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The Combined Effect of Qualifications and Marriage on the Employment Trajectories of Peruvian Graduates in Switzerland

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Abstract

Much research to date has shown that migrants from the Global South to the wealthier nations of the North often experience a devaluation of their educational credentials, notably because their initial qualifications are not recognised in their host countries. The limited validity of educational achievements is often identified as the main cause of the relatively unfavourable labour market outcomes of highly skilled migrants, who tend to be concentrated in the least prestigious employment sectors and to bare an unequal share of precarious jobs. In this article, we adopt a slightly different approach to this issue, by focussing on the professional and personal trajectories of migrants who acquired education credentials in their host country. Although previous research has stressed the difficulties faced by non-EU students in Swiss HE institutions, both in terms of successfully completing their educational programme and in finding qualified jobs afterwards, the aim of the article is to better understand the gender dynamics that are associated with post-graduation employment trajectories. By examining the employment outcomes of Peruvian graduates, from Swiss Higher Education (HE) institutions, we are able to reveal the influence of educational credentials on their subsequent life-course is mediated by events in other life spheres. Using a gendersensitive approach, we analyse the effects of legal barriers and family dynamics on the employment trajectories of migrant graduates. We show that obtaining a Swiss HE qualification is rarely enough to guarantee access to the upper reaches of the Swiss labour market. In most cases, such qualifications need to be combined with marriage to a Swiss (or EU) citizen before these highly qualified migrants are able to settle legally in the host country and start a career that is congruent to their educational credentials. However, the family reunification route into legal residency is not without its own hazards. For women in particular, it may cancel out some of the advantages associated with having a Swiss qualification and lead to precarious or under-qualified positions on the labour market.

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Introduction

Much research to date has shown that migrants from the Global South to the wealthier nations of the North often experience a devaluation of their educational credentials, notably because their initial qualifications are not recognised in their host countries (Al Ariss et al. 2013; Iredale 2005; Riaño and Baghdadi 2007). The limited validity of educational achievements is often identified as the main cause of the relatively unfavourable labour market outcomes of highly skilled migrants, who tend to be concentrated in the least prestigious employment sectors and to bare an unequal share of precarious jobs (Elrick 2015; Liversage 2009a; Raghuram and Kofman 2004; Reyneri 2004; Triandafyllidou and Isaakyan 2016).

In this article, we adopt a slightly different approach to this issue, by focussing on the professional and personal trajectories of migrants who acquired education credentials in their host country (Bailey and Mulder 2017). By examining the employment outcomes of non-EU[1] graduates from Swiss Higher Education (HE) institutions, we are able to reveal that the influence of educational credentials on their subsequent life-course is mediated by events in other life spheres (Levy and Widmer 2013a). Using a gender-sensitive approach, we analyse the effects of legal barriers (Axelsson 2016; Hawthorne 2014; Raghuram 2008; Shinozaki 2017) and family dynamics (Geddie 2013; Phan et al. 2015; Raghuram 2004, 2008; Schaer et al. 2016a) on the employment trajectories of migrant graduates.

We focus solely on migrants from a single non-EU country (Peru) who have received at least one tertiary education diploma from a Swiss HE institution, and who were still living in Switzerland at the time of the study. Although previous research has stressed the difficulties faced by non-EU students in Swiss HE institutions, both in terms of successfully completing their educational programme and in finding qualified jobs afterwards (Guissé and Bolzman 2015), the aim of the article is to better understand the gender dynamics that are associated with post-graduation employment trajectories. We show that obtaining a Swiss HE qualification is rarely enough to guarantee access to the upper reaches of the Swiss labour market. In most cases, such qualifications need to be combined with marriage to a Swiss (or EU) citizen before these highly qualified migrants are able to settle legally in the host country and start a career that is congruent to their educational credentials. However, the family reunification route into legal residency is not without its own hazards. For women in particular, it may cancel out some of the advantages associated with having a Swiss qualification and lead to precarious or under-qualified positions on the labour market.

Whilst investigating under what circumstances partnership and parenthood influence the employment trajectories of Peruvian graduates, we are also interested in exploring the ways in which access to Swiss HE institutions and qualifications in turn influences

[1] The classification of migrants used in Swiss Law is based on a division between European Union (EU) and citizens and non-European ones. Under this distinction, it is usually much easier for EU citizens to study, work and settle legally in Switzerland than it is for citizens from any other part of the world

the family-formation patterns and gender arrangements within foreign and bi-national households. We show that holding a Swiss HE qualification does not lead to identical labour market outcomes for all the Peruvian migrants we met. Not only are their employment opportunities influenced by the type of qualification and the demographic characteristics of particular employment sectors, they also depend to a large extent on the gendered division of care and domestic labour that is adopted within households. Overall, it appears that the gender configurations in the family sphere have a greater influence on the employment opportunities of these highly qualified migrants than the level or origin of their educational credentials per se.

The article is structured around five main sections. After briefly presenting the level of international student mobility from non-EU countries to Switzerland and explaining the focus of our study on Peruvian graduates (2), we briefly describe some of the specificities of the Swiss migration regime (3). We then go on to review migrant family-formation patterns, notably through bi-national marriages (4). After describing our research methods (5), we then present in some detail the three main transition patterns of Peruvian graduates to the Swiss labour market, as identified in our study population (6).

International Student Mobility to Switzerland

According to the Swiss Federal Statistics Office (SFSO), in 2015–2016, 24.9% of Swiss HE students were "foreigners"[2], in the sense that they had obtained their secondary school-leaving diploma outside of Switzerland, as compared to just 13.1% of students in 1990–1991 (SFSO 2017b). The proportion of foreign students increases by level of study: in 2010–2011, foreigners represent 22% of students at bachelor level, but 52.1% of PhD students (Kunz 2011, p. 7). It also varies by type of institution, with the share of foreign students being lower in universities of applied sciences (12.5%) and teacher training institutions (5%) than in universities (SFSO 2017b). With the exclusion of PhDs, most foreign students (74%) at bachelor and master levels come from neighbouring countries and other EU member states, while only 4% come from Central and South America (CSA) (Fischer and Gerhard Ortega 2015, p. 11).

Establishing the importance and evolution of international student migration to Switzerland is no easy task, since the category "foreign students" includes people with very different backgrounds and life histories (Teichler 2015). In Switzerland, research has focussed on the educational accomplishments of second-generation immigrants (Fibbi et al. 2003; Griga 2014), i.e. in non-mobile foreign students who have already lived and studied in their host/home country, rather than on non-EU foreigners who specifically move to Switzerland in order to study. The latter have to follow a long and often complex route into the country, via selective admission procedures to HE institutions. Applications to particular Swiss HE institutions are generally made from their home countries (Guissé and Bolzman 2015) and need to be accompanied by certified translations of their previous diplomas and grade certificates into one of the official Swiss languages. Each HE

[2] As Riaño and Baghadi have stressed: "The term foreigner (living in Switzerland either temporarily or long-term but not having Swiss citizenship), rather than immigrant (foreign-born) is used in Swiss legislation and statistics. This reflects a legal conception of citizenship based on the principle of descent rather than on place of birth" (2007: p. 164). Due to this conception, as direct descendants of at least one Swiss parent, grandparent or more distant relative, some Peruvian migrants actually have Swiss citizenship before moving to the country.

institution is entitled to make its' own decision concerning the entry regulations to particular courses and is free to recognise (or not) qualifications obtained abroad[3]. Once they have obtained a place at a HE institution, non-EU citizens have to apply for a student visa. This involves providing the Swiss Embassy in their home country with a number of formal documents, including a letter of acceptance to the study program, proof of economic solvency (the deposit of approx. 24,000 CHF in a Swiss bank account) and/or a letter of sponsorship from a Swiss citizen. This process is both costly and time-consuming.[4] The Federal government also runs its own highly selective student mobility programmes, via a limited number of studentships for applicants from non-EU countries. These provide a monthly stipend of 2000 CHF for a period of 3 years to a small number of "promising" PhD candidates from Asia, Africa or Latin America. Foreign students who pass through this selective route into the Swiss HE system are usually helped with their visa applications and are sometimes provided with subsidised student accommodation for the duration of their studies.

Peruvian citizens who plan to study in Switzerland have to consider the opportunities and limitations of these procedures. Compared to other well-documented cases of Latin American migration (to the USA, for example), Peruvian migration is geographically scattered[5] and is very socially selective (Takenaka and Pren 2010). Peruvian migrants are highly educated: 29% declare a tertiary level of education (Paerregaard 2015), and they are predominantly female (Sanchez 2012, p. 78). Furthermore, in 2007, more than 50% of Peruvian migrants belonged to middle class categories and 26.3% belonged to the most privileged socioeconomic groups, while only 20.7% of them came from underprivileged backgrounds (Sanchez 2012, p. 85). In addition, 57.7% of Peruvian migrants come from the more affluent regions, either the capital, Lima, (45.9%) or other coastal cities (Sanchez 2012, p. 86). The Peruvian HE system reinforces these inequalities. Private universities, which cost 300 USD per month and are mostly located in the capital, provide a higher quality of education and student services than most public universities[6]. The focus on Peruvians graduates, a minority but highly selective group of migrants, is well suited to the study of employment outcomes for migrants who graduate abroad. Our study provides novel evidence of the ways in which privileges from the home country are mobilised or neutralised in the course of migration, sometimes through complex channels.

The Swiss Migration Regime

The Swiss migration regime is generally recognised as being one of the most restrictive in Europe (Huddleston et al. 2011). However, rather than focussing primarily on legal restrictions and entitlements, we are particularly interested in studying the complex ways

[3] In many cases, foreign students are admitted to enrol on the condition that they pass a number of additional courses in advance of formal registration to the degree programme they want to follow. Once these additional credits have been obtained, they follow the courses under the same conditions as Swiss and EU students.

[4] Some of our interviewees mentioned having to overcome passive or active resistance to their visa applications on the part of Embassy administrative staff.

[5] In 2011, 31.5% of Peruvian migrants were living in the USA, while 53.1% of them were living in other countries such as Spain (16%), Argentina (14.3%), Italy (10.1%), Chile (8.8%) and Japan (4.1%). Only 0.7% of them were in Switzerland (Sanchez 2012, p. 88).

[6] One exception is the National University of Engineering located in Lima that has a male-dominated student population and a highly competitive entrance exam.

in which individuals combine the opportunities associated with educational migration, so-called economic migration and family reunification measures (Axelsson 2016; Hawthorne 2014; King and Raghuram 2013; Wilken and Dahlberg 2017). Although non-EU foreign students do have access to Swiss residential permits, these are only valid for the precise duration of their study programme (Riaño et al. 2017). Before the 1990s, Peruvian citizens did not need a visa to enter Switzerland. Likewise, before the 2008 Federal Act on Foreign Nationals imposed tighter restrictions on the ability of non-EU citizens to study, work or settle in the country (Piguet 2013), Peruvians could switch quite easily from a tourist visa to a student permit or even to a work permit. Although Switzerland has not been a common destination for Peruvian migrants, the recent economic crisis in Southern Europe has led some of those who initially settled in the Spain to move on to Switzerland, where unemployment rates remain well below the EU average and where salaries are relatively high. In 2015, Peru's National Office of Electoral Processes had 6482 registered voters in Switzerland, while the Swiss Federal Statistical Office counted 2898 Peruvian citizens in 2015[7] (SFSO 2016). Up until 2011, non-EU foreign students were required to leave the country immediately after graduation. Since that date, partly in response to the recurrent labour shortages identified in particular sectors of the Swiss labour market (Aratnam 2012), a 6-month "job search extension" to student permits has been introduced (State Secretariat for Migration 2011). However, in order to recruit a non-EU foreign graduate, employers are required to attest that the person in question is better qualified than any available Swiss or EU citizen (The Federal Council 2005), under a so-called essential employment clause that is negotiable for cases of high academic or economic interest (Hercog 2017; Hercog and Sandoz 2018). Foreign graduates with Swiss qualifications thus need to find an employer who is willing to "sponsor" their work permit application, by attesting a shortage of equally qualified Swiss or EU candidates in the field.

Several authors have noted that this type of procedure tends to create a "gendered global hierarchy of professions", which considers male-dominated sectors such as finance and technology to be of "greater national interest for global competitiveness" than female-dominated sectors such as care work and welfare services (Kofman and Raghuram 2006, pp. 282–303). This is even more likely to be the case, since Peruvian and Swiss HE systems show a similar pattern of gender segregation. In Peruvian universities, 27.8% of male students are concentrated in engineering courses (INEI 2015). In Switzerland, women represent only 29.1% of engineering students, whereas they make up 67.5% of students in the social sciences and humanities (SSH). Although the Swiss HE sector is highly internationalised, the share of foreigners is much greater in the male-dominated disciplines (42.7% in engineering) than in the female-dominated ones (24.8% in SSH) (SFSO 2017a).

Given the uncertainties surrounding the transition from Swiss HE institutions to the local labour market, graduates from non-EU countries who wish to remain in Switzerland are likely to consider "family reunification" measures, which are often seen as more immediately accessible than those involving the "essential employment" clause. Family reunification procedures have frequently been identified as an important route into legal settlement for poorly qualified foreign women, particularly in the care sector (Banfi and Boccagni 2011; Bonizzoni 2015). Only recently has the importance of these procedures

[7] Some Peruvians are not counted in these statistics because they have dual nationality from Switzerland or other European countries. Peruvians aged below 18 years old are not counted as voters. Of course, undocumented Peruvians are not identified in the official statistics either.

for highly qualified migrants started to be recognised (Fleischer 2011; Schaer et al. 2016a; Zittoun and Cangià 2018).

As with student permits, Swiss work and family reunification permits allow non-EU citizens conditional residence in the country. The so-called B permits are valid for 12 months and renewal is subject to proving the fulfilment of the initial purpose of stay. In addition, the number of work permits allocated is subject to a national, annual quota[8]. In contrast, the spouses of Swiss citizens can apply for Swiss nationality after 5 years of marriage or even after 3 years if they chose to use the "fast-track" option, subject to proving "successful integration".

Making the Link Between International Student Mobility, Bi-national Marriage and the Labour Market

In Switzerland, the percentage of couples composed of people of different nationalities has increased steadily, from 20% in the 1970s to 40% in the 2000s (Mosimann 2016). In 2015, 36% of marriages were composed of a foreign spouse and a Swiss citizen, 59.5% of these marriages involved a foreigner from outside Europe and 62.5% involved a female foreigner from non-EU countries (FSO 2017). In 2014, family reunification permits represent the second largest source of migration flow into Switzerland after the UE free movement permits (OECD 2016, p. 307). In 2010, approximately 11% of foreigners married to a Swiss citizen were from Central or South America (CSA) and Peru ranked in third place: 70% of these marriages are between a Peruvian woman and a Swiss man (FSO 2016). Although the increase in bi-national marriages has undoubtedly contributed to the increase in the immigrant population in Switzerland, little is known about the employment outcomes of highly skilled migrants who use the family reunification channels.

Once again, the categories used to describe the internationalisation of family formation patterns are often rather fuzzy. The distinctions made between mixed marriages, bi-national marriages, transnational marriages, arranged marriages, sham marriages, etc. are not always clear in practice (Beck-Gernsheim 2007). Other studies about the migration patterns of non-EU citizens to Europe emphasise the differentiation operated between transnational families due to the increasing fragmentation of the right to family reunification in Europe (Bonizzoni 2011). In this article, we use the concept of bi-national marriages as it "best captures the inter-linkage of issues related to the different cultural background of the spouses with issues related to citizenship and residence" (Kraler et al. 2011, pp. 26–27).

When analysing the effects of the Swiss migration regime on the family-formation patterns developed by Peruvian graduates from Swiss HE institutions, it is important to stress the relatively differentiated gender regime that prevails in the Swiss context (Giraud and Lucas 2009). The scarcity and cost of public childcare services hinders women's full-time, continuous labour market participation, particularly after the birth of a first child (Giudici and Gauthier 2009; Le Goff and Levy 2016). It has been argued that the access of foreign spouses to settlement rights in Switzerland is conditioned on scrupulous conformity to the dominant "master status" (Krüger and Levy 2001) of the Swiss gender regime (Levy and Widmer 2013b; Riaño 2011; Riaño and Baghdadi 2007).

[8] For workers, there is also a fixed-term "L" permit that is valid for less than 12 months. Quotas for work permits in 2016 stood at: 4000 L permits and 2500 B permits (State Secretariat for Migration, 2015).

The literature on student migration is rather ambivalent as to the long-term implications of access to qualifications from host country HE institutions on the life-course trajectories of highly skilled migrants (King and Raghuram 2013; Kõu et al. 2015). In the same vein, only a few, recent studies of bi-national marriages have considered the role of qualifications on family dynamics (Kõu et al. 2017; Liversage 2009b; Riaño et al. 2015). However, results from both types of literature reveal some common features. Studies of international student migration analyse the issues of labour market participation after graduation in the host country (Baláž and Williams 2004; Hawthorne 2014; Mosneaga and Winther 2013; Suter and Jandl 2008; Wilken and Dahlberg 2017) or the role of spouses during the completion of the academic program abroad (Bordoloi 2015; Cangià et al. 2018; Schaer et al. 2016b). Studies of bi-national marriages emphasise status-based inequalities within couples composed of EU and non-EU citizens (Fleischer 2011), as well as skills-based inequalities within couples where non-EU spouses are more highly qualified than their EU partners (Guetto and Azzolini 2015). A limited number of studies have identified marriage to a national as a prime route for (female) highly skilled foreigners into host country labour markets (Kofman and Raghuram 2006). Thus, the role of qualifications earned at destination on the employment trajectories of highly skilled migrants is also dependent on dynamics in the non-professional life spheres.

Drawing on a life-course perspective, this article proposes to analyse events that demonstrate the interdependence of educational, professional, legal and family trajectories in the transition of Peruvian graduates of Swiss HE institution to the labour market at destination. We argue that the ability of migrants with Swiss qualifications to translate their educational credentials into professional capital is highly dependent on the negotiation of each spouse's career opportunities and caregiving responsibilities within their own household and extended family networks (Creese et al. 2008; Phan et al. 2015; Riaño et al. 2015). Thus, rather than presuming a binary pattern of the higher education to employment transition for migrant men and women in the Swiss context, we propose to focus on the heterogeneity of the experiences of qualified Peruvian migrants, that partly reproduce and partly transcend the gender divide.

Research Methods

The data presented here were collected by the first author in the course of her PhD research and are based on 54 biographical interviews carried out—in Spanish—with Peruvian men and women living in the French- and German-speaking regions of Switzerland. Peruvian nationality was the main selection criterion and those with dual nationality were included[9]. The aim of these interviews, which were carried out using the a purposely designed life-calendar (Morselli et al. 2013)[10], was to collect systematic

[9] Most of the interviewees (31) had acquired the nationality of a European country during the migration process: 24 obtained the Swiss passport, and 7 obtained the Spanish one. A minority (3) already had Swiss (2) or European nationality (1) before leaving Peru, on the grounds of family lineage.

[10] A life-calendar is defined as "a two-way grid, with the temporal dimension on the one side, and different life domains on the other. Respondents are asked to report events for each life domain, relating them to what happened across other domains or in reference to time landmarks. While filling in this calendar, respondents can visualize their life trajectory, linking what happened to when, where and for how long it happened" (Morselli et al. 2013, p. 3).

information about the important events in the participant's legal, professional and family histories, as well as their own explanations of their pattern of transition to the labour market (or not). Contact with interviewees was established through personal networks and migrant associations using a "snowball" technique in order to reach a study population that was as diverse as possible, in terms of gender, age, education, employment status, migration history and family-formation patterns. Almost all the interviewees (43) had married someone with EU or Swiss citizenship in the course of their migration trajectory.

Although most of the interviewees (34) had post-compulsory education credentials earned in Peru, only 16 of them had also graduated from a Swiss HE institution. This article is thus based on a sub-group of 16 participants (8 women and 8 men) who had Swiss HE qualifications (see Table 1 for details). Two interviewees (1 man and 1 woman) had studied at a University of Applied Sciences; nine (2 men and 7 women) had studied at a University and five (all men) had graduated from one of the Swiss Federal Engineering Schools. The family-formation patterns of those Peruvians who had graduated from a Swiss HE institutions were similar to those of the initial population studied, in that most of them had been married to a Swiss or EU national at some point in their lives: nine (3 men and 6 women) had a Swiss spouse, one woman had married an EU national and 2 men had a Peruvian spouse. In addition, four of the graduates (3 men and 1 woman) were single with no children at the time of the interview. The two male graduates who were married to a Peruvian woman and one

t1.1 **Table 1** Interviewee profiles

		Name	Initial field of study	Work experience before migration	Age at/year of migration	Migration type	Field of Swiss degree
t1.3	1	Carlos	Engineer	None	18/1995	Family	Engineering
t1.4	2	Samuel	Architect	Architect	38/2007	Student	Engineering
t1.5	3	Betty	Linguistics	Teaching	24/1992	Swiss passport	Linguistics
t1.6	4	Marco	Environment	Environmentalist	25/2011	Student	Engineering
t1.7	5	Augusto	Engineer	Engineer	26/2011	Student	Engineering
t1.8	6	Coco	Physics	Research	29/2008	Student	Engineering
t1.9	7	Paco	Lawyer	Lawyer	28/1990	Student	Business studies
t1.10	8	Ernesto	Engineer	Engineer	26/2008	Student	Engineering
t1.11	9	Marta	Social Worker	Social worker	27/1997	Student	Social work
t1.12	10	Concha	Doctor	Doctor	37/2010	Marriage	Medicine
t1.13	11	Lola	Secretary	Secretary	26/1990	Student	Sociology
t1.14	12	Hilda	Translator	None	20/1981	Student	Linguistics
t1.15	13	Jenny	None	Secretary	29/1990	Student	Sociology
t1.16	14	Rosa	Journalist	Journalist	28/1990	Student	Sociology
t1.17	15	Pepe	Anthropology	Anthropologist	31/2012	Swiss passport	Anthropology (unfinished)
t1.18	16	Rocio	Engineer	None	22/1996	Undocumented	Humanities

of the unmarried graduates already had a Swiss passport on arrival, through their family descendance. The other three single interviewees were all engineering graduates.

The data enabled us to adopt a multidimensional approach to life histories, since: "the complete biographical path of an individual is composed of a series of 'parallel' trajectories: familial, relational, occupational, residential, etc." (Levy and Widmer 2013a, p. 17). In order to represent the various patterns of labour market participation after graduation, we adopted an annotation technique that enables us to compare the life-histories of people who share similar circumstances, but without subsuming individual experiences under over-generalised categorisations (Liversage 2009a, p. 207). This type of notation is valuable for depicting "an individual's movements through time and (stratified) social space"(Liversage 2009a, p. 208).

Employment Trajectories of Peruvians with Swiss HE Qualifications

The interviews and life-history calendars reveal that access to host country qualifications does not automatically improve the labour market outcomes of the Peruvian immigrants we interviewed. As could be expected, the type of qualification and field of studies appear to play a major role in ensuring not only that Peruvian graduates from a Swiss HE institution find a job, but also that they are employed at a level that is commensurate with their educational credentials. However, perhaps more surprisingly, our interviews indicate the vital importance of family reunification measures in ensuring that Peruvian migrants with Swiss qualifications are able to access the upper reaches of the national labour market. Nevertheless, when the right to work is achieved through marriage to a Swiss or EU national, rather than through the "essential employment" clause, these migrants face a higher risk of professional disqualification. They are much less likely to experience direct access to jobs that are commensurate with their educational credentials than their colleagues who have been sponsored by prospective employers. We can thus affirm that marriage to a Swiss or EU-national has a potentially variable effect on the employment outcomes of foreign graduates from host country HE institutions. In some cases, marriage acts as an additional resource, helping graduates to access the legal security required to get a first foothold on the labour market and subsequently enabling them to move up the career ladder in their chosen field of employment. In other cases, marriage to a Swiss or EU-national appears to cancel out the advantages of possessing a Swiss degree, sending the respondents down a slippery slope into precarious and part-time jobs, sometimes even full-time domesticity, implying long-term financial dependency on their (Swiss or European) spouse.

Although the study sample is not representative of the Peruvian migrant population as a whole, it is interesting to note that over half of the interviewees (10) where employed in highly skilled, full-time and permanent jobs at the time of the interview. The other half had been unsuccessful in finding jobs that were commensurate with their Swiss qualifications and were either working in jobs that were below their skill levels or desired working time (5), or had dedicated themselves to (almost) full-time home-making (1).

In the summary graphs presented below (Fig. 1), we outline three distinct patterns of the transition from education in a Swiss HE to employment at destination for Peruvian migrants. In these graphs, the horizontal *x*-axis depicts both historical time and the number of years since arrival in Switzerland; it thus enables us to contextualise individual

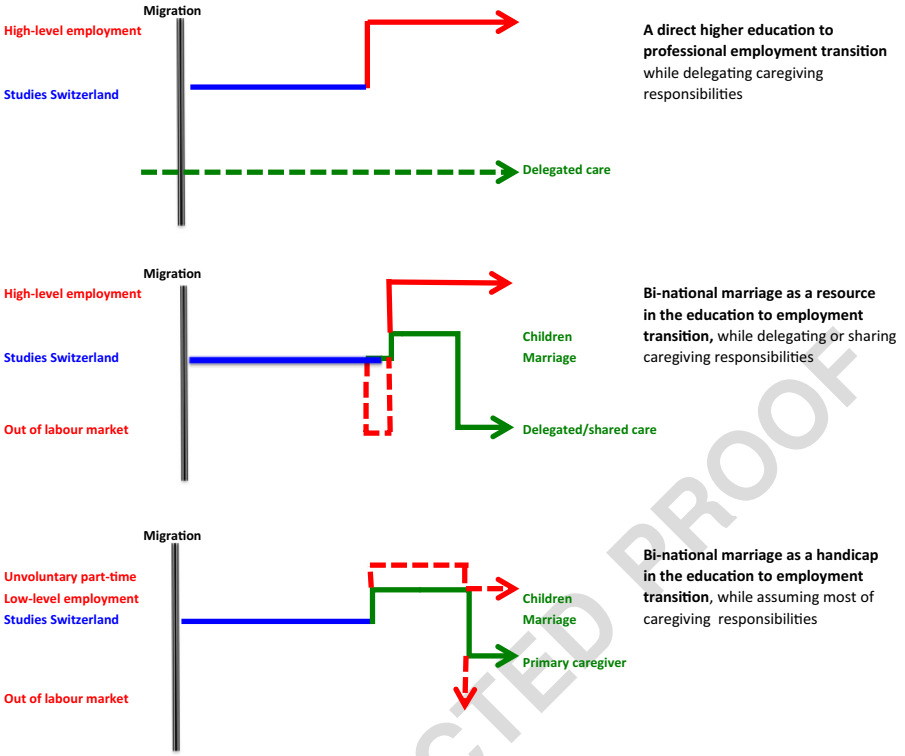

Fig. 1 Professional trajectories of Peruvians with Swiss HE qualifications

trajectories within historical contexts, such as the political instability and the economic crisis that took place in Peru between 1980 and 2000, or the adoption of 2008 Foreign Nationals Act in Switzerland. The interviewees had arrived in Switzerland over a period of almost three decades—from 1980 to 2010. They had also migrated at quite different ages (between 18 and 38 years), although the majority had arrived in Switzerland between the age of 25 and 30 years. Consequently, intersections between historical time and biographical time varied across the 16 interviews analysed here (see Fig. 1).

The vertical *y*-axis represents respondents' positions and movement though social space. The left-hand side of the graph depicts educational and professional events. The blue arrow refers to periods of study in Peruvian or Swiss HE institutions, including any language courses. Time spent in employment figures in the upper left-hand side of the graph, placing stable, full-time employment commensurate to skills, as the most desirable outcome. Other employment statuses are graded according to the resources they bring to the respondents. The category "involuntary part-time" refers to jobs that are also commensurate with the educational credentials, but that are occupied on an involuntary part-time basis (usually below 50%). Finally, the category "low-level employment" refers to jobs that do not require any particular qualifications and that are often precarious and unstable. The category "out of the labour market" refers to those respondents who were not in employment at the time of the interview (including those in voluntary work or full-time home-making), but who were not officially registered as unemployed either. On the right-hand side of the graph, the green arrow depicts different family events: partnership,

marriage, birth of children and degree of care responsibilities, which is divided into three distinct categories: the "delegated care" category corresponds to situations where the respondent delegates almost all caregiving responsibilities to someone else, usually their spouse. The "shared care" category depicts situations where care activities are equally shared between both partners and the "primary caregiver" category designates situations where the respondent has personal and sole responsibility for the domestic and care arrangements of the household.

As shown in Fig. 1, the first pathway on to the labour market corresponds to cases where the respondents immediately found a qualified job after graduation from a Swiss HE institution (see Table 1, nos. 1–6). In this case, they obtained a work permit on the basis of the "essential employment" clause and did not have to mobilise any other resources in order to remain in the country after their student permit expired[11]. In this case, the red and green arrows do not converge at any point. This direct route into qualified employment is associated with the delegation of most care responsibilities to a spouse.

The second path into employment represents situations where the transition between graduation from a Swiss HE institution and access to a qualified job was mediated by marriage to a Swiss or EU citizen (see Table 1, nos. 7–10). In this case, despite having Swiss HE qualifications, respondents were dependant on family reunification measures for gaining access to the upper reaches of the Swiss labour market (all the arrows converge at a particular point). In this case, care is either shared equally between partners or is delegated to a spouse.

In contrast, a third and final ideal-type model represents the trajectories of those respondents for whom marriage to a Swiss or EU national after graduation does not enable access to the upper reaches of the labour market, but acts rather as a precondition for labour market exit or, at best, part-time and discontinuous labour market participation, combined with primary responsibility for domestic and care activities (see Table 1, nos. 11–16).

A Direct HE to Employment Transition Pattern

This graph refers to the paths of Peruvians who successfully earned a Swiss degree within the allocated time frame and who started a highly skilled job almost immediately after graduation. Out of the 6 interviewees whose trajectories correspond to this pattern, five are male engineering graduates and one is a woman with a university degree in the Humanities. The latter already had a Swiss passport at arrival due to her family background. The male engineering graduates are sponsored by high-tech companies and research and development centres and can therefore mobilise the "essential employment" clause to transition directly into a qualified job. Apparently, engineering graduates are almost automatically considered to be of "high economic interest" to Switzerland, despite having a non-EU migrant background. For the female Humanities graduate, it would seem that the legal security of holding a Swiss passport cancelled out the need to obtain a work permit after graduation[12]. Tin our sub-sample, this first

[11] It is nevertheless important to note that some of these respondents had been able to come to study in Switzerland in the first place due to family connections in the country. This entitled them to a family reunification permit prior to commencing their studies.

[12] Although the comparison would undoubtedly have been enlightening, it was impossible to find a Peruvian female engineering graduate to interview. This is mainly because women are equally under-represented in engineering in Peru and Switzerland.

pattern of transition is clearly male-dominated. Along with the assurance of direct employment provided by the highly masculinised field of engineering, the delegation of care work—either to the female spouse at destination or to female family members in Peru—is central to the engineer's continued success in demanding and well-paid jobs.

In order to illustrate this first pattern of transition, we can cite the example of Samuel, who started to train as an architect in Peru before travelling to Europe during a "gap year" funded by his parents (see Fig. 3). While he was in Germany, he met a Swiss woman, who was the daughter of his German language teacher (1). At the end of his stay, Samuel returned to Peru to finish his degree (5). His Swiss girlfriend joined him there; they married in Peru (2) and had two children (3). Whilst in Peru, his wife worked part-time as a German language teacher in a private school and looked after the children, with the help of her mother-in-law (4). After working as an independent architect for some years (6), Samuel was recommended by one of his former teachers for an 18-month scholarship to one of the Federal engineering schools in Switzerland. His wife and kids moved to Switzerland with him (7). After passing his Master degree, he was awarded an additional grant to continue on to a PhD while his wife continued to take sole responsibility for domestic arrangements, at the expense of her own career (8). Finding affordable childcare solutions or receiving help from family members was harder in Switzerland than it had been in Peru. At the end of his first 3 years at the engineering school, Samuel made a successful "fast track" application for Swiss citizenship. Immediately after defending his doctorate, his wife asked for a divorce on the grounds that he was not spending enough time with his family (9) and she moved back to her home city with their children. Samuel has always worked full-time as an architect in the French-speaking part of Switzerland (10) (Fig. 2). Q6

Gendered Configurations in the Direct Transition to the Skilled Labour Market

This pattern of post-graduation transition to the labour market is associated with particular types of HE qualifications and depends on a normative gender division of domestic labour and childcare. It is particularly visible amongst male engineering students, who are actively sought after by prospective employers, sometimes even before graduation. For example, Augusto was awarded the same Federal scholarship as Samuel and passed an MA degree in computer science. Even before he graduated, he was contacted by a "head-hunter" working for a multinational company looking for a

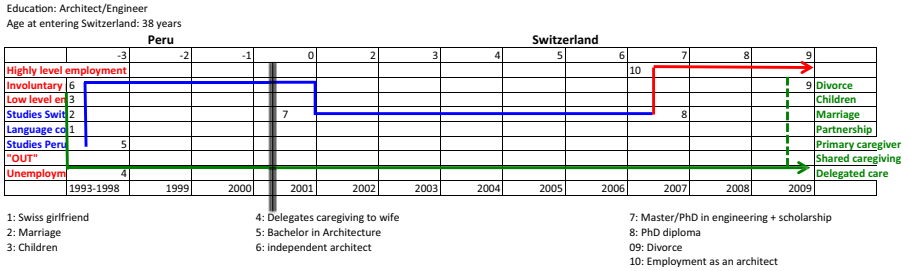

Fig. 2 Lifelines of Samuel

software specialist to be based in Switzerland. The company provided Augusto with all the administrative paperwork required to obtain a work permit, whilst offering him a permanent employment contract. As a single man, Augusto had never sent any remittances back to his family in Peru, nor had he ever provided hands-on care to any family member. This smooth transition into highly skilled jobs would seem to be restricted to very masculine fields of expertise, and to be fostered by a very traditional division of domestic labour and care work in transnational families.

In this pattern, marriage to a Swiss national is of no consequence for the successful transition to employment at destination. However, the successful completion of an engineering degree and the subsequent career path of these migrant men are dependent on their ability to delegate domestic and care responsibilities: usually to their mothers in the home country and to their spouses in the host country context. Here, the decision to give priority to the male career is taken irrespective of the nationality of the spouses. It is based on an evaluation of the respective career opportunities available to men and women in the Swiss context. Since the jobs available to women are usually less well paid then those open to men, the adoption of a "modified male breadwinner" family configuration appears all the more rational. This is consolidated by the long hours work culture that prevails in many male-dominated areas of the Swiss labour market (Second author, 2015, pp. 8–9).

Bi-national Marriage as a Resource in the Transition Process

Marriage to a Swiss or EU citizen offers an alternative route to legal settlement in Switzerland for foreign graduates, although the positive labour market outcomes of this second pattern of transition often take longer to achieve than those associated with the previous ideal-type. If a person is unable to immediately enter the labour market after graduation from a Swiss HE, marriage to a Swiss or EU national provides an alternative route to legal residence and often allows the acquisition of additional skills that can improve employment opportunities in the Swiss labour market. This second transition pattern was observed in the case of male and female graduates in engineering (1), medicine (1) and the SSH domain (3). All these Peruvians decided to marry their Swiss or EU partner in to solve the legal impasse they experienced after graduation: the expiration of their student permit and the absence of prospective employers to sponsor a work permit. The legal security obtained through family reunification channels provided them the additional time required to improve their employability. This eventually led them into jobs that were commensurate to their skills. For example, learning a regional language (French or German), doing volunteer work in associations related to their chosen professional domain or accepting unqualified jobs in order to be trained in specific skills are all strategies adopted by these interviewees, and they all depend on the prior acquisition of settlement rights. Here, bi-national marriage was almost always followed by parenthood. As in the previous pattern, the Peruvian male graduates generally delegated care work to their female spouses. However, some of the female graduates managed to negotiate shared caregiving arrangements with their spouses. This second transition can be illustrated by the case of Marta, a social work professor at a Swiss University of applied science (see Fig. 3).

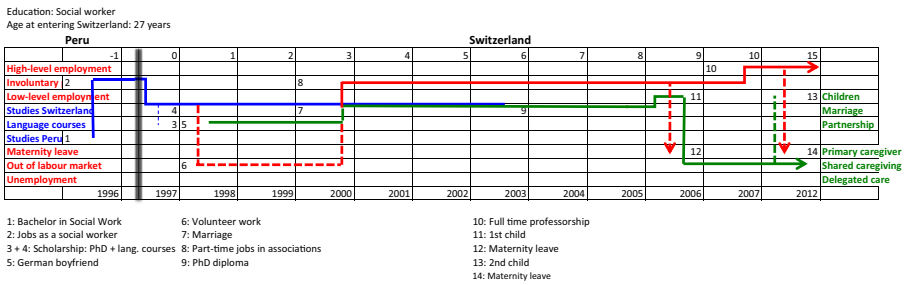

Fig. 3 Lifelines of Marta

After earning her Bachelor degree in Peru (1), Marta worked for several NGOs involved in women's health issues (2). She won a Swiss Federal scholarship to do a PhD in social work, and was able to take some French language courses before the start of the course (3+4). During her PhD, she wrote a dissertation on migrants' health issues, and started to do volunteer work with local NGOs (6). Although she took more time than expected to finish her doctoral dissertation (9), one of the NGOs she had been volunteering for offered her a part-time research job (50%), which enabled her to fund the last months of her doctoral studies (8). However, she did not have much time left on her student permit and her future employer was not able to mobilise the "essential employment" clause in her favour. She solved this problem by marrying her long-term German partner (7). The experience Marta gained in working for the NGO, along with the topic of her PhD dissertation, helped her get a fixed-term post-doc position at a Swiss University of Applied Science, where she was eventually recruited to a professorship and where she has been working ever since (10). On the birth of her first child (11), Marta was employed on two fixed-term, part-time (50%) research contracts and was entitled to 4 months statutory maternity leave (12). After the birth of her second child (13), she was offered a tenured position and was able to reduce her office hours quite drastically for a year, but then increased progressively up to 80% of a full-time position once she had secured a place for her child at the University crèche (14). She claims that her domestic arrangements are fairly egalitarian, notably because her husband takes on an equal share of the domestic and care arrangements. She believes that this is because her husband's own professional career, as an independent research consultant, is less secure and well paid than her own.

Gendered Configurations in the Bi-national Marriage Transition Pattern

In contrast to the first case, this pattern does not seem to be tied to specific qualifications; transition from the Swiss HE institution to the labour market depends mostly on the legalisation of ongoing intimate relationships. Marriage to a Swiss or EU citizen provides the legal security required to make the transition to employment over a longer period of time (Axelsson 2016). Taking a "step back" in order to achieve the desired employment outcome is an important feature of this pattern of transition. Accepting jobs that are clearly below the educational credentials of the respondents and/or spending time in unpaid activities, such as voluntary work, are strategic stepping-

stones towards more stable and prestigious jobs in the medium term. However, in order to adopt such strategies, the migrants need to maintain their right to legal residence in Switzerland. Thus, Paco, a Peruvian lawyer who graduated in Switzerland with an MBA, explained how he had accepted a relatively poorly paid job in a small insurance company in order to enhance his knowledge of the Swiss insurance sector. He described this as his "tiger strategy": "Have you seen a tiger? The tiger always takes a few steps back before jumping higher". In Marta's case, the combination of a part-time, fixed-term jobs in an NGO and a post-doc position provided her with the specialist knowledge and personal contacts that would prove essential to her successful application for an academic professorship. Many of the cases that correspond to this pattern of transition also include considerable financial and time investment in language courses, in order to enhance employment opportunities in particular parts of Switzerland, a multilingual country.

The stability provided by marriage to a Swiss or EU citizen thus proves to be vital for the successful completion of this rather more prolonged path of transition from a Swiss HE institution to the labour market. Since the qualifications gained by the foreign respondents were not as clearly in demand as in the previous case, a bi-national marriage enables the respondents to remain in the country long enough to consolidate their potential career opportunities, through a more meandering route.

The care configurations associated with this second transition were not systematically aligned to the "modified male breadwinner" model of gender arrangements. The fact that these respondents passed through various forms of precarious and unpredictable employment conditions led to inventive solutions for the organisation of domestic and care duties. Although the more promising career opportunities that were generally available to men did lead to some delegation of care activities to their spouses, this was less systematic than in the previous case. When the employment opportunities of the female spouse were better than those of her partner, more egalitarian care arrangements were established, irrespective of the nationality or citizenship status of the spouses.

Bi-national Marriage as a Handicap in the Transition Process

While the previous transitions eventually lead to stable positions in the upper reaches of the Swiss labour market, the third and final pattern reflects the risk of disqualification that some Peruvian graduates face in the Swiss context. Across the interview subsample, six respondents had failed to achieve employment outcomes that were congruent with their educational credentials. In other words, having a Swiss degree had not proved enough to secure them access to the upper reaches of the Swiss labour market. Although bi-national marriage had provided the legal right to remain in Switzerland, it was associated with downwardly mobile career trajectories that were particularly sensitive to the gendered partnership and/or parental effect. Most of the interviewees whose life-histories fall into this pattern are female graduates (5 women and 1 man) in the humanities and social sciences (5 out of 6). The only male who experienced this type of thwarted transition already had a Swiss passport (due to family lineage) before he registered for a SSH degree in Switzerland. He never actually finished his degree course and, after marrying a compatriot, struggled to find a qualified job. All the other interviewees experienced a legal impasse after graduation. Once again, marriage to a

Swiss or EU citizen provided these respondents with the opportunity to remain legally in the country after the expiration of their student permits. However, contrary to the previous case, the care configurations adopted in these bi-national households tend to hamper the employment and career opportunities of the Peruvian respondents, who end up assuming the largest share of domestic and care duties. As a result, they often end up renouncing any professional ambition they had on arrival in the country. This is a female-dominated path that can be exemplified with the case of Lola (Fig. 4).

Lola worked as a bilingual secretary (French and English) in Peru (1-2), before coming to Switzerland to study sociology (3). Her move to Europe was made possible by the fact that her sister had been living in Switzerland for many years and was able to sponsor her arrival. Lola married her Swiss boyfriend, an engineer (4), after graduation (5). Immediately after their marriage, her husband took up a post-doctoral position in the USA. Lola moved with him and took sole responsibility for organising their daily life in this unfamiliar environment (6). After taking some English language classes, Lola found a part-time job in a library (7). At the end of his 2-year post-doc, her husband found a job in the German-speaking part of Switzerland. Lola followed him there and enrolled for German language courses (9) whilst job-hunting (8). She found a short-term job in an NGO for migrants (10), before taking up a permanent position in a private bookshop and then in a public library (11). Feeling frustration at the lack of career opportunities in either of these positions, she successfully applied for a job as project manager in an international development agency (12). This was seen as a clear "improvement" in her career prospects, particularly as her employer encouraged her to enrol for a master degree in intercultural communication (13). However, just after she graduated from this course, she was made redundant under a downsizing exercise (14). After 6 months on unemployed benefit, she was extremely depressed and applied for a very short-term, part-time (30%) position in a public sector organisation (15). After re-training at her own expense as an adult educator (16-17), she now works part-time (under 50%) for a migrant integration office and as an independent coach and adult educator. In addition, she continues to do voluntary work for a number of NGOs, and to assume almost all the domestic and household duties.

Gendered Temporalities Shaping the Impeded Transition Pattern

Contrary to the other cases, the professional trajectories of these Peruvian graduates are often involuntarily part-time and their employment status remains well below their qualification levels over long periods of time. Almost all the cases observed here

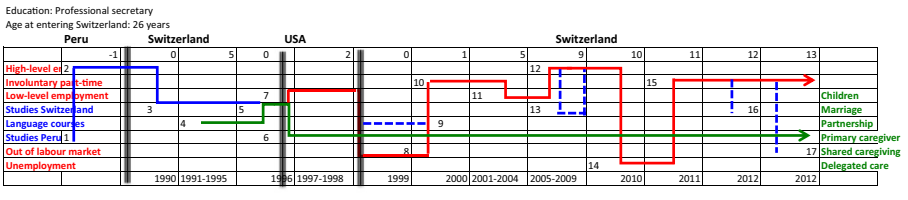

Fig. 4 Lifelines of Lola

concern graduates from the humanities and social sciences, who experience stiffer competition for jobs overall (Gfeller and Weiss 2015). The risk of deskilling is particularly high for those graduates who aspire to jobs in the academic or research sectors, where permanent jobs are in particularly short supply (Bataille et al. 2016; Dubach 2015). For example, Hilda earned a PhD in linguistics in Switzerland and started an academic career, but she never managed to obtain a tenured position, due to financial cutbacks in her field of specialisation.

The fact that the Peruvian partner's career is considered secondary to that of their Swiss or EU spouse is once again based on an assessment of their respective career opportunities; a process that often takes the form of a self-fulfilling prophecy. Since the Peruvian partner is expected to face a number of "objective" handicaps in the transition to the labour market (qualifications in a highly competitive field, poor language skills in relation to the place of residence, etc.), the partners' career takes precedence and the domestic division of labour is progressively consolidated according to a "male breadwinner/female carer" model. Once the Peruvian partner has "opted out" of the labour market in this way, it is extremely difficult to renegotiate a more egalitarian share of domestic duties and care responsibilities, even when the couple remains childless, as in the case of Lola. The arrival of children tends to reinforce these domestic arrangements, particularly given the scarcity and extremely high cost of childcare services in Switzerland (Baghdadi 2010; Giraud and Lucas 2009). For example, Jenny and Rosa both obtained a social science degree from a Swiss HE institution and married their respective Swiss boyfriends in order to stay in the host country, with a view to starting a family. However, neither of them managed to find a job and they both accumulated a series of short-term, part-time jobs that were manifestly below their level of qualification (one in secretarial work, the other as a teacher in a private language school). Neither has ever succeeded in working more than 50%. Due to this fragile labour market status, both ended up taking the lions' share of care responsibilities at home and soon felt overwhelmed by the time-consuming character of their daily family lives. Although marriage to a Swiss national provided them with a form of residential and financial stability, it also led them to renounce their own professional ambitions and, ultimately, to lose the potential value of their Swiss qualifications.

Conclusions

To date, few studies have compared the employment outcomes of migrants who have graduated from a Swiss HE institution, or have considered the influence of legal restrictions on the residential rights of foreigners after graduation on their transition to the host country labour market. In this article, we have shown that individuals with similar objective characteristics—Peruvian origin and a Swiss HE qualification—can end up with contrasting career opportunities. It would appear that, for most of the non-EU graduates who want to remain in the host country, the Swiss "essential employment" clause is more difficult to access than the alternative family reunification measures.

Due to the interdependence of legal, family and professional trajectories, these foreign graduates fare very differently in the symbolic game of "snakes and ladders". Due to their rarity and desirability for Swiss employers, (male) engineering graduates experience a linear, rapid and upwardly mobile transition to the upper reaches of the Swiss labour

market. They do not need to negotiate any extension to the time officially allocated to the transition period. However, not all foreign graduates are able to negotiate such a smooth transition within the duration of their student visa extension. In order to undertake additional training or to accumulate the required work experience, a second group of graduates are dependent on family reunification measures to ensure their successful transition to jobs that are commensurate with their (Swiss) tertiary qualifications. To a certain extent, bi-national marriage provides a substitute "ladder" to kind of jobs that their qualifications alone cannot guarantee (at least, not within the available time-frame). However, according to the gender division of domestic labour and care configurations that are adopted within these bi-national couples, family reunification measures can also represent a potential source of professional precariousness and disqualification for a number of (female) migrants. Unable to mobilise the "essential employment" clause on the basis of their HE qualifications, these women often find themselves at risk of sliding down the socio-professional hierarchy. The more unequal the organisation of domestic and care work within their households, the less they are likely to benefit from the stability and extended time-scale provided by family reunification measures to consolidate their transition to the upper reaches of the Swiss labour market.

In identifying three potential patterns of transition from Swiss HE institutions to the labour market, we are able to better understand the conditions under which these highly qualified migrants accumulate advantage and disadvantages across time (Schafer et al. 2009). According to their field of study, legal status and family configurations, not all Peruvian migrants are able to respond to the opportunities and challenges of the post-graduation transition to the labour market in the same way. Comparison with Swiss graduates shows the long-lasting effect of nationality in employment transition to the Swiss labour market. One year after graduation, Swiss graduates in the humanities and social sciences show higher rates of unemployment and underemployment than engineering graduates. However, this gap tends to closed 5 years after graduation (Gfeller and Weiss 2015).

Previous research has brought attention to the pervasive effects of the Swiss gender regime for highly skilled migrants—without Swiss qualifications—from countries with less traditional gender regimes (Riaño et al. 2015). Recognising the combined influence of gender and migration regimes on the ability of qualified male and female Peruvians to capitalise on their educational credentials opens up interesting avenues for further research on the complex interactions between the educational credentials, employment outcomes and family formation patterns of particular groups of migrants.

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