

## **Migration, Household Activities, and Gender Roles in Georgia**

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Extended Abstract Submitted to the 2013 Population Association of American Annual Meeting

### **Introduction**

International migration has considerable potential to shape the gender roles that prevail within households in migrant-sending countries. There are two main mechanisms through which this can occur. First, by traveling abroad, both male and female migrants may come into contact with a different set of gender norms than those that prevail in their home communities. If they adopt some or all of the norms from the destination country, they may change their gender-related behaviors in their household life when they return to their origin country. Migration can also either enhance or diminish the individual economic resources and human capital of the migrant, perhaps giving him or her greater or less power within the household upon return which affects his or her leverage to bargain with other household members over the allocation of time spent on various household tasks.

Apart from these possible effect of *migrant experience* (that is, changes in gender norms or bargaining power that migrants experience as a result of their travel abroad), another possible mechanism is *migrant absence*: the departure abroad of an adult household member can require the household members who stay behind to spend more time on the household tasks that the migrant performed. If the migrant is female, her absence can require left-behind men to perform traditionally female tasks at home during her absence, and vice versa. Migrant absence effects may be temporary: household gender roles can revert to the status quo ante after the migrant returns. But is also possible that left behind household members become accustomed to performing non-gender traditional tasks during the absence of migrants, and thus continue to perform these tasks even after the migrants return.

We will examine both migrant experience and migrant absence effects of migration on the performance of gender-typed household task in the Republic of Georgia. Georgia is an ideal setting for the study of these mechanisms, because it has experienced high levels of labor out-migration in recent decades, it is a country where traditional norms predominate, and high-quality household survey data on migration, household tasks, and gender norms are available.

### **Significance**

Despite growing interest in gender and migration during the last two decades (see, e.g. Pessar and Mahler 2003; Donato et al. 2006), there are relatively few studies of how the migration process affects gender roles within households. Some research has examined how migration influences intra-household gender power dynamics among Mexican migrant households, reaching inconsistent conclusions (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; Parrado and Flippen 2005; Parrado, Flippen, and McQuiston 2006; Schmalzbauer 2009; Nobles and McKelvey 2012). However, these studies all focus on the case of Mexico and none of them examine possible reconfigurations of gender divisions of household tasks. At the same time, gender scholars have devoted increasing attention to differences in the amount and type of housework performed by

men and women (e.g. Brines 1994; Bittman et al. 2003; Hook 2010; Killewald and Gough 2010), but this literature focuses overwhelmingly on highly developed countries.

Our study will advance the literature on gender and migration by providing initial insight into how labor migration may shape the gender division of household tasks in migrant-sending families both during and after the migration process. Our data permit us to test for a range of both migrant-experience and migrant-absence effects among households with currently absent migrants and among those with returned migrants. By introducing a new case in the literature, we will ensure that findings on the relationships between migration and gender power dynamics found in studies of US-Mexico migration are not limited to that particular case. Moreover, because female labor migration (with males staying at home) is much more common in Georgia than in Mexico, we have an unprecedented opportunity to examine the relationship between gender and migration from the perspectives of both sexes. Finally, we will point the way to incorporating developing countries (most of which tend to have high levels of out-migration) into the research on gender and housework, while introducing a potential mechanism (migration) that might play a unique role in these countries not observable in developed countries.

## **Data**

We analyze data from the “Georgia on the Move” (GOTM) survey, which was part of a six-country study of the relationship between migration and development funded by the Global Development Network (GDN). General findings from the comparative study are reported in Chappell et al. (2010), and we have used the data in a study of remittances (Gerber and Torosyan forthcoming). The survey was designed and implemented (using face-to-face interviews) by the Caucasus Research Resource Centers (CRRC) and International School of Economics at Tbilisi State University (ISET), with the help of external advisors and the GDN’s Project Management Team. Target sample volume was allocated equally across three strata: *absent migrant households* (at least one member currently living abroad), *return migrant households* (at least one member who previously lived abroad for at least three months), and *non-migrant households* (with neither current nor return migrants).

Primary sampling units (PSUs) were voter precincts randomly sampled within rural villages, cities, and Tbilisi, with the number of PSUs in each proportionate to population size. The researchers conducted block enumerations of households by migration status within each selected PSU, which were used to randomly sample households within each migration-status stratum. Due to some errors in the enumeration and variation in response rates (overall, 70%) by strata, the final sample of 1482 households included 464 absent migrant households (31.3%), 345 return migrant households (23.8%), and 673 non-migrant households (45.4%). The interviews were conducted in November-December 2008, after the August invasion by Russian troops.

The survey included a battery of questions ascertaining which of a series of activities respondents engage in most frequently, second most frequently, and third most frequently at home. We collapse the three “frequency” levels into dummy variables indicating whether the respondent engages in each activity as one of the three most frequent activities in his/her home life (Table 1). For initial purposes, we define “male” activities as those in which the logged male/female odds ratio of engaging in the activity is greater than 2.0 (home repairs, collecting firewood, recreation, and social occasions), while “female” activities are those with a

male/female odds ratio under .5 (cooking, cleaning, and caring for children). We will experiment with alternative definitions of male and female activities, as well as measures that treat the two non-work activities (recreation and socializing) separately (since these are not forms of housework, but clearly the opportunities to frequently engage in these typically pleasant activities are unequally divided by sex.)

**Table 1: Percentage of people who list each task as one of their 3 main tasks**

Main household tasks	Men %	Women %	Male/female log-odds ratio
1. Cooking	5.5%	80.4%	0.01
2. Doing dishes/laundry/ironing/cleaning	4.8%	82.9%	0.01
3. Repairing your home	10.4%	1.9%	6.06
4. Collecting water	14.8%	8.4%	1.88
5. Collecting firewood	33.8%	2.0%	24.53
6. Growing/collecting food, looking after animals	27.6%	16.1%	1.99
7. Shopping for food and household items	24.2%	15.8%	1.69
8. Caring for children	3.4%	19.2%	0.15
9. Caring for the sick/old	2.0%	3.7%	0.55
10. Resting, recreation (e.g. chatting, watching TV)	83.3%	47.9%	5.44
11. Social occasions/visiting family and friends	42.2%	17.2%	3.52
12. Community work	4.4%	3.3%	1.35
<b>TOTAL individuals</b>	<b>1561</b>	<b>1813</b>	

The data also include a measure of attitudes about gender inequality (Table 2) and about traditionalism (Table 3). Interestingly, we find somewhat different patterns when we compare return migrants (RM) to respondents who have not migrated: return migrants (male and female) are more likely to agree that the country needs more efforts to ensure equal treatment of women, while return migrant women are more likely to endorse “traditional ways of life” in Georgia.

**Table 2. “We Need More Efforts to Ensure that Men and Women are Treated Equally in Georgia”**

	Non-RM males	Non-RM females	RM males	RM females
Strongly agree	8%	31%	38%	23%
Agree	35%	40%	22%	63%
Neutral	21%	20%	37%	8%
Disagree	12%	5%	3%	6%
Strongly Disagree	3%	3%	1%	0%
<b>Observations</b>	<b>368</b>	<b>749</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>61</b>

**Table 3. “Traditional Ways of Life in Georgia Should be Protected”**

	<b>Non-RM males</b>	<b>Non-RM females</b>	<b>RM males</b>	<b>RM females</b>
Strongly agree	47%	47%	49%	75%
Agree	36%	35%	27%	16%
Neutral	14%	3%	23%	4%
Disagree	1%	4%	1%	4%
Strongly Disagree	2%	1%	0%	1%
<b>Observations</b>	<b>406</b>	<b>814</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>63</b>

In terms of right-hand side variables, in addition to measures of individual-level (return migrants vs. non-migrants) and household-level (non-migrant, return migrant, absent migrant) migration status, the data contain an extensive array of demographic and socio-economic characteristics at both levels. The sampling strategy of the survey ensures that we will have adequate statistical power for comparisons across migration status, particularly at the household level.

### **Analysis Plans**

We will test a variety of hypotheses regarding both migrant-experience effects and migrant-absence effects on both household activities and on gender norms. All analyses will be conducted separately by sex. To test migrant-experience effects we will estimate individual-level regression models for the odds that a respondent engages in gender atypical activities. Our baseline model will compare return migrants to non-return migrants, then we will add a series of individual characteristics (age, education, current employment status, earnings, marital status, health) and household characteristics (measures of household economic well-being, household size, composition, and type of locality). In order to address the obvious concern that the individual migration decisions may be endogenous, we will also estimate models with fixed household effects (to produce estimates of within-household differences in gender-atypical household among adults of the same sex by their prior migration experiences), apply obtain ATT estimates of migration using propensity score matching, and incorporating information in the survey about the main household activities of respondents five years prior to the survey. Although none of these approaches will be foolproof, by applying each of them in turn we will gain a sense of how robust our findings regarding the “effects” of migration experience are to endogenous selection into migration. We will also systematically examine for variations in the effect of migration by destination country, as gender norms differ significantly in Russia and Turkey (two common destinations for Georgian migrants) compared to the United States, Western Europe, and Australia. We will test for household-level migrant-experience effects (where return migrants have either more or less power to bargain around housework issues as a result of their migration) by estimating models for gender-atypical activities among non-migrant respondents only and incorporating the presence of a return migrant as a key household-level variable. Finally, we will also estimate a parallel set of individual-level models comparing return migrants to non-migrants with respect to current gender norms (this variable is only available for survey respondents, so we will not be able to use the household fixed effects).

We will examine possible migrant-absence effects by estimating regressions on the sample of non-return migrants for individual-level gender-atypical household activities that

incorporate current household migration status as the key variable of interest. If migrant absence affects the level of gender-atypical household activities undertaken by those left behind, then we should observe systematic differences between non-migrant households and absent-migrant households, net of extensive individual-level and household-level controls. We will deploy a similar arsenal of tools to address potential endogeneity in these models. Also, we will conduct the same analyses comparing absent-migrant and return-migrant households in order to examine whether there are persistent effects of migrant-absence (through learning or adaptation on the part of those left behind).

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