, it's always been Colombians ... I try not to get involved with Latins, I try and stay as alone as possible' [Alvaro was undocumented]. Interestingly, many Bolivians also complained that the mistrust among them was linked with historical divisions in their home country rather than the difficulties associated with being a migrant in London and competing for scarce resources. Fernando, a Bolivian (from the larger sample) noted:

'In Bolivia, there is a historical rivalry between the east and west, and for one or other reason, there is jealousy between one zone and the other. I criticise my country for this. For example, you see Colombians who are from different regions, but they greet each other, they help each other. I say that here the difference among Bolivians is that there is no solidarity ... we don't help each other. Here, thousands of kilometres from our land and you can see the rivalry'.

There was also some rivalry between different Latin American groups, often drawing on regional and national stereotypes. Ecuadorians were more likely to make comments to Colombians and Bolivians about drugs, and Colombians were likely to claim to be the hardest workers. Also, Ecuadorians were often blamed for being passive and accepting poor working conditions and low wages, whereas Colombians said they would fight for their rights to a greater degree. For instance, Tomas, a Colombian said that Ecuadorians will put up with being disrespected at work in a way that Colombians wouldn't. On the other hand, Ecuadorians were likely to say that Colombians were the most likely to take advantage of people. Lida, Ecuadorian, said: 'Colombians, excuse me, but Colombians are characterised as giving you a little and then taking double'.

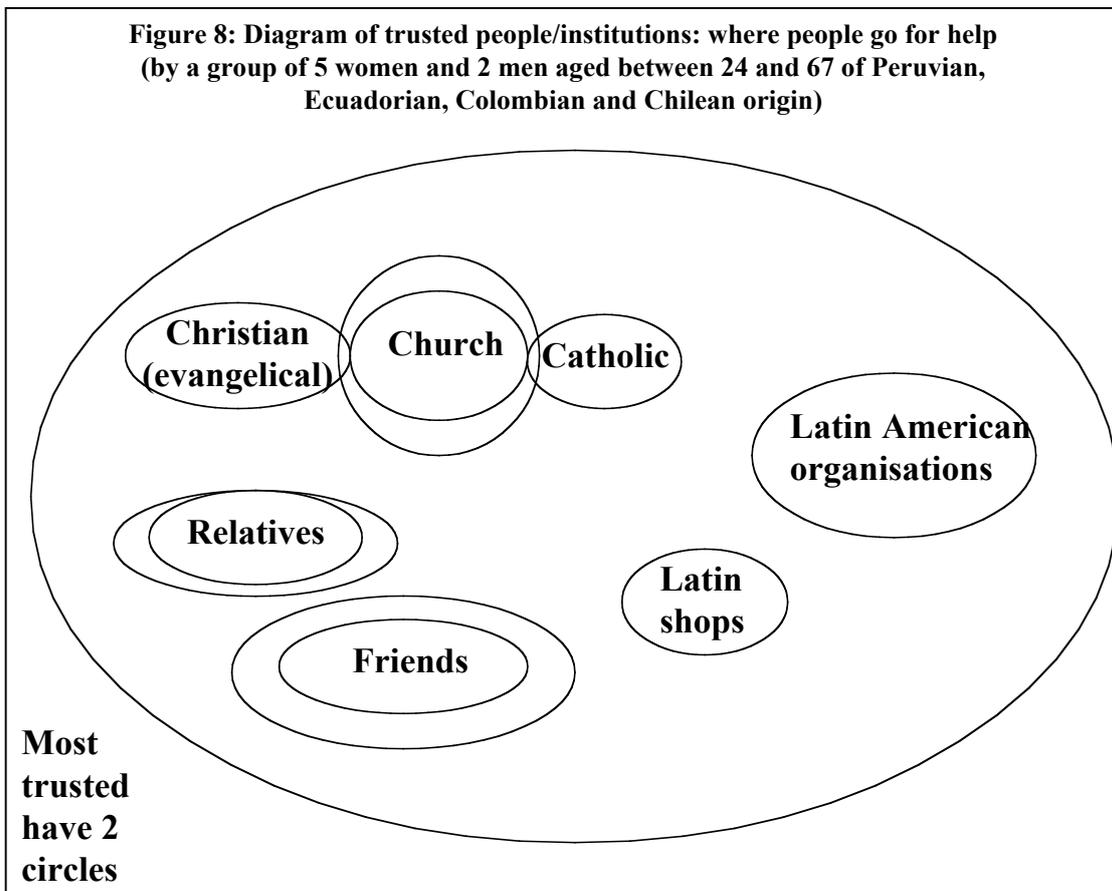
Having said this, and as noted above, these sentiments were ultimately contradictory. Some people, although a minority, were also positive about the support they received from other Latin Americans. Daniel, a Colombian (from the larger sample) said:

'I think that Latins help each other. I've known many Ecuadorians and Bolivians that are very nice and they have helped out a lot. I know that the day that I need something one of them is going to help me. I have always had a job thanks to Latin solidarity, I have only looked for work once'.

Yet, while the majority complained about the lack of trust within the community, the majority still maintained their friendship networks among other Latin Americans and sought out Latin American friends when they needed help. Perhaps because they were migrants and often living in very precarious socio-economic and legal situations, it was often prudent to be careful about whom to trust. With increasing competition for jobs, and a permanent sense of anxiety among those without papers, it is perhaps no surprise that trust is difficult to generate. This is further undermined by people's general lack of leisure time. People reported that they worked all the time and that their free time, if they had any, was spent resting rather than socialising.

The main leisure pursuit among many Latin Americans was going to church. Indeed, those who attended church were the most likely to say that they trusted other Latin Americans, although it was often with the proviso that they were Christians or specifically belonged to their church. While both the Catholic and Protestant churches were important, more people were involved in the latter and especially the Evangelical churches such as the Church of God. It was also common for people who had been practising Catholics in their home countries to become Evangelicals in London. It emerged that the church of any persuasion was an important source of support for people, especially if they were on their own. For example, Fernanda, who worked as a live-in nanny, joined an evangelical church in London despite being brought up a Catholic in Bolivia. She said: 'Here, I had no friends. But I always watched TV and there was a programme about evangelicals. It made me think. When the only friend I had went to Italy, and I was left alone, my best friend, therefore I went and looked for a church'. The evangelical church is often more appealing because the pastors are Latin American and the services are all in Spanish. However, the Catholic church is also feeding this demand with an increasing number of Spanish and Portuguese masses being held throughout London. Manuela, from Bolivia, epitomises a typical way that Latin Americans spend their leisure time: 'I clean at home, I rest, I go to Bible study and on Sundays to church. There's no point in going anywhere else. Now and again, I go to a Bolivian place'. From an institutional perspective, people tended to trust the church more than other organisations and at the same level as their friends and family (see Figure 8 on where people go for help).

Figure 8: Diagram of trusted people/institutions: where people go for help (by a group of 5 women and 2 men aged between 24 and 67 of Peruvian, Ecuadorian, Colombian and Chilean origin)



Thus, social networks and social capital among Latin Americans were essential to their survival in London, yet at the same time, they were highly fragmented. The vast majority of people interacted only with other Latin Americans, and used personal networks to get jobs and information. However, people were very wary of other Latin Americans, and especially of their own people. All three nationalities repeatedly complained about their compatriots taking advantage of them or exploiting them in some way. The roots of this were complex but were mainly linked with fear, anxiety, envy and the need to prove themselves as successful. However, there were differences among nationalities as well. Colombians tended to be the most secure among themselves, perhaps because they were the most established group and less like to be undocumented. In turn, Bolivians were the least likely to trust or help their fellow country people, perhaps because they were most likely to be undocumented, and were the most recent arrivals in the UK, as well as the strength of the rivalry among the population in Bolivia itself. In general though, the lack of friends, mistrust and silence becomes another way of surviving in London

6) THE ROLE OF MIGRANT ORGANISATIONS: INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

Ostensibly, migrant organisations are also part of the repertoire of social networks available to Latin Americans in London. As noted earlier, there is a strong history of organisations in London that have evolved into migrant service organisations. However, while obviously all those interviewees who were accessed through Carila had actively used or consulted an organisation, it was surprising how many people had no idea that these types of organisations actually existed. Indeed, of the 50 migrants not related to Carila, only 5 had consistently used the services of a migrant organisation. The reasons for this lack of engagement were, first, lack of information in that people were often unaware that organisations existed; second, was fear that they would be reported to the authorities if they contacted an organisation, especially among those who were undocumented; third, and linked with this, was the lack of trust within the community. People often said that they didn't need help and did not want to get involved with anyone; Lucy, an Ecuadorian (from the larger sample) said: 'I don't know of any organisation, nor have I looked for one. I didn't come here to get any type of help, only to work for myself'. Similarly, Alvaro, Bolivian (from the larger sample) said: 'I don't like organisations, you always have to give lots of information about yourself, I suppose that I've never gone nor would I think of going, I don't like to get involved in this, I'm fine how I am'.

For this type of person, and besides the church, often the only contact people had with any type of organisation was with their embassy. However, often the embassies are not able to help people with immigration issues due to lack of funding and staffing. Moreover, embassies themselves were not always aware of the existence of many of the organisations serving the Latin American community.

Once people had contacted a migrant organisation they were generally very satisfied with the service they provided and as a result trusted them. So for example, Figure 8 identified migrant organisations as somewhere to go to get help. As well as Carila, the other main organisation mentioned by people was IRMO (the Indo-American Migrant and Refugee Organisation), and to a lesser extent, LAWRS (the Latin American Women's Rights Service).

Generally, people spoke very highly of migrant organisations especially in terms of the level of confidentiality and professionalism among the staff. As Eduardo, an Ecuadorian notes about Carila:

'they have helped me for 5 years now and they are still helping me. They are very professional, Susana, Alba, Myriam are people who fight for you, like a lawyer fights for their client, or a father fights for his son. They are strong women, fighters who are very successful. They have helped me in everything, including when I have had problems and they have got on the phone and sorted it out for me. They have authority and control over the processes and because of this they get what they want. I have been to many organisations but they have never helped me. What there isn't in other institutions, there is here'.

People were also impressed that the service in organisations like Carila and IRMO was free, not least because private lawyers were incredibly expensive, and often exploited their clients by making promises they couldn't keep. People said that they were very important for any type of problem or issue, from getting help to pay bills to helping people to apply for citizenship. For instance, Edilma from Colombia recounted how she had a gas bill of £200-£300 that she couldn't pay so

she went to Carila where Myriam arranged for her to pay by direct debit. She had also just passed her British citizenship test with the help of Myriam. Organisations like Carila were also an important source of information for the Latin American community, and in particular the free helpline at Carila that is the only service of its kind in the country. Several people noted that the information from Carila allowed them to make decisions affecting their lives and futures in the UK. Clarena, from Colombia, for example, noted:

'I think that they give you such good advice and so much help that it makes you realise lots of things, and allows you to improve your life in the long term. If you don't have this type of information then I think life would be much more difficult'.

In many cases, migrants said that organisations such as Carila were the main reason why they had managed to survive in London, and that without them they would have had to return to their own countries. However, while these organisations were important in providing all sorts of assistance such as interpreters, help with housing, health and education, it was accessing state benefits and immigration issues that tended to dominate their work. For example, between April 2006 and April 2007, the Carila helpline received contact from 918 service users, of which 767 were new clients, and who had enquiries relating to welfare benefits (38%), immigration (31%) and accommodation (12%). Similarly, of the 126 enquiries through the caseworkers, more than half concentrated on welfare rights (53%), with 19.2% relating to accommodation, and 6.5% to immigration.¹⁴

The issue of accurate advice also emerged as important. Several people noted that they had received incorrect advice from some organisations, but that Carila in particular always provided accurate information. Clarena stated: 'for me, they provide a magnificent service, all the time they have been really good, really professional and they have always been available to help with the right information. If you call, everyone from Luis Carlos, or Alba or Myriam, they give you very good information'.

In terms of accessing the services of migrant organisations, most people heard about them through recommendations from friends and colleagues rather than through any formal channels. Indeed, a common complaint was that there wasn't enough marketing of organisations, with one focus group identifying 'more information and marketing of advice for Latin Americans - especially that there is a free service such as Carila' as a project that the community urgently required (see also below).

More specifically, other areas where people identified problems or issues within Carila and other organisations revolved around the availability of appointments. Some said that appointments were too spread out and that more appointments needed to be available immediately rather than having to wait 2 weeks. While obviously, this is related to demand for services, it was a complaint levelled at all the main organisations. Indeed, it was noted that people often went to the organisation where an appointment was available or where someone would see them straight away. Adriana, an Ecuadorian said: 'All that I would ask is that the appointments are more immediate. Sometimes, you need to reply to a letter quickly and here [Carila] the appointments are spaced out. Sometimes I have to go to IRMO so that I can be seen'. Isabel, a Colombian also said: 'The only bad thing is

¹⁴ Information from the Carila Open Bidding Final Monitoring Return for the London Council (Carila, 2007).

that there is hardly ever any places, it's always full, you have to wait to be seen to'.

Another issue that people complained about was help for the undocumented. There are constant rumours within the Latin American community about potential amnesties for people who are undocumented. As a result, people often enquire about these, and are then disappointed if they find out that it is only a rumour. In addition, people complained if organisations couldn't regularise someone even if it was not possible. Clara, a Colombian, noted: 'Supposedly these organisations help those who are illegal, but they don't give them any support at all'. This was reflected in Carila monitoring in that of 49 helpline users, 70% of users reported that they received the information they required over the phone, 32% were booked for an appointment with Carila's caseworkers, while they were unable to help only 8%. The latter was mainly due to limited rights available to those who were undocumented.

Overall, although migrant organisations were highly valued when people used them, but there were issues about information sharing and marketing of the existence of these groups.¹⁵ They proved to be lifelines for many people especially in terms of providing information on the nature of migrant rights. However, one area where people had least faith in these groups was if they were undocumented with no prospect of being able to obtain documentation. In these cases people were dissatisfied because the organisations could only help within certain parameters and within the law.

¹⁵ All the organisations are listed in the newspapers for the Latin American community in the UK, such as Noticias, but people often said that they didn't always read these.

7) CONNECTIONS WITH HOME COUNTRIES

Another important dimension of surviving in London was the maintenance of linkages with home countries, often referred to as aspects of transnationalism defined as: 'the process by which transmigrants, through their daily activities, forge and sustain multi-stranded social, economic and political relations that link together their societies of origin and settlements, and through which they create transnational social fields that cross national borders' (Basch et al., 1994: 6). These connections take two main forms; first, was maintaining communication channels with family and friends. All the migrants kept in contact with loved ones in their home countries in some form. Everyone made phone calls to parents, friends and other family members using cheap phone cards. The majority phoned once a week to every 15 days depending on who it was. Others also used the internet, especially email and messaging services to keep in contact. Even people in the most precarious of circumstances often had access to the internet either through internet cafes or at home. Alba, from Bolivia, lived in a hotel, yet in their over-crowded room still managed to run a computer, which allowed her to 'chat' to her sister in Bolivia almost every day.¹⁶ This contact was critically important for migrants as Sebastian from Colombia said: 'I phone [my father] every 8 days, this call is sacred'. While there were obviously huge variations, the tendency was to reduce the amount of communication the longer a person had lived in the UK. Edilma from Colombia noted: 'I carry on communicating with my family but only a few friends. After so much time [9 years] communication is lost'.

The second form of maintaining ties was through sending money home in the form of remittances. As noted above, this is often the main reason why people migrate in the first place, in order to be able to help a particular person, or to generate savings, or to make an investment. As a result, the vast majority of migrants sent money home regularly and irregularly. Indeed, there was only a handful of people who didn't remit and these were people who had political asylum and their whole family resident in the UK. Sending money was both a necessity and an obligation that was an integral part of being a migrant in the UK, as Edgar from Colombia pointed out: 'we have a noble heart, because everyone, the vast majority, 90% of people help our families back home'. Indeed, he himself sent money to his parents of between £200 and £250 per month. However, while there were obviously variations, most people sent on average £100 per month.

Most sent money to their parents, but there were also cases of people supporting children or spouses in home countries and in these instances the amounts were usually much higher. Generally this money was used for general living and subsistence expenses, but frequently it also paid for medical bills, school and university fees, and the repayment of debts. For example, Esperanza was supporting her daughter through medical school in Colombia, while Libia was repaying the debts she had incurred through medical treatment she had had in Ecuador the previous year. Clara specifically took on another cleaning job to pay for her sisters' chemotherapy in Colombia. Tomas said that in the past he had moved to London in order to get a job and send money back to his ex-wife and children in Colombia.

¹⁶ The fact that most migrants were quite highly educated and often came from middle class backgrounds meant that their families and friends in their home countries were likely to have access to internet as well.

Others were also able to save up enough money to send back to their countries as investments. It was common for people to have bought houses back home which they then rented out. In some cases, people said that the rent generated by these houses replaced regular remittance sending for relatives. Fernanda from Bolivia built a house in La Paz and her parents collect the rent for her (which they keep). However, Fernanda also sent money to her father (£400 per month) to pay for the school fees for her brothers and sisters and nephews and nieces. Lida from Ecuador had also managed to buy a house and an apartment in Quito, as well as a shared plot of land with her sister. She said that this was her insurance for the future even though she planned to stay in the UK.

While remittance sending was incredibly important for migrants and for their families back home, and was certainly part of Latin American migrant culture, very few sent money in a collective way through organisations or home-town associations. When people sent money for the people of their village or barrio, it was usually on an *ad hoc* basis. Fernanda, for example, sent money to her sister who was a teacher in a rural school in Bolivia, in order to buy educational materials.

Also important to stress, and something that is often overlooked, is that migrants made huge sacrifices in the UK in order to be able to send remittances (see also Datta et al., 2007b). Tomas noted that he had worked really hard in the past in order to send money to his ex-wife and children in Colombia:

'I worked tremendously hard. Not any more, but in the past I killed myself. I used to get up at 4am, and work all day and all night ... I worked to support them, and because of this I have nothing here because I sent it all to them. I also sent to my brothers and my family. For me, December signified millions as I gave presents to everyone'.

Indeed, even if people didn't send money, they sent presents at special times (sending goods are very expensive and so people try to limit this to birthdays and Christmas).

The sacrifices people made were also emotional. Esperanza noted: 'I miss my daughter, but like everything in life, the wounds heal and you get accustomed to it. Sometimes I cry for her and for myself but I have made a life here'. At the same time, people also gained satisfaction from helping family as Fernando a Bolivian (from the larger sample) noted:

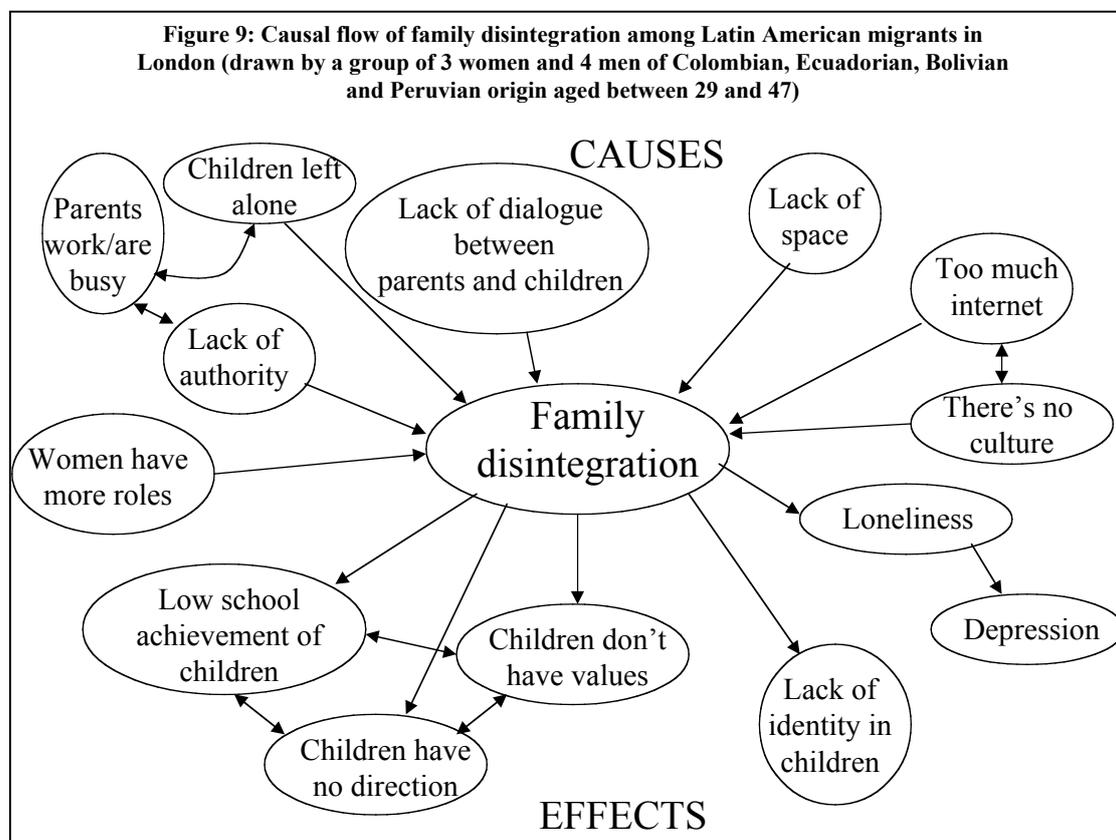
'From when I started to work in Bolivia I always felt very gratified to be able to help out my family. It gave me great satisfaction, and to be able to continue to do this from afar is much better. Perhaps I'm not there physically, but in one way or another I can be there through the help I give. To see the results is very satisfying'.

Remittances also affected family relations in detrimental ways. In repeated cases, people recounted how they had lost their money to family members whom had been trusted to keep or invest migrants' remittances. Lida from Ecuador told how she and her sister had sent their eldest brother £15,000 to buy a house for them in Quito. However, due to some wrangling over their father's will and legacy, the brother lost all the money. Sometimes, remittances also flowed in the opposite direction when migrants in London were in dire need. In particular, younger migrants recalled how they sometimes had to call on their parents to send them money in the short-term to help them when they lost jobs or didn't get paid.

Yet, overall, money flowed from the UK to Latin America in what is now recognised as one of the main sources of foreign exchange in countries in the region. Indeed, according to a recent World Bank report, in 2005, Colombia received 2.7% of its GDP in remittances, Bolivia received 3.6%, while Ecuador received 5.6% (Ratha and Xu, 2007). The real amount is also likely to be much higher because this is only what is sent officially, yet people frequently reported sending money with friends, relatives and even embassy staff. As well as cost, this was also because the economic situation in their countries was not stable and people didn't trust banks.

8) FAMILY, HOUSEHOLD AND GENDER RELATIONS

The ways in which people survived in London was also interrelated with the nature of household and family relations and also the ways in which gender identities changed as a result of the migration process (see also Mahler and Pessar, 2006; Pessar and Mahler, 2003). As noted above, one of the most difficult things for Latin Americans to cope with in London was the fact that housing was extremely expensive to rent, and as a result, people often lived in over-crowded conditions with people whom they didn't know, sharing rooms and flats. When people lived together like this, there were countless cases of conflict. There was also a high turnover of housing and rooms especially when people were undocumented and had to keep moving around. Alvaro, a Bolivian (from the larger sample) noted: 'Normally, I don't like to move around a lot but here you have to. There are a lot of people who are illegal like me and they live in constant fear of being in the same place, we are afraid of Emilia [colloquial name for 'immigration']'.



However, as well as over-crowded conditions leading to conflict, the pressures of being a migrant also affected close family relationships, especially within couples. As Figure 9 on the causes and consequences of family disintegration shows, lack of space was a contributory factor, together with a range of other issues linked with parents working a lot and leaving children alone, as well as children losing their identity. In addition, loneliness and depression also played a role, being a primary effect of conflict within the home.

Family disintegration was also linked, not surprisingly, with marital breakdown. While there is no information on the extent of marital breakdown within the Latin American community, Alberto (for the larger sample) estimated that among

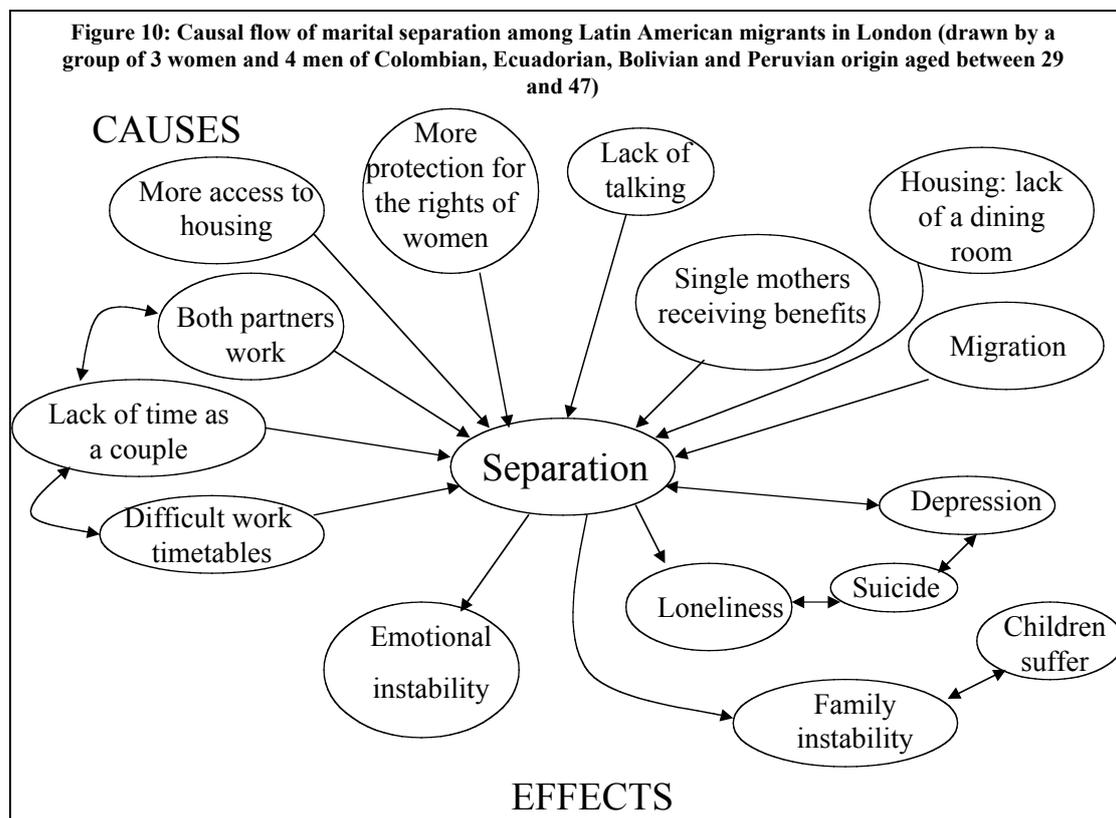
Colombians, around 70% are separated. He attributed this to the fact that couples often have to live apart:

'it's immigration that is very destructive because it breaks the ties of family affection for such long periods. This is what happens here in England - there are people who are separated for 10 or 12 years and obviously this does a lot of damage'.

Even when people live together in the UK, migration is said to have a negative influence on conjugal relations. A male migrant from one of the focus groups noted: 'it's the changes that are the cause of separation, now there's no time to share. We work like donkeys and we forget that we also need affection'. Similarly, another women said: 'when there is time, occasionally, we don't spend it together and we do our own thing' (see Figure 10). One man noted bitterly that marital separation was also linked with state protection for women:

'The system protects women, they have more protection, they receive money for their children and it suits them to say that they are divorced so that they can receive help. As a man, if you say you are a single father, they give you nothing'.

Again, mental and emotional problems such as depression and loneliness were also effects of separation, with suicide even being mentioned as possible.



While life as a migrant in terms of the pressures of work, having to send remittances back home, and coping with cultural changes were also influential in family and marital disintegration, changes in gender roles and relations were also noted. For example, many people said that the nature of marriage changes in the UK because it is a more equal partnership which in turn, is rooted in some fundamental changes in gender identities. Often this entails women not accepting men as *machistas* and men not being able to accept women as having more independence and freedom compared with their home countries. Out of the Carila

sample, all but one person said that gender roles and relations were different in the UK compared with back home. For instance, Clara commented:

'Being a woman is completely different here compared to Colombia. My husband was a *machista* and here he had to change. He told me what my responsibilities as a woman were and I keep doing them ... but although he still thinks of himself as the head of the household he has had to change a lot'.

Men themselves said that they had to accept these changes. Santiago, from Ecuador said: 'here you have to accept women. Here, everyone has the same rights and opportunities'. Both women and men alike said that the laws of the UK supported the rights of women as being equal to men. Adriana from Ecuador, said: 'the laws here support women, in our countries they don't'. Also significant, but not uniform was that men actually took on more domestic responsibilities when they came to the UK. This was partly because of practical issues such as both partners going out to work, but also because men were forced to accept that women had rights as well as men. Esperanza pointed out:

'Here, women are valued more in all ways. I had a partner in Colombia and here I have one here. There, my husband did nothing, he never helped to wash a plate, he never helped me to look after my daughter, he came home from work and he did nothing. My husband here [also Colombian], since my daughter was born knows how to change a nappy; in hospital they taught him. Here, they let men into the birth, this is fundamental for me, it helps you, they feel the pain you feel. When the men visit, they are asked if they are helping, they look after for you. Men here are much better and they behave much better'.

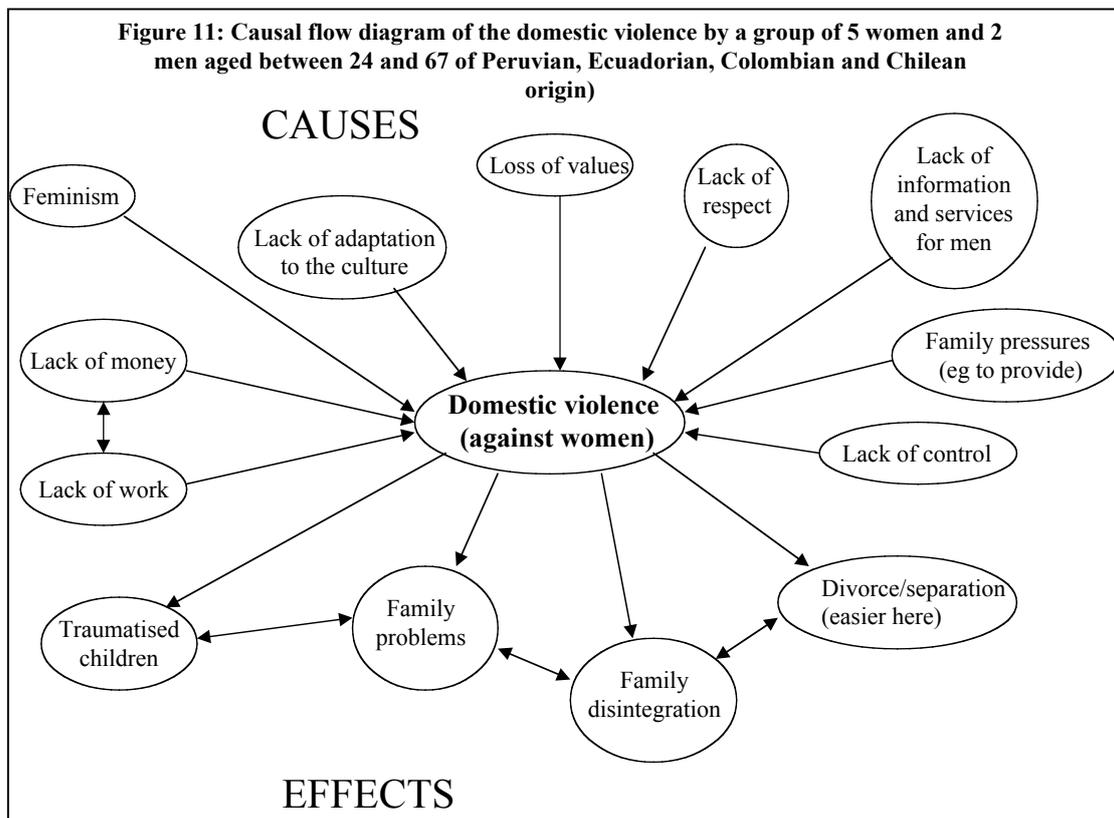
Some men also find the changes satisfying. Sebastian said: 'in Colombia, I would burn water'. Yet since he came to London, and after working in a coffee shop [he used to be a taxi driver], he had learnt to cook, and look after the children. He said: 'sometimes I even wash dirty clothes, and I mow the lawn in the garden and I like doing it all, I like to keep the house in good order. In Colombia, I did none of these things'. Angélica from Bolivia (from the larger sample) also said: 'Here many men learn to deal with their *machismo*. I know Bolivian men who say "my *machismo* has gone to ground, here I have learnt to do everything"'.

Many of the gains felt by women were rooted in their economic independence and the fact that it was often easier for women to find work in London compared with men. This was especially notable in domestic service where women were the preferred workforce and where they earned more than those employed by large companies cleaning offices. William, a Colombian (from the larger sample) said: 'I think that Colombia is still a *machista* country. Here the work opportunities and the work mobility are better for women. There, men take all the best posts'.

However, while this is the positive side to changes in gender roles and relations in terms of some quite dramatic shifts in domestic responsibilities at the household level, there was also a more negative side. This was mainly in the form of domestic or intra-family violence that was identified as a problem within the Latin American community in London. Some said that the pressures of living as a migrant meant that domestic violence had increased. However, others said that domestic violence was more common in migrants' home countries, but that people were more likely to talk about it in the UK. This was mainly because they knew they were protected in the UK by the law. For example, Isabel, a victim of domestic violence herself said: 'with my problem in Colombia, I would have denounced my case and that

would have been that. Here, in contrast, there was protection. Only the Home Office knew my address, he had to continue to support my son by law. Here there are laws that protect women who have suffered domestic violence'. Men also recognised this. Eduardo from Ecuador said: 'when a man abuses a woman here, the government protects her'. As Figure 11 shows, so-called 'feminism' plays a role in causing violence against women as well as a range of pressures linked with money, work, cultural change and family breakdown. In particular, the discussions from the focus groups highlighted that men found it difficult to deal with their loss of status especially compared with women's increase in status. As a man from one of the focus groups noted:

'Women arrive here and they have more space to express themselves. Because they have suffered a bit and have not done things that they wanted, unconsciously, they feel superior in certain things, they stop valuing men, they don't give them any status. Men don't have the capacity or the facility to develop like they did before, they don't have sources of work the same as they had before. In general terms, men are more affected morally in this country. Women here have their own space, they go to work and they have freedom of expression, no one criticises them'.



From a positive perspective however, it was also noted that even if women do experience domestic violence in the UK, it is much easier for them to leave abusive partners because of their economic independence. A woman from one of the focus group discussions noted: 'in Latin America, relationships are often dominated by who can provide the economic support and unfortunately there are women who are with men only because they are being supported. Sometimes they tolerate violence and abuse. Here they don't have to put up with anything or anyone. There is access to work for both and men don't earn more than women'.

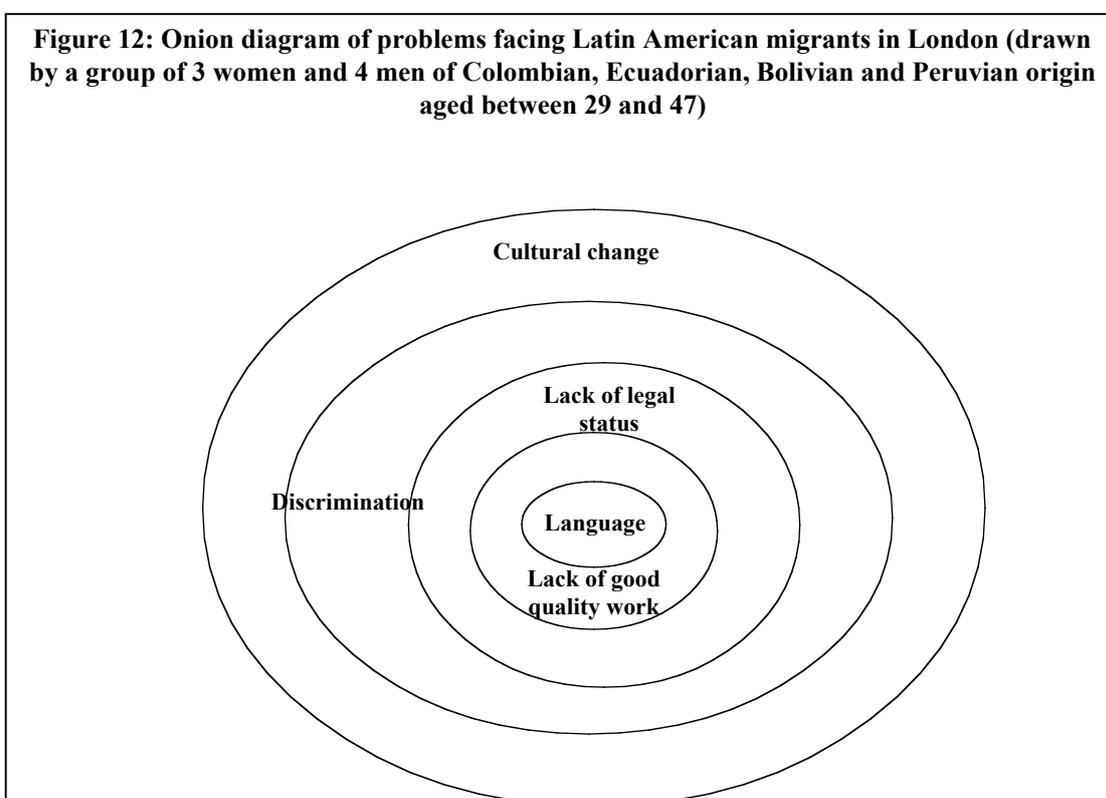
Thus, overall, it appears that women have more to gain at the household and interpersonal level than men as a result of migrating to the UK. Although they suffer from huge pressures and especially from those linked with their mental health and especially depression, as well as abuse, ultimately they have more control over their lives and increased self-esteem because of access to work and because they feel protected by the British State. As Helena from Bolivia pointed out:

‘When I came here I realised that I was worth something. He [her husband] had always looked down on me, treated me like I was worthless, but here I have realised that I can work, I can look after my children on my own. Back in my country women always think that if their husband leaves, who is going to give me money for food?’

9) MAIN PROBLEMS FACED BY LATIN AMERICAN MIGRANTS IN LONDON

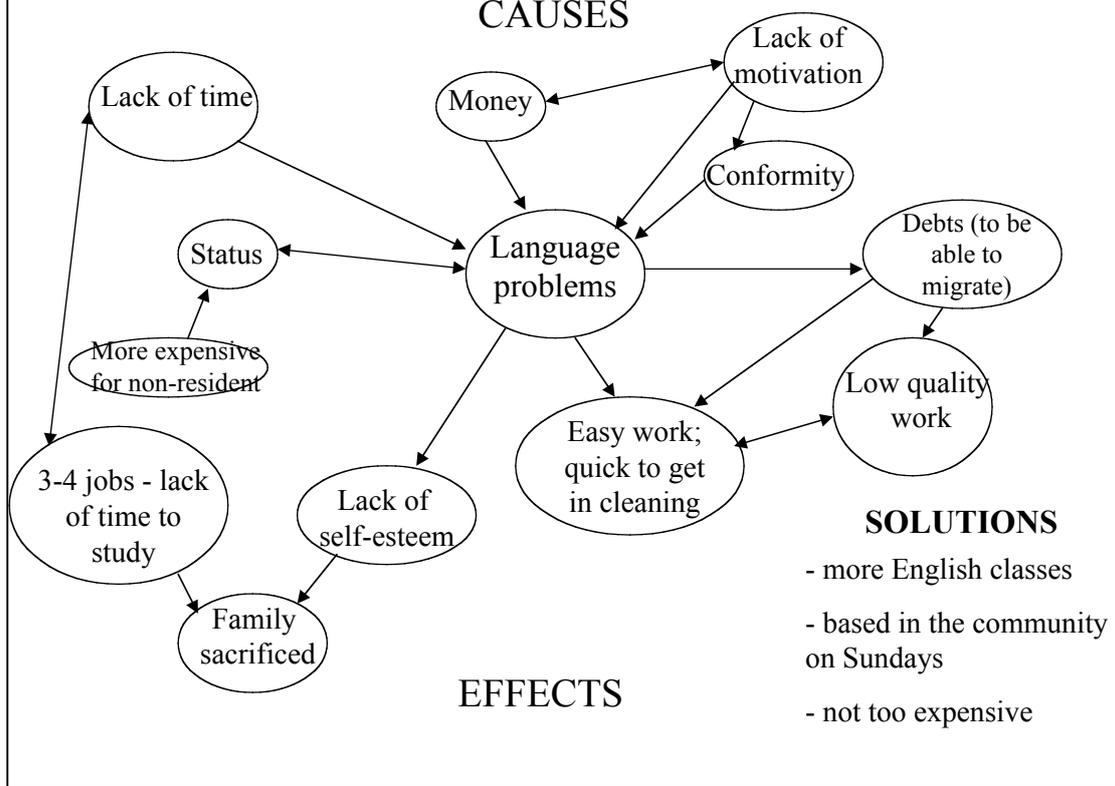
Surviving in London is not easy for Latin Americans. As we have already seen, they face a lot of obstacles when they first arrive and in the longer term. All the interviewees were asked to identify the main problems facing them as Latin Americans. Almost without exception, the two most commonly cited problems were their inability to speak English and their lack of legal status. This was closely linked with not being able to secure decent work and having to work illegally and face exploitation as a result (see Figure 12). In the words of a man from one of the focus groups: 'the main barrier that us Latins face here is the language and the lack of knowledge of the system and the facilities available to use in this country. Work opportunities are bound up with the language. There is exploitation at work when people don't speak English. If you can't speak English you can't defend yourself against the supervisors, sometimes you have to do the work again. There are people who take advantage of this'.

Figure 12: Onion diagram of problems facing Latin American migrants in London (drawn by a group of 3 women and 4 men of Colombian, Ecuadorian, Bolivian and Peruvian origin aged between 29 and 47)



While everyone realised the importance of speaking English, it was not always possible to attend classes and really dedicate time to learning. The vast majority of migrants had attended classes at some point since arriving in the UK. However, many had abandoned them for a range of reasons including the poor quality of classes available, the high cost of classes, the need to work long hours, and the difficulties of juggling work, family and studying. Dealing with these issues often meant that people lost motivation (see Figure 13). In addition, and as noted earlier, most people also worked and socialised with other Latin Americans, so it was hard for them to practice their English. Also, the incentive was often lost because many people had children who went to British schools and who acted as interpreters for them.

Figure 13: Causal flow diagram of language problems (drawn by a group of 2 male and 4 female adults aged between 18 and 44)



Yet, people also realised that ultimately if they wanted some social mobility, they had to learn English, not least in order to take advantage of the work opportunities that existed in London. In the words of Sebastian, a Colombian:

‘In this country if you don’t speak English you are not going to have a future. To go anywhere you have to study English to be able to support yourself economically. Now with the Olympic Games coming, the doors of work are going to open and if you want your economic situation to improve you have to learn English’.

Also, as noted earlier, immigration status dominated people’s lives. Not surprisingly, if they were undocumented, their lives were severely curtailed, and their opportunities very limited. They had few job prospects open to them, they earned less than those who were documented, and they faced much more exploitation in the workforce. Also, as noted above, there were also deep-seated psychological effects of being undocumented. Indeed, Esperanza, a Colombian, said that those without papers had to work three times as hard to earn the same as someone who was legal. Most lived in constant fear and dependent on rumour. For example, Juliana, an Ecuadorian (from the larger sample) noted: ‘the papers, the language, every day it gets worse. 1,800 police have now been contracted to work as civilians and catch people, therefore you have to have your documents with you all the time, because of this people live in fear.’ While those who were undocumented were obviously especially affected by stress and anxiety, these issues also emerged as part and parcel of being a migrant. Many people discussed how lonely they felt. In the words of Fernanda who was a live-in nanny from Bolivia: ‘I feel really sad, when for example, I realise that I don’t have a house, I don’t have anywhere to go, only into the street and to church.’

The other issue that emerged as important was discrimination. Many people noted that they had not personally experienced discrimination, but they had heard that it existed. In particular they complained about Latin Americans being taken advantage of in the workplace, although as noted above, this was often by their compatriots. However, in general, people said that white British people treated them well, and that often other groups were treated worse than them. Samanta, a Colombian (from the larger sample) noted:

'I don't think that the Latin community is discriminated against in London, I think that other groups such as the Arabs and Turks are more discriminated against. In the United States the Latin is a thief, but here, maybe because there aren't that many of us, because they don't know much about us, there are a lot of people who are interested in knowing about Colombia'.

However, the majority complained about the black population being racist against them. They blamed them for delinquency in the areas where they lived, and for treating them badly, especially in government offices. As Lucy, an Ecuadorian (from the larger sample) noted:

'Here it's the coloured people who are racist with us and with everyone. The vast majority of them have psychological problems, they feel that they are being accused just by looking at them, that a look is an insult'.

Opportunities for Latin Americans in London

Despite the problems that Latin Americans faced, people are still migrating in their thousands. People realised that there were opportunities in London that they would not have in their own countries. In particular, people spoke about freedom and protection, whether from political violence or from interpersonal violence or in terms of giving people personal space. Sara from Colombia said: This country has opened many doors for me, to study, to meet my husband, I can't complain. Here, I have become more independent and maturer'. Thus, people also appreciated the education system especially for their children. In fact, even when people were living in incredibly precarious situations, they often resolved to put up with it so that their children could go through the education system and learn English. Despite some complaints, people also praised the health care system. An Ecuadorian man, Santiago, had suffered a brain tumour in London and said that he wouldn't still be alive if he had been in his own country.

Although social mobility was difficult, it was also possible, and most people had strong aspirations for a better future. As discussed above, some people had managed to set-up small businesses, or to move from cleaning jobs to white collar employment. Everyone had dreams for their future and for their children. Esperanza from Colombia said that she wanted to do a course in floristry so that she could do flower arranging for special occasions, while her husband wanted to open a shop that sold music and films. Sara, from Colombia said: 'I want to do something more here, I don't want people to ask my daughter what her mother does and she has to reply, she is a cleaner. I have told her that I am doing this for her future'. Thus, despite everything, London can provide opportunities, as Eduardo from Ecuador said: 'London is a mine'.

10) ADDRESSING PROBLEMS: TYPES OF PROJECTS NEEDED

Although London can provide many opportunities for people, Latin Americans remain a vulnerable population in the city. Many are barely surviving, and many are living in very exploitative conditions. As well as asking interviewees about the main types of problems they faced, the research also asked people what types of projects they felt that the community needed.

Not surprisingly, people wanted projects that would address the main problems identified above. However, there was also a remarkable consensus about the types of project required (see Boxes 4 and 5). For instance, everyone wanted accessible, cheap and good quality English classes. As noted in Figure 13, there were suggestions that they were located in the areas where the Latin American community lived rather than in Central London where most of the English-language colleges were. People also wanted classes on Sundays so that they could attend them when they weren't working.

Another major issue was about information. It was felt that people didn't have enough information about what was available for the Latin American community, especially in terms of free, high quality advice that organisations such as Carila offered. Thus, more targeted marketing was identified as a potential area where more work could be done by migrant organisations (see Box 5).

Box 4: Types of projects needed by the Latin American migrant community in London (by a group of 2 male and 4 female adults aged between 18 and 44)

- ❖ English classes
- ❖ Psychological help (although there is a lack of trained psychologists who can speak Spanish)
 - ❖ for men, they need help with alcoholism, smoking, and gambling problems (especially slot machines and video games)
- ❖ Accessible interpreters
- ❖ Family workshops: how to help women cope with and adapt to their new lives in the UK
- ❖ More marketing of the existing projects (through newspapers, and Latin American places like Seven Sisters and the 'Elephant')
- ❖ Parenting classes
- ❖ Workshops for men: to deal especially with the causes of domestic violence

Also significant was the identification of workshops for parents and for men. Several people (both women and men) noted that many of the organisations and projects that already existed for Latin Americans were for women only. They said

that there were several organisations dedicated solely to women, yet no equivalent for men. While people did not advocate that male-only organisations should be formed, it was suggested that workshops for men would be very beneficial (see Box 4). Parenting classes were also identified as important and critical in terms of trying to address family disintegration and the issue of young people dealing with a dual identity of being Latin American and British at the same time. Finally, the issue of an amnesty for those without documentation emerged strongly, although this is obviously something that migrant organisations are unable to address beyond giving support to campaigns such as 'Strangers into Citizens'.¹⁷

Box 5: Projects needed for the community (by a group of 3 women and 4 men of Colombian, Ecuadorian, Bolivian and Peruvian origin aged between 29 and 47 years)

- 1) More information and marketing of advice for Latin Americans – especially that there is a free service such as Carila
- 2) More information in Spanish, for example, in libraries, about housing, about health care
- 3) English courses – especially intermediate
- 4) Opportunities for professionals
 - work experience
 - programmes to be able to practice your profession
- 5) Cultural events – more information – there's only the Carnival
- 6) Amnesty

¹⁷ See <http://www.strangersintocitizens.org.uk/>

11) CONCLUSIONS

Life for Latin American migrants in London is about opportunity, hardship, and survival. Many make huge sacrifices, both financially and personally in order to migrate to the UK in search of a better life free from persecution or economic hardship. While on one hand, London meets people's expectations in that people can secure jobs that usually pay the minimum wage, on the other hand, they often don't realise how difficult it is to live in London, economically, socially and culturally. People often get 'stuck' in cleaning jobs, with little prospect of occupational mobility because of their lack of English. Yet, there are also some success stories in terms of people establishing small businesses and making an economically sustainable life for themselves in the city. Socially, the Latin American community is at once united and divided. They stick together in terms of helping each other out when new people arrive and by sharing information about jobs. However, there is also a deep-seated lack of trust, partly linked with the pressures of life as a migrant in terms of competition for jobs, envy and fear about lack of documentation.

There are also differences among nationalities. Among the three nationality groups focused on here, Colombians were the both economically successful and the most integrated into British society. As a result, they were the least vulnerable. This was mainly because they were the most established groups in London. The Ecuadorians who had been living the city for a long time were also relatively successful, yet there were also quite high levels of vulnerability among them. The Bolivians tended to live in the most precarious circumstances; as the most recently arrived group, they were most likely to be undocumented, to work in cleaning and to be exploited. They were also probably the most internally divided among the nationalities, partly linked with regional and racial rivalries from Bolivia.

Despite divisions and a lack of trust among many members of the community, Latin Americans still have a united identity in London. Increasingly, their mark is being made on the multicultural landscape of the city through music, dance, and retail. Yet, they are still largely invisible, especially in the eyes of the state. This is poignantly reflected in the fact that an invisible army of Latin Americans, from the office of the Prime Minister to schools, hospitals and shopping centres is cleaning so much office space in London. Furthermore, despite some recent improvements, most Latin Americans are ultimately living in very vulnerable conditions in terms of housing, health care and education, not to mention legal status. It is hoped that this report has gone some way towards highlighting the importance of the Latin American population in London, in terms of the functioning of the urban economy and in relation to social and cultural diversity. This is a valuable population that has a lot to give British society, yet their contribution must be recognised more fully by society, government and policy makers alike.

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F) **APPENDIX 1: Interview schedule**

Coping practices among Latin American migrants in London

Interview schedule: individuals

Name of person interviewed (please note that all names will be changed):

Age of person interviewed:

Gender of person interviewed

Date of interview:

Life in Colombia/Bolivia/Ecuador

Can you tell me something about what your life was like before you migrated to Britain?

(Area where you lived, rural-urban, family, education, work, history of migration in family)

Migration

What year did you arrive in London?

Did you arrive alone or with others? If with others, with whom?

Where did you stay when you first arrived?

What were the primary reasons for migrating here?

What is your current status here in the UK? Please note that this information will not be used for any official purposes or passed on to anyone else.

How did you feel when you first arrived in London? Was it how you expected?

Did you feel welcomed when you came to the UK or were there any hostilities?

(Neighbours, wider community, streets. If hostile/tensions – feelings and responses)

Educational background

What sort of educational level did you attain in Colombia/Ecuador/Bolivia?

Have you participated in any education while in the UK?

Have you taken any language classes?

How would you describe your English?

Housing/accommodation

What sort of accommodation do you live in (rented, owner, B&B etc)?

How long have you lived there?

If different from the above, where did you live when you first arrived?

Household structure

How many people are living in your household?

Who are they?

Do you share all the expenses?

Has anyone come to live with you recently?

Occupation/making a living

What sort of occupation did you have in Colombia/Ecuador/Bolivia?

Do you have work/a job here in London?

Do you earn more than the minimum wage?

How did you go about finding work? (Via family, community, networks, agencies ads?)

Can you tell me about your experiences of working in this job? (What's it like doing the job?) (Hours, workload, promotion, training, subcontracting, discrimination, meet expectations – feelings)

Can you tell me how the managers treat you?

Can you tell me about the other people you work with? (Friends, hostilities, nationalities.)

How does your job compare to the type of work you did before you came to Britain?

How long do you plan to do this job for?

Overall, do you think you're better off here or before you came to London? (More or less money?)

Are you able to save any of your income?

If so, what do you use it for?

Other forms of income

Do you have any other sources of income? For example from renting rooms, part-time or extra work?

Where do you turn if you don't have any money? For example, friends, relatives, money lenders, organisations for Latin Americans etc.

Support networks

Would you consider the Latin American community in London as close knit?

Do people trust each other?

Do you help any other Latin Americans in monetary and non-monetary ways? For example, money lending, childcare, accommodation etc.

Do any other Latin Americans help you in monetary and non-monetary ways?

Do you use the facilities of any organisations for Latin Americans here in London?

If you have any spare time, can you describe what you like to do?

Links with home country

Do you maintain any links with Colombia/Ecuador/Bolivia?

If remittances, what proportion of your earnings do you send and how often do you send money?

Do you plan to return to Colombia/Ecuador/Bolivia?

Do you stay informed with events 'back home'?

Discrimination

Do you think that Latin Americans are discriminated against in London?

If so, what are the main forms of discrimination?

Is discrimination worse for other Latin Americans or the same?

Gender

Do you think more women or men migrate to London?

Do you think it's easier or harder for women or men to settle in the UK? And why

Is it easier for women or men to find jobs?

Is life in London very different for women compared with in

Colombia/Ecuador/Bolivia? Is there a difference for men as well?

What is your role in the household and since coming to the UK has this role changed? (How, why)

Problems faced

Overall, what do you think are the main/most important problems facing Latin Americans living in London?

APPENDIX 2: Total sample interviewed

Name	Nationality	Employment	Legal status
Sandra	Colombian	Student, café worker, voluntary work	Student visa
Milena	Colombian	Teaching assistant	Residency
Andrea	Colombian	Student, cleaner, McDonalds	Student visa
Jaime	Ecuadorian	Catering assistant, cleaner	Student visa
Ximena	Colombian	Cleaner	Resident/British passport
Jorge	Colombian	Café worker, cleaner, student	Student visa
Nubia	Bolivian	Waitress	Student visa
Jose	Bolivian	Cleaner	Student visa
Ana	Colombian	Student, paper distributor, cleaner	Student visa
Monica	Colombian	Student, café worker, cleaner	Student visa
Felipe	Colombian	Cleaner, waiter	Student visa
Guillermo	Ecuadorian	Window-cleaner	ILR
Rosa	Bolivian	Cleaner	Over stayer/making asylum claim
Augusto	Ecuadorian	Cleaner	Asylum
Olga	Colombian	Housewife	ILR
Sergio	Colombian	Manager of religious centre	Resident
Daniel	Colombian	Factory worker	Student
Manuel	Bolivian	Cleaner	Student
Fernando	Bolivian	Cleaner	Student
Samanta	Colombian	Cleaner	Student
Lina	Ecuadorian	Cleaner	Undocumented
William	Colombian	Cleaner	Resident
Dario	Bolivian	Cleaner	Student
Victoria	Bolivian	Food maker	Student
Juliana	Ecuadorian	Hairdresser	Undocumented
Angelica	Bolivian	Cleaner	Resident
Lucy	Ecuadorian	Cleaner	Resident
Alvaro	Bolivian	Window cleaner	Undocumented
Carlos	Ecuadorian	Nanny	Dual nationality
Astrid	Bolivian	Cleaner	Student
Catalina	Bolivian	Cleaner	Undocumented
Diana	Bolivian	Cleaner	Waiting for documents
Mario	Bolivian	Chef	Undocumented
Ricardo	Ecuadorian	Facilities assistance	Student
Dolly	Bolivian	Cleaner	Undocumented
Nora	Ecuadorian	Hospitality	Applying for residence
Hernestina	Ecuadorian	Cleaner	Student

Elizabet	Ecuadorian	Cleaner	Undocumented
Liliana	Ecuadorian	Cleaner	Undocumented
Mauricio	Ecuadorian	Works in family cleaning business	ILR
Paola	Bolivian	Hairdresser	Student visa
Jose	Colombian	Owns hairdressers	British citizen
Wilson	Colombian	Disabled (receives benefits)	Resident/ILR
Alberto	Colombian	Owns legal advice business	British citizen
Alejandro	Colombian	Student	British citizen
Miriam	Bolivian	Unemployed	Undocumented
Edgar	Colombian	Unemployed (receives benefits)	British citizen
Libia	Ecuadorian	Cleaner	ILR
Sebastian	Colombian	Laundry worker	ILR
Alicia	Colombian	Au pair	Student visa
Clarena	Colombian	Housewife	ILR/passport
Helena	Bolivian	Cleaner	Student
Alba	Bolivian	Housewife	Undocumented
Fernanda	Bolivian	Nanny	Diplomatic visa
Edilma	Colombian	Remittance agency/ cleaner	Resident/British passport
Eduardo	Ecuadorian	Boxing trainer/ volunteer (receives benefits)	Resident
Adriana	Ecuadorian	Unemployed (receives benefits)	Resident
Santiago	Ecuadorian	Unemployed (receives benefits)	Resident
Fany	Ecuadorian	Cleaner	Resident
Clara	Colombian	Cleaner	Resident
Tomas	Colombian	Cleaner	Resident
Esperanza	Colombian	Cleaning manager	Resident
Sara	Colombian	Student	Student
Manuela	Bolivian	Cleaner	Resident
Lida	Ecuadorian	Student/Carila Volunteer	Resident
Isabel	Colombian	Cleaner	Resident



Carila



Latin American Welfare Group

- Would you like to contribute to CARILA'S work?
- Would you like to play an active role at CARILA?

* If your answer is **YES**, Please register yourself/organisation as a **MEMBER**.

- ORGANISATIONS £10
- INDIVIDUAL
 - a) Employed £6
 - b) Concessions £3

Please fill in your contact details and return it to us at the address below: FAO to Coordinator.

Name

Address

Telephone _____ Mob _____

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