Global Changes and Gendered Responses: The Feminization of Migration from Georgia

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Presentation overview

- Causes and consequences of the feminization of migration
- Reasons for exploring the feminization of migration from Georgia
- National-level migration trends in Georgia
- The feminization of migration as a social process
Feminization of migration: regional variation

- Women dominate migration flows from some Asian countries
- Migration from North Africa is still a male-led process
- Regional differences potentially related to women’s education and social status
Feminization of migration: causes

- Labor market changes in migrant destination countries
- More female-headed households in migrant-sending countries
- Increasing restrictions on immigration, deportations
Feminization of migration: consequences

- Migration may bring increased social status for women
  - Freedom from family supervision
  - Exposure to more egalitarian cultures
  - Increased earnings → more household authority
Specifics of the Georgian case

- Recent, dramatic change in migration patterns
  - Little international migration in Soviet period
  - Migration to Russia in the 1990s
  - Expansion of migration and diversity of destinations today

- History of political turmoil, violent conflict, and internal displacement
Male and female migration by year of departure
Migrants by destination and year of departure

- Russia
- Other FSU
- Greece
- Turkey
- Western Europe
- North America
- Other

Years:
- Before 1989
- 1989-1993
- 1994-1998
- 1999-2003
- 2004-2008
Migrants by destination

Men

Women
Characteristics of female migrants

- Changing role of displacement
  - Displaced women played a big role in migration in the 1990s, less today

- Role of education
  - Migrant women are a highly educated population

- Role of divorce
  - Divorced women are more likely to migrate than married women
Negative perceptions of women’s migration

- Male, 53, Dusheti, former migrant:

  “Earlier, when men left to work in Russia, the mother stayed home and raised the children; today everything is backwards and the next generation is left without mothers. A father can’t give such attentions to children, such as they need, and so children are left without supervision.”
Women’s migration as feminine sacrifice

Female, 53, Tbilisi, former migrant:

“We in Georgia…have a cult of the child. A mother will do anything for her child. The mother and child, that is everything. She will do anything so that her child will live well, will have a good education, she’ll buy him an apartment, where he can live with his family. For this, mothers will do anything.”
Men’s migration as personal benefit

- Female, 58, Tbilisi, mother of migrant

  “It’s better [for him] to have [work], to be making something of himself, and to be earning money. So he’s someone, he’s a full person. That’s how it is for him…It’s not just about money and about work. It’s also about getting to see another country…You can learn something from that
Conclusions

- Complex interplay between global and local factors

- Limitations to the transformative potential of women’s migration