

Final Report: Gender, Households and Migration in the Republic of Georgia

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In 2010, I received a Title VIII Combined Research and Language Training Grant from American Councils, in support of my dissertation research on gender, social norms, and migration in the Republic of Georgia. This grant allowed me to travel to Georgia during the summer of 2010 in order to conduct in-depth interviews with returned migrants and family members of migrants and meet with local experts on migration. I received additional support for this research from the National Science Foundation through an SBE Doctoral Dissertation Improvement Grant (P.I.: Dr. Cynthia Buckley). This report will describe my dissertation project, provide an overview of the progress I made during my grant period, and discuss my plans for my dissertation.

Background of research project

Migration is a complex phenomenon, but extensive research has identified several key factors that influence the propensity to migrate, often called selectivity (Massey, Arango, Hugo, Kouaouci, Pellegrino, and Taylor 1998). At the macro level, global economic systems and labor market demands influence who migrates (Piore 1979; Portes and Walton 1981; Sassen 1988). At the meso level, migrant networks play an important role in selectivity (Kritz, Lim, and Zlotnik 1992). At the micro level, individual factors such as economic deprivation and human capital can predict migration (Chiswick 2000; Stark and Taylor 1991). However, we also know that there are distinct gender differences in migration patterns, and existing theories do not always provide a satisfactory explanation for these gendered patterns.

There are three areas that might explain gender differences in migration patterns. First, labor market demands in destination countries are often highly gendered, with

employers looking to hire male migrants for certain types of jobs and female migrants for others (Engle 2004). Migrant networks are also gendered; networks of male migrants are most helpful to men who hope to migrate, while female networks are more helpful to women (Curran and Rivero-Fuentes 2003; Davis and Winters 2001). Social norms in the country of origin may also play a role in making migration more desirable for men in some circumstances, and for women in others. At the macro level, there is some evidence that strongly patriarchal societies send few female migrants, while countries where women enjoy greater autonomy send many (Massey, Fischer, and Capoferro 2006; Oishi 2005; Sana and Massey 2005; Zlotnik 1998). But the influence of patriarchal norms is not the same across societies. In some societies, women's migration is seen as a threat to female domestic roles and male authority (Cohen, Rodriguez, and Fox 2008; Dannecker 2005), while in others, women are seen as more reliable migrants because they are more easily controlled and more likely to remain loyal to the family (Curran, Garip, Chung, and Tangchonlatip 2005; Tacoli 1999).

The role of social norms in determining migration has not been systematically studied. Looking at social norms as a motivator of migration is challenging, due to both the difficulty of operationalizing social norms and the reciprocal relationship between migration and norms. The influence of social norms can affect people's decision of whether or not to migrate, but the experience of migration can also lead people to change their beliefs (Dannecker 2005; Foner 2002; Wilkerson, Yamawaki, and Downs 2009).

The case of the former Soviet Union, and the Republic of Georgia in particular, provide a valuable case study for exploring the relationship between social norms and migration. By some estimates, at least one million Georgians (out of a total population of

4.6 million) work abroad (Atskvereli 2008). At the beginning of the post-Soviet period, the typical migrant was a young man who worked in Russia, but this pattern has been changing (Chineda, Majkowska-Tomkin, Matilla, and Pastor 2008). The increasing difficulty of migration to Russia, and the prospect of higher salaries in Europe and North America, have led Georgian migrants to seek new destinations, which are particularly attractive to women because of their large service sectors. While the growing participation of women in migration is a global phenomenon (Castles and Miller 2009), Georgia has several unique characteristics. First, Georgia is a traditional society, where women's migration is often seen as incompatible with wife and mother roles (Hofmann and Buckley, Forthcoming), but Georgian women have high levels of human capital and a history of labor market experience. Second, men and women in Georgia have access to a variety of migration networks leading to many different countries and types of labor markets. Georgia therefore provides an opportunity to explore the influences of both social norms and economic incentives in a context where migration options for both men and women are extensive.

In my dissertation, I will develop a framework that incorporates social norms as well as socioeconomic conditions in order to explain migration patterns. I feel that incorporating norms, despite the challenges, will provide a more complete picture of the migration process and a better understanding of gendered patterns. Because gender is a fundamental organizing principle of societies, all aspects of migration will be influenced by gender (Curran, Shafer, Donato, and Garip 2006). Individual and household characteristics, social networks, community context, national policies, and global labor markets will all influence migration from Georgia, but the influence of these factors will

be moderated by the individual characteristic of gender. This will be true for both socioeconomic motivations of migration and for social norms. Both of these motivations will have a direct influence on individuals' decisions to migrate or not, but the way that they influence migration decisions will depend on the gender of the individual. Furthermore, the fact of migration will have a reciprocal effect on individuals, households, and communities, in ways that are also gendered.

My dissertation will test four broad hypotheses:

- 1) The predictors of migration established in the literature (such as having a relatively deprived background, being young, having dependents, having access to a large migrant network, and living in a developing region) will also predict migration from Georgia, but will be more relevant for men than for women. Because norms uniquely constrain women's migration, predictors of migration for women will be different. Women will be likely to come from higher SES backgrounds, come from households that include multiple adult women, not have young children, and have close personal ties abroad.
- 2) Gendered social norms will be independently related to migration. Patriarchal beliefs will be positively associated with migration for men, and negatively associated with migration for women, when socioeconomic factors are taken into account.
- 3) Norms will influence migration decisions in multiple ways, such as: unwillingness to act contrary to one's personal beliefs, family control over migration decisions, and fear of social stigma.
- 4) Men and women in Georgia will be pulled to different destination countries due to gendered social networks and the demands of different labor markets.

To test these hypotheses, I will use a mixture of quantitative and qualitative data. I will use data from three national surveys to examine overall associations between social norms, socioeconomic conditions, and migration in nationally representative samples of Georgian men and women. In addition, I will use semi-structured interviews with male and female migrants and family members of migrants in Georgia to examine how Georgian families take socioeconomic factors and norms into consideration when making migration decisions. The combination of qualitative and quantitative data will provide a more thorough test of the hypotheses than either could alone (Creswell 2003). The quantitative analysis will provide a generalizable picture of migration patterns at the national level and allow me to test gender differences in the influence of both norms and socioeconomic conditions on migration, but the ability of survey data to capture social norms is limited.

Incorporating interviews will complement the survey data in three ways. First, a comparison between the predictors of migration identified in the survey data and the reasons for migration identified by respondents can either reinforce the quantitative results or call them into question. Second, no survey data could include all the possible social or economic motivations for migration. Open-ended interview questions will allow motivations for migration not included in survey data to emerge from respondents' narratives. Third, an association between norms and the odds of migration that emerges in the quantitative analysis can only hint at the mechanisms that cause that association. Interview data can help tease out how normative beliefs might influence migration decisions; for example, they may help identify whether people are more constrained by their personal beliefs, or by their fear of encountering social stigma.

Qualitative data collection

I planned to use my grant period primarily to collect qualitative interviews. I had two main goals that I hoped to accomplish.

Most importantly, I planned to conduct 20 to 30 in-depth interviews with returned migrants and family members of migrants in two regions of Georgia. I knew I wanted to do some interviews in Tbilisi, but I needed to choose my second interview site after arriving in Georgia. I also needed to finalize my Georgian-language interview protocol and identify local translators to help me in conducting Georgian-language interviews. Finally, I needed to recruit migrants and family members of migrants in both Tbilisi and the second site, looking for men and women representing a diversity of destinations and family situations.

Secondly, I wanted to meet with local experts on migration in order to inform them about my research, explore the types of migration programs that are taking place in Georgia, and ask their thoughts on the most important issues for research today.

During my time in Georgia, I was able to conduct more in-depth interviews than I had originally planned—a total of 34. I interviewed six men and 12 women in Tbilisi, and eight men and eight women in Dusheti. Respondents ranged in age from 19 to 73 and were fairly well educated; 24 had a higher education, four had postsecondary professional education, four had a high school education, and two had not completed high school. Of the 34 respondents, 26 had migration experience, and eight had never migrated themselves but had family members living abroad. Many of the returned migrants also had family members abroad. In total, I collected data on 58 current and former migrants

(29 men and 29 women), either directly from the migrant or through a family member. These migrants had traveled to a variety of destinations, including: Russia, Ukraine, Poland, the United States, Canada, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, England, Ireland, Belgium, Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Greece, Turkey, and Cyprus (several individuals had lived in multiple countries).

The improvement in my Georgian language skills during the grant period was particularly helpful in conducting the in-depth interviews. I conducted interviews in Russian when possible, but a few respondents in Tbilisi, and nearly all the respondents in Dusheti, had limited or no Russian ability and preferred to hold the interviews in Georgian. I had planned to rely on a local translator for such interviews, because prior to arriving in Georgia, I knew only very basic Georgian. Thanks to the classes provided by American Councils, my Georgian improved more than I expected, and I was able to ask the questions from the interview protocol myself. I still used a translator; sometimes I was not able to fully understand respondents' answers or to formulate follow-up questions. Still, I was able to participate much more actively in the Georgian interviews than I expected, which improved the comparability between the Russian and Georgian interviews.

I am currently in the process of completing my interview transcripts and have not had a chance to fully code and analyze the data. However, preliminary analysis shows several key themes. First of all, I found a widespread belief that women have better chances of success at migration than do men, due to the greater availability of domestic service jobs, in comparison with more traditionally male jobs. People seemed to hold this belief despite the fact that many men do go abroad and work. Even men who had successfully

held found jobs abroad expressed this view. This widespread perception may explain the feminization of migration from Georgia.

Second, I found limited evidence of social stigma surrounding migration. Past research in Georgia, done in 2007, did show social stigma surrounding women's migration; women who migrated were sometimes portrayed as potential prostitutes, or as negligent wives and mothers (Hofmann and Buckley, forthcoming). These interviews, however, did not demonstrate much stigma for either men's or women's migration. Most respondents described migration as a bad thing, and saw women's migration as particularly harmful because of the consequences for children in not having their mothers around. But many respondents said that people in general pitied migrant women, rather than condemning them, because migration is not seen as a voluntary act.

Despite this lack of stigma, there are two things that appear to constrain women's migration. First is the expectation that women have the primary responsibility for caring for children or elderly family members. Women with few caregiving responsibilities can migrate, and women who have such responsibilities can also migrate if they can arrange for replacement care (generally from another female relative). But several female respondents found that their situation at home changed, and either their families required more care, or their replacement caregivers became unable or unwilling to continue, and the new situation forced them to return. Men did not seem to face, or even to consider, similar issues. Second, a woman considering migration might face the direct disapproval of her husband or other relatives. Several of my female respondents either won their family's support after long arguments, or migrated in secret, but in at least a few cases a husband's disapproval prevented a woman from migrating.

The final key theme that my interviews uncovered relates to the ways in which respondents spoke about destination countries. Some respondents migrated because a specific opportunity arose in a specific country, but many others, particularly in Dusheti, decided to migrate and then picked what country they wanted to go to. These choices of destination were generally very strategic, and reflected migrants' perceptions of their own needs as well as their perceptions of the advantages and disadvantages of different destination countries. Because migration is so prevalent in some parts of Georgia and because there is such a variety of destination countries, many people have heard stories about migrant life in a variety of different countries, and these stories shape their migration decisions. Often, stories have a gendered component: men who failed to find jobs in Greece and Turkey, young men who fell in with a bad crowd in France, women who were constantly humiliated as domestic workers in Italy, families who were able to reunite in Belgium thanks to generous social assistance programs, men who got rich in America.

In addition to in-depth interviews, I met with 13 migration experts in Tbilisi, including representatives of government, NGOs, and local researchers. These interviews provided me with valuable professional contacts and insights into the perceptions of migration in Georgian society.

Quantitative data collection

I had not planned to focus on quantitative data collection during my grant period. I intended to use data from the Generations and Gender Survey (GGS), which is publicly available and which I would be able to work with in the United States. I was also aware of migration questions included in the 2007 Caucasus Regional Resource Center (CRRC)

Data Initiative (DI) and was considering using the DI, which is also publicly available. And I planned to ask about other data sources in my expert interviews, in order to determine if there was any other data on migration available.

One of my first meetings in Tbilisi was with Dr. Irina Badurashvili, the director of the Georgian Centre of Population Research, who is in charge of the GGS in Georgia. In my meeting with Dr. Badurashvili, I learned that the GGS is not useful for migration research. Although I was aware that using the GGS to study migration involved many limitations, I was not aware that GGS interviewers specifically excluded any household member who had been absent from the household for more than one year, effectively excluding many or most migrants from the survey. Based on this information, I decided not to use the GGS in my dissertation.

Despite this setback, during my time in Georgia I learned about two extremely valuable data sets that I had been unaware of. I learned about the 2008 Development on the Move: Measuring and Optimizing Migration's Economic and Social Impact in Georgia (DOTM) survey, conducted by CRRC and the International School of Economics at Tbilisi State University (ISET). This data has not yet been made publicly available, but I was able to access it at ISET. Thanks to the assistance of Dr. Badurashvili and Paata Shavishvili I was also given access to survey data on migration collected in 2008 by Georgia's national statistical office (GeoStat), which has not been made available to many scholars, even within Georgia. I have had limited time to analyze these data sets, but I am certain they will be extremely valuable for the final dissertation.

The three data sets that I now plan to use in my dissertation are:

Caucasus Research Resource Center Data Initiative (DI), 2007 The DI has been conducted annually since 2004 in the three countries of the South Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia). The sampling methods and survey questions have varied substantially from year to year, and only the 2007 survey includes migration questions. The 2007 DI in Georgia used a multi-stage cluster sample of households based on the Primary Sampling Units (PSUs) used in the 2002 Georgian census. The sample was stratified by residence in a rural area, an urban area (but not the capital city), or the capital city, as well as by residence in the each of four geographic quadrants (north-east, north-west, south-east, south-west). This resulted in a total of nine strata (CRRC 2007), with a total sample of 3,392 households. The 2007 DI included information on whether each household member had ever lived abroad, as well as a special supplement for members of the household who were currently located abroad. The survey also includes household socioeconomic characteristics, as well as a large number of questions on the values and political beliefs of a sample household member. The questionnaire was available in Armenian, Azeri, Georgian and Russian.

Development on the Move: Measuring and Optimizing Migration's Economic and Social Impacts in Georgia (DOTM), 2008. This survey was sponsored by the Global Development Network (India) and the Institute for Public Policy Research (UK), and the fieldwork was conducted by the Caucasus Research Resource Center. It employed a screening strategy in order to ensure a large sample of migrants. The survey was based on Georgia's electoral precincts, which were used as PSUs. A total of 42 PSUs were randomly selected, stratified by location in rural areas, urban areas, and the capital city. Some PSUs were excluded due to a high proportion of non-Georgian speakers, and others

were excluded because they were inaccessible while fieldwork was being conducted (fall 2008) due to the conflict between Georgia and Russia. Interviewers screened every household in those PSUs to determine if the household included any current or former migrants. Based on that original screening, approximately 500 households without migrants, 500 with current migrants, and 500 with returned migrants were selected. The final sample size is 1484 households. Weights were calculated based on the proportion of migrants in the original screening in order to develop estimates of the prevalence of migration at the national level (Tchaidze and Torosyan 2010). The DOTM survey includes socioeconomic and demographic data, and a wide variety of migration-specific questions. The questionnaire was available in Georgian only.

GeoStat Migration Survey, 2008 At the same time that the DOTM survey was taking place, Georgia's national statistical office, GeoStat, conducted its own migration survey. The GeoStat survey is a multi-stage cluster sample, based on the PSUs used in the 2002 census, and stratified to be representative of Tbilisi and 10 other regions of Georgia (GeoStat 2009). The final sample includes 5,450 households. The GeoStat survey includes a very small number of variables, covering only basic demographic characteristics, household income, basic migration history and reasons for migration. The questionnaire was available in Georgian only.

Future directions

As I complete my dissertation, I will focus on three main areas. First I will use the three national surveys to describe and analyze migration patterns and motivations for migration among men and women in Georgia. Preliminary analyses demonstrate that there are

significant differences between the three surveys, so I will explore the role of sampling differences and different definitions of “migrant” in creating these differences.

To analyze gender differences in the predictors of migration, I will use separate logistic regressions to model the odds of migration for men and women, incorporating both socioeconomic and cultural factors, at multiple levels of analysis, as predictors. At the individual level, I will include age, marital status, and level of education. At the household level, I will include household size, number of dependents in the household, and one or more measures of household standard of living or economic stability. In analysis based on the GeoStat migration survey, I will also be able to include variables at the regional level, including male and female labor force participation rates, marriage rates, poverty levels, and levels of male and female education. In order to estimate the effects of mechanisms operating at different levels, I will use a hierarchical modeling strategy. Hierarchical models separate error variance by level of analysis, providing a proper estimate of the variability of regression coefficients and avoiding the data problem presented by clustering at the regional level (Raudenbush and Bryk 2002).

The second focus of my dissertation will be to explain the role of norms in motivating men’s and women’s migration from Georgia. Both the DOTM and the DI include a few variables related to social norms and beliefs. I will incorporate these variables into the logistic regression models described above. In addition to the logistic regression models, I will draw on the issues of stigma and the constraints to women’s migration that I saw in the in-depth interviews in order to explain the role of norms in migration decisions.

The third focus of my dissertation will be to explain gender differences in migrants’ choices of destinations. Previous studies, based on non-random samples, have indicated

that male and female migrants from Georgia tend to choose different destinations. Data from the GeoStat and DOTM surveys (I have not completed this analysis with the DI data yet) confirm this pattern. In the GeoStat data, 51 percent of male international migrants are in Russia, compared to 26 percent of women. The difference in the DOTM data is less dramatic (41 percent of male migrants are in Russia, versus 30 percent of women), but still notable. Both surveys find about an equal proportion of men and women in various western European countries and North America, while Greece and Turkey attract at least a quarter of all female migrants, but very few men.

To further explore the phenomenon of gender differences in destination choices, I will use the DOTM survey, which includes extensive data on the reasons for choosing specific destination countries. I will use regression analysis to model the likelihood of choosing Russia, Greece or Turkey as a destination among men and women and explore whether other factors might explain gender differences in destination choices. Potential explanations that I will consider include: the migrant's main reason for going abroad (to help the family, personal development, or family reunification), whether the migrant planned to return, whether the migrant had relatives in the destination country, whether the migrant traveled with legal documents, and whether the migrant had a specific job lined up in the destination country.

In addition to quantitative analysis, I will incorporate the extensive interview data on how respondents chose their destinations.

Policy relevance

International labor migration has become a key feature of the social, economic, and political development of Georgia. Migration has dramatic consequences for the

demographic structure of some Georgian regions (Svobodnaiaa Gruzia 2006) and remittances sent through official channels alone constitute over 20 percent of Georgia's GDP (Atskvereli 2007). Migration plays and will continue to play a central role in Georgia's political, economic, and social development, but there has been little research on migration from Georgia by U.S. scholars. While local scholars and international organizations such as the International Organization for Migration have addressed questions of migration, much of their work has been based on small, non-representative samples of migrants (Badurashvili 2004; Chineda, Majkowska-Tomkin, Matilla, and Pastor 2008). The DOTM and GeoStat surveys are the only attempts yet made to represent the migrant population in Georgia using nationally representative samples, but so far neither survey has generated much research. The GeoStat survey, in particular, has been very little-publicized, and even inside Georgia many scholars are not aware of it.

Creating a representative sample of migrants has several inherent difficulties. First is the fact that a sub-population (such as migrants) that totals less than 10 percent of the general population is unlikely to be well represented in a national sample unless special sampling techniques are used (Kish 1987). Only the DOTM survey used a screening strategy to obtain a larger sample of migrants. The second challenge of measuring migration using a sending-country based survey is the fact that many of the desired respondents are absent from the country and therefore unable to participate in the survey. For respondents who are returned migrants, surveys can record migration histories, but current migrants can only be captured if there is someone remaining behind who is able and willing to provide information about the migrant. When a whole family migrates, they are especially unlikely to be captured in a sending-country survey. Even when a

migrant's family members remain behind, they may be unwilling to report on their migrant relative, due to social stigma or fear of legal consequences. Or, they may simply no longer think of the migrant as a member of the household; surveys commonly ask about the current location of people who "usually" live in the household, although it is likely that this type of phrasing leads to an under-count of long-term migrants (Massey and Zenteno 2000).

Given these substantial challenges, both the DOTM and the GeoStat surveys are both far from perfect samples. By combining these two surveys, and adding the 2007 DI, which was not a migration survey but did include migration questions, I hope to overcome the limitations of the individual surveys and create a more comprehensive picture of migration trends in Georgia than currently exists.

In addition to describing migration trends, my dissertation will explain what types of people migrate from Georgia and why. I will use multivariate analyses to quantify the characteristics regions that are most likely to send migrants, the types of households that are most likely to send migrants, and the characteristics of individual migrants. And I will add in interview data to help explain how people make migration decisions and explore characteristics of migrants that might not be include in survey data. My research will take a gendered approach to these issues because there are substantial differences between men's and women's migration patterns in Georgia.

Both the comprehensive descriptive analysis of migration patterns in Georgia and the analysis of the reasons behind them should prove valuable to policymakers. The experience of migration in other parts of the world has shown that a strong understanding of migration patterns—including issues of migrant selectivity—is useful in policymaking.

For migrant-receiving countries, understanding what types of people most commonly migrate, and why, is important in developing effective immigration policies (Massey, Durand, and Malone 2002). For migrant-sending countries, knowing who migrates is important to predicting the ways in which migration will shape the country's political and economic future. The selectivity of migration is associated with migrants' desire and ability to send remittances, making some sending countries more likely to reap the benefits of remittances than others (Portes 2007). Different types of migrants are also likely to take different approaches to transnational engagement in the political and social life of their home countries (Portes, Escobar, and Radford 2007).

The U.S. government has invested considerable funds in promoting the economic and political development of Georgia—processes that will be strongly shaped by migration. In the right policy environment, migration can have a positive impact on development, but it also has the potential for creating economic dependency and social problems (Mansoor and Quillin 2006). In order for Georgia to benefit from migration, it is important to understand the migrant population. Knowing who migrates, to where, and why will allow policymakers to predict how migration is likely to affect Georgia, and to enact policies that maximize the positive effects of migration and minimize its negative consequences. By increasing our knowledge of Georgia's migrant population, my research will be a valuable contribution to this process.

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