

The U.S. and Feminization of Migration

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Abstract

The socio-economic crisis in Georgia that arose in the 1990s became the major factor leading labor migrants to the United States in research of work and subsistence in the United States. If until 1990 labor migration of woman from Georgia was socially unacceptable, as a consequence of increasing poverty after 1990 a significant segment of women decided to find the way out of hardship in the form of employment in the U.S.

As feminization of migration is regarded as a new progressive emancipation phase in the development of labor migration in the west, for the Republic of Georgia it remains a culturally and socially vulnerable issue, that is hard to get used to.

Keywords: feminization, subsistence, labor, unqualified

Handling Immigration

The United States has a long history of organizing immigration, dating from the 1860s. Early legislation, such as the 1945 National Origins Act and the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952, attempted to set universal limits on immigration but strongly favored immigrants from Europe over other parts of the world.

A forceful set of enactments that are still shaping the United States today is: the Immigration and Nationality Act Amendments of 1965. The 1965 Amendments brought extensive changes to immigration policy by abolishing the national origins quota as the basis for immigration. (2001, Douglas K. Stevenson)

In addition, numerical limits were increased from 154,000 to 290,000 of which 120,000 were reserved for immigrants from the Western Hemisphere. First time in this period, the United States began to observe the modification from prevalently European immigration to Latin American and Asian flows that continue to characterize today's immigration patterns.

The Immigration and Nationality Act was amended by the Refugee Act of 1980, which brought US policy in line with the 1967 Protocol to the 1951 UN Refugee Convention. The protocol expanded the number of persons considered refugees. Whereas previously the definition of refugee had focused in those affected by World War II, the new framework took into consideration other global conflicts contributing to the refugee population. (Schmidley, Dianne, 2001).

In another change, as a result of undocumented population in the U.S., Congress passed the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986. In an attempt to "close the back door while opening the front door", IRCA

granted amnesty to illegal immigrants who had resided in the United States for a certain period of time. That period differed depending on whether or not the immigrant worked in agriculture. Simultaneously, it was directed on diminishing incentives for failure undocumented immigration by creating a system of employer sanctions. The system criminalized the facilitation of illegal immigration by imposing penalties on those who would hire unauthorized residents. The third component of IRCA – enhanced border control – did not begin in reality until the mid – 1990s.

The immigration Act of 1990 completed this set of legislation by adjusting admission categories for both permanent and temporary entries. The goal has been to increase the skills and education levels of these entrants. (1993, Lapham, Susan I.)

The decade of the 1990s was characterized by state and federal legislation limiting immigrants' access to a range of social services and benefits. In 1994 California passed one of the most controversial pieces of state law. Particularly, Proposition 187 denied undocumented immigrants in California access to public schools, medical care, and other social services, and required public employees and law enforcement officials to report suspected undocumented immigrants to the Immigration and Nationalization service. (2001. Kramer, Roger).

In 1996, Congress passed three new federal laws that limited access to public benefits and legal protections for non-citizens. Under the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PR WORA), commonly known as the Welfare Reform Act, legal and undocumented immigrants no longer had access to federal public benefits, such as Medicaid, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), and food stamps.

The illegal Immigration and Immigrant responsibility

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Act (IIRIRA) accelerated deportation of illegal immigrants who committed crimes. It also made it more complicated for immigrants to make legal appeals following executive branch decisions.

The last in the three pieces of legislation, the Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act (AEDPA), made it easier to arrest, detain, and deport non-citizens.

The end of the decade was marked by the new initiative of Congress, whose attention had shifted to the booming economy's increasing need for highly skilled immigrants who could occupy technology jobs.

Non-citizens of the U.S.

Non-citizens entering the United States are divided among three flows: "Lawful permanent residents (LPRs)," "non-immigrants", and "undocumented migrants".

Lawful permanent residents are foreign-born persons who have been admitted to reside permanently in the United States. Such immigrants may enter the U.S. through family-sponsored immigration, employment-based immigration, or through refugee and asylum admission.

Family-sponsored immigration makes up more than three-quarters of all regular immigration into the United States.

According to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) legal immigration in fiscal year 2003 was 705,827, coming mainly from Mexico (115,864), India (50,379), the Philippines (45,397), China (40,659), El Salvador (28,296), the Dominican Republic (26,205) and Vietnam (22,133).

Together, these seven countries made up about half of all legal immigration.

In addition to those non-citizens who arrive to take up permanent residence, some enter lawfully as "non-immigrants" – foreigners who are in the United States temporarily. This category includes more than 27,8 million, as well as those who help fill the temporary needs of US employers-often on visas that allow to stay longer than a year. There are dozens of non-immigrant visa classifications, including the F-1 category for students in academic or language programs, the J visa for those who enter for cultural exchange purposes and the TV category for professionals from Canada or Mexico who enter under North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) regulation. Work-entitled non-immigrants, holders of various types of H and other visas, play an important role in the US economy. The H-1B visa category provides for the temporary admission of workers with specialized knowledge and skills. Congress defines the number of H-1B visas each year.

"Illegal" or "unauthorized" immigrants enter the US by avoiding official checkup, passing through inspection with false documents, entering legally but overstaying the terms of their temporary visas, or in some way violating

other terms of their visa.

Although it's hard to measure the undocumented population, according to the US Census Bureau the figure is between 9 and 10 million yearly. Mexico remains the leading country, accounting for nearly half of the total, with several Central American and European countries also substantially represented.

I've brought all this detailed information to show the intensity of change of the U.S. immigration patterns throughout the XX century and the beginning of XXI century. Needless to say, quite a number of immigrants, and specific immigrant groups are not welcomed by all Americans, any more today than they were in the past. Recent polls show that some 70 percent of all Americans support reducing the flow of immigrants. Even among Hispanics, some 65 percent feel that there is an excessive number of immigrants. There have been fears as well that immigrants will take away jobs from Americans and that the larger numbers from poorer countries will increase poverty. (Douglas K. Stevenson, 2001). Presumably, periodical restrictions on immigration impacts the number of Georgian immigration as well, the majority of which are females.

The moral questions associated with immigration, however, remain. Main illegal aliens are living in poverty that is astounding even to the poorest Americans. For Americans whose ancestors were poor, such people cannot be unwelcome. Moreover, some Americans are willingly accepting this kind of inexpensive labor.

Anyway, probably for Americans stopping the vast flow of illegal immigrants is much easier to demand than to realize. Whether wanted or not, they continue to come to the U.S.

America's tradition as a nation of immigrants is not likely to end, even as the countries of origin and patterns of immigration change.

For Georgian emigrants the hope for a better life grounds on the American Dream notion, so alluring to numerous emigrants worldwide.

Gender Aspects of Labor Migration from Georgia

The main factor leading to the intensive migration of Georgian citizens to the United States of America, since the break down of the Soviet Union was deterioration of the local socio-economic conditions, and thus, of the standard of living of the Georgian population. Labor migrants' socio-economic and legal status in the United States significantly depends on the nature of migration and the way it has been organized. There are several specific methods of organized migration. In the majority of cases the departures of labor migrants occur with the assistance of relatives and friends. There are also travel agencies, student exchange programs, invitations of specific employment, and some state employment services that play a key role in organ-

ized labor migration. Travel share of “random” migration to the United States from Georgia is high, but most of the migration occurs through students exchange programs and private contacts. Majority of “random” migrants usually lives and works illegally, which makes it difficult to visit their homeland and then emigrate.

Natural history of labor migration has significantly changed as a result of changed gender models. While labor migration has traditionally been male dominated, since 1990s an increasing number of women has been leaving their country in search for work. Gender as well as social equality for ancient and medieval societies is not a relevant issue. However different cultures have different traditions in this regard. According to the oral and written sources one can trace tendencies of liberalization to some extent in Georgia for different times. Georgia is a country with a woman’s cult - elevated role of a woman in the society. It’s emphasized by different expressions in the Georgian language: motherland, mother-father, sister-brother, daughter-son, mother-pillar.

Since woman was recognized as mother, who raised up children and transferred all traditions and cultural heritage, she had to be educated. There is a long list of the Georgian manuscripts which were restored and copied by woman throughout the middle Ages. Woman participated in editing newspapers, wrote article, translated plays for theatres, translated European literature, since many of them got higher education in European educational institutions. The first institution of higher education for woman in the Caucasus – “Women’s Higher Courses” – was opened in the capital of Georgia Tbilisi in the early 20th century (M. Javakhishvili, 2002). Since the establishment of the

Soviet power, women got right to elect and be elected. There was no difference in salaries of woman and men. Total liquidation of illiteracy was a good precondition for almost all girls and woman to get enrolled in schools and higher institutions. There appeared numerous successful women in different fields. Moreover, there was a dynasty of the Georgian female world champions in chess. Nevertheless men held almost all top managerial positions in the country (L. Antelava, 2002). Women were the majority in such professions as teaching, health care, culture, art and food industry.

Despite of increasing duties, women were still somehow inferior in a family and workplace. Regardless of a new woman’s cult in Georgia, reality and everyday life not always coincided with the evidences of different sources, and attitude towards woman was often controversial. (Status of woman in Georgia. United Nations Development Programme, 1999, p.5)

Since 1991 Georgia became independent, internal as well as external relation’ changes, collapse of economy, unemployment, two armed conflicts and as a result internally displaced persons in the country gave rise to changes in intra-family relationships and caused revising the woman’s status in the society.

Unemployment became the main reason of migration out of Georgia; In 1990-2000 years Georgia was abandoned by about 800000-1000000 citizens. Employment in the United States significantly increases and improves the economic condition of many Georgian families; the remittances became only way of income. The average income of migrants a week is 755 USD. The major percent of the immigrants’ income is sent to Georgia. Migrants working

Table 1: Distribution of Potential Migrants by Reasons and Duration Stay in the U.S.A. (Percent BY Total)

Reasons for Migration	Terms for Migration (how long do they wish to stay)			
	Temporary	Permanently	Dependent on adaptation there	Does not know
Hard economic condition	20.8	13.9	17.1	20.5
Could not find a job	11.5	13.9	10.7	12.8
Low salary (income)	9.3	13.9	5.0	7.7
Political situation in the country	2.6	5.5	7.1	5.1
Corruption in the country	3.7	11.1	5.7	12.8
Wish to study in the U.S.A.	4.0	-	11.4	2.6
Better reimbursement of labor in U.S.A.	15.9	11.1	13	10.3
Better possibilities of using one’s skills abroad	6.2	11.1	2	2.5
Wish to see condition of life	8.9	2.8	5.0	2.6
Disorder and chaos in the country	6.6	13.9	10.0	7.7
other	0.3	-	-	5.1

Sources: <http://iom.ge>

in the U.S. through remittances generate 480-500 million USD annually in Georgia. Remittances play a great role in covering the external budgetary deficit as well as the basic needs of population.

The most part of migrants are women of age between 20 to 50 years. The majority of migrant woman are skilled professionals, knowing foreign languages. However most of the women are busy with unqualified work-becoming

domestic servants, nurses for the sick (I. Badurashvili, p.117).

Georgian women may be reviewed as independent social actors. When women cross the borders to take a job in the United States, they are making decisions, taking actions and redefining their family and labor roles. The feminization of transnational migration has been prompted by rising global demand for labor in specific female-type domestic

Table: 2 Distribution of Labor Migrants According to Their Professional State in Georgia and Their Employment in the United States (Percent in Total)

Professions	Teacher	Doctor	Engineer	Economist	Hospital Nurse	Driver	Repairmen	Electric mechanic	Other	Has no profession
Work as a nurse	37.5	23.1	1.4	12.8	29.4	-	7.1	16.7	10.9	12.1
Waiter	3.6	7.7	-	1.2	5.9	-	-	-	-	7.8
Cleaning person	8.9	3.9	3.5	1.2	5.9	-	-	-	4.7	4.8
Auxiliary Worker	10.7	15.4	32.9	20.5	17.7	41.9	53.6	55.6	28.1	34.3
Mechanic	-	-	1.2	3.5	-	-	17.9	16.7	-	1.8
Agricultural Worker	1.8	-	-	1.2	-	6.5	3.6	-	-	6.6
Driver	1.8	3.9	5.9	1.2	-	39.1	7.1	-	3.1	3.6
Salesman	5.4	-	1.2	9.3	5.8	13.0	10.7	-	4.7	5.4
Self-employed	-	3.8	20.0	10.5	-	-	-	5.7	15.6	6.6
Doctor	-	15.4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hospital nurse	-	-	16.5	-	17.7	-	-	-	-	-
As higher education works in field of experience	10.7	11.5	-	11.6	-	-	-	-	-	-
Studies	-	-	1.2	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.6
Work and study	7.1	11.5	-	12.8	-	-	-	-	-	4.2

Trades man	1.8	-	-	1.1	18.1	-	-	-	-	0.6
Office staff	1.5	-	-	1.1	-	-	-	-	-	1.8
Sports man	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.6
Nanny	5.4	-	2.4	4.7	5.9	-	-	-	1.6	6.6
Other	3.6	3.8	5.9	7.0	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Sources: <http://iom.ge>

jobs and occupations. In the conditions of considerable unemployment in Georgia, this global demand for female-specific job act as a significant incentive for migration of Georgian women implying not less responsibility and obligations for their children than men. More than 80% of migrants support their families with remittances. 4% send clothes, various domestic appliances.

Money is mainly sent by means of bank transferee 50%, or post 17%, 84% of migrants in the U.S.A. use bank services to transferee money. The average amount of remittances is proportional to the income of migrants in the United States. On average migrants manage to send 21% of their income.

Changing Times, Changing Gender roles

Women's opportunities have changed on many fronts. Woman can now vote, own land, and file for divorce. They can also hold doctoral degrees, compete in sports, and succeed at all levels in the workplace. The ground has changed. With these changes however, has come ambiguity and mixed messages about relevant gender roles. Some glass ceilings have been destroyed, but others remain. Once, women and men "knew their place". Now that place has expanded, and we struggle with the uncertainty that these changes have brought.

The gender belief system model proposes that our perceptions about men and woman are impacted by societal expectations. These expectations are reflected in a set of beliefs and opinions about males and females. This belief system involves, but is not limited to, gender stereotypes, attitudes toward appropriate roles for the sexes, and perceptions of those who violate the modal pattern. Apparently, people expect gender-related characteristics, such as roles, traits, and physical appearance, to shape an orderly pack. The gender belief system influences our understanding of woman's nontraditional roles. (Deaux and Kite, 1987; Kite and Whitley, 1996) The studies of Paul Rosenhrantz and Inge Broverman (Broverman, 1972, Rosenkrantz, 1968)

defined the traits typically associated with woman and men. They identified competences associated with men, that include characteristics such as confident, independent, and controlling (labeled agentic or instrumental), and a warmth-expressiveness cluster, typically associated with woman, that includes traits such as warm, kind, and concerned for others' welfare (labeled communal or expressive). Men's physical characteristics are believed to include strong, rugged, and broad-shouldered, whereas women's physical characteristics are believed to include dainty, pretty and graceful. Consequently, people's perception of women's gender roles include caring for children and taking care of household task and men's gender roles include being head of the household and handling financial matters.

As it was mentioned after 1990s, as a consequence of increasing poverty and hardship, a significant proportion of Georgian women decided to find a solution in the form of immigration. It should be noted that demand for certain categories of traditionally female labor (house maids, nannies, service sector) on the international labor market has risen, which encouraged the outbound migration of Georgian women to get prepared to work as cheap labor. The attitude of the Georgian society towards the role of women in migration is regarded as a new phase in the development of labor migration and a further step towards female emancipation. Despite the fact that Georgian women revealed more flexibility in new conditions and more readiness to meet the demands of labor market, Georgian society is trying to preserve traditions, a family cult is still there, the overwhelming majority of population emphasizes maternity care as the main function of a woman, raising up a young generation. Female migrants from Georgia often work out the guilt complex, being parted from their family, children, and instead taking care of other children far away from their family. In addition, their cultural background, traditions, family relations and gender roles clash with the realities of the world abroad. Separation of a woman from the family for a long time, alien for the Georgian society,

is tolerated in a new reality (Status of Women in Georgia, UNDP, p. 10). Many women are confronted with previously unknown aspects of the labor market. What makes women particularly vulnerable is their exposure to particular gender specific aspects of discrimination. The reason why women continue to expose themselves to the danger of discrimination and exploitation can be explained by the fact that their families lack the bare substance minimum and women see no alternative to migration. This new gender role of women as bread earners conflicts with the traditional role of women as mothers.

Conclusions

As immigration rate negatively impacts on Georgia's demographic situations, as positively improves its economic situation. But what about the United States economic conditions? In 2006 foreign-born workers accounted for 15% of the U.S. labor force, and over the last decade they accounted for about half of the growth in the labor force. While it is notoriously difficult to measure the undocumented populations, the U.S. Census Bureau and independent analysts assess the figure to be between 9 and 10 million as of 2003, and growing at a rate between 300,000 and 500,000 each year. Assessing how immigration affects the well-being of U.S. natives is more complicated, as immigration's economic impact is complex, and not all natives are alike in terms of economic characteristics. Nonetheless, economists and demographers conclude that immigration has a positive effect on the American economy as a whole and on the income of native-born American workers.

The socio-economic crisis in Georgia that arose in the 1990s became the major factor leading labor migrants to the United States. Lack of employment opportunities and dysfunctional labor market, in addition too low remuneration and catastrophic living standards have resulted in a large migration of the population, driving the most part of Georgian population in search of work and subsistence in the United States.

National history of labor migration has significantly changed as a result of changed gender models. Before 1990s labor migration of women from Georgia was socially unacceptable. However, as a consequence of increasing poverty and hardships, a significant proportion of woman decided to find a solution in the form of employment abroad. Feminization of migration is considered to be a progressive sign in the West; it is associated with gender equality, but for Georgia it is neither socially, nor culturally acceptable that the majority of labor immigrants are female, moreover most of them are highly educated and skilled, that decreases the labor capacity and human capital of Georgia, as well as impacts the demographic potential.

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