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Identity, Gender and Immigration: Policy Ramifications in Multicultural Greece

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Abstract

Immigration has increased sharply in the latter third of the twentieth century, creating an important demographic shift for immigrant-receiving societies. Ethnic identity refers to the component of self that includes both knowledge and evaluation of one's membership in one or more ethno-cultural groups. Concerns about identity and self-definition are of importance, and gender provides an important conceptual framework for understanding these issues. This study examines the relation between gender and ethnic identity. Some of the importance and visibility of the terms "identity" and "citizenship" in political and academic discourse comes as a result of their contested meanings and complex educational implications.

Introduction

Immigration has increased sharply in the latter third of the twentieth century, creating an important demographic shift for those (and other) immigrant-receiving societies. Changes in the ethnic make-up of immigrant-receiving countries have led to increased interest by social scientists in the challenges that confront the immigrant.

Ethnic identity refers to the component of self that includes both knowledge and evaluation of one's membership in one or more ethno-cultural groups (Tajfel, 1981). Concerns about identity and self-definition are of importance. Gender provides an important conceptual framework for understanding some of these issues (Dion & Dion, 2001). Phinney's (1990) review of ethnic identity research found only a few studies had examined the relation between gender and ethnic identity and the findings were on balance inconclusive. We see that a portion of the importance and visibility of the terms "identity" and "citizenship" in political and academic discourse comes as a result of their contested meanings and complex educational implications (Phillipou, 2007).

Immigration as a social phenomenon is considered an inherent part of human history. According to the EU, member states need to adopt a common perspective dealing with the confrontation of the immigration phenomenon (illegal or not), even though the phenomena differs in all states. Greece in the early 90's was transformed from an emigration country to a reception country; without having previous experience in dealing with such phenomena (Triadafilidou, 2005). At the same time equality of men and women has been a central issue of social and political discourses in EU. Gender mainstreaming constitutes the basic strategy followed by the EU, in order to address inequalities presented between men and women in society (Deligianni-Kouimtzi, 2003). In recent years and as a result of the increase in immigration numbers we note that there have been several incidents involving women with an immigrant background (Freedman, 2003). The tension between the objective of equal status between the genders and respect

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for the cultural practices of ethnic minorities and woman immigrants has especially become a source of debate.

In the present paper we will try to examine the policy ramifications in multicultural Greece concerning gender and immigration issues and the consequences of both immigration and gender policy to the identity of woman immigrants in Greece. The focus here is on the interconnectedness between gender equality, immigration and multiculturalism in the constitution of woman's identity. The aim of this paper is firstly to present a brief historical retrospect of Greek immigration policy and second to describe the ways women immigrants are confronted in respect to the existing policy measures. Greek immigration policy does not adapt a specific framework concerning the guarantee of immigrant women's fundamental rights. However we will attempt to refer to the difficulties and stereotypes that immigrant women face in their everyday life and how these issues affect their identity and social status.

Greek Immigration Policy

The magnitude of immigration flows to Greece resulted in the development of continuously evolving legislative mechanisms. The first policies implemented by the national authorities focused on an attempt to control as well as impede immigrant's entrance and to also deport those illegally residing in the country. The former policies indicated the lack of experience of Greek governments and understanding of the complexity of the immigration phenomenon (Baldwin, 2001).

The geopolitical changes occurring in the European continent in the early 90's caused the increase of immigration flows towards Greece. The first law (in force since 1992) that tackled the influx of foreigners into Greece was law 1975/1991 entitled "Entry, exit, sojourn, employment, and removal of foreigners, recognition procedure of refugees and other stimulations". The Greek authorities focused on two domains: that of the entrance of foreigners and that of the control policy. Regarding the control of entrance and residence of immigrants many public services were involved (ministries, the police and public institutions and organizations). This fact contributed to the formulation of a bureaucratic and convoluted procedure for the acquirement of the highly sought after residency permits (Kiprianos, 2003). Central aims of the law were the restrictive control of the borders, the deportation of illegal immigrants, while it made it virtually impossible for immigrants to legally enter and stay in Greece.

The law was supplemented by two presidential decrees which inaugurated the first immigrant legalization programme. The first presidential decree 358/1997 regulated: the registration, the supplying of the Immigrant Temporary Resident Permit Card and the employer's obligation to declare their foreigners employees. The second presidential decree 359/1997 regulated: which immigrants have the right to obtain the Limited Time Residency Permit (Green Card) which could also be used as a work permit. The first official immigrant legalization effort presented many deficiencies and difficulties as a consequence of the bureaucratic procedures and the lack of expert human resources in the relevant public services (Gropas, 2005).

After the implementation of the first legalization programme, the adopted policy was limited to measures concerning "the mass-control of legitimacy". The specific measure intended to purge of the country of the illegal immigrants who didn't

possess the necessary documents. Consequences deriving from this operation were the deportation and arrest of a large number of immigrants, in concert with the logic of zero immigration policy (VPRC, 2006).

A new law was enacted in 2001 “Entry and sojourn of foreigners in the Greek Territory. Naturalization and other measures”. This law provided not only for issues relating to border control but also for channels of legal entry to Greece for employment, family reunion, and return to their country of origin. It also regulated among others:

- Constitution of a commission including three members in every region, who have the province through interviews with the foreigners to give expert opinion on the procedure of supplement of residence permits.
- Access of the immigrant children to the Greek educational system
- Allowance of entrance and residence to foreigners for family reunion
- Attainment of Greek citizenship
- Legalization of foreigners
- Xenophobic and racist behavior is concerned as a penal offence

The administrative procedures related to supplying the entrance and residence permit were carried out by many public services. This fact made the procedures complicated, time consuming and expensive (Baldwin, 2001). The process of residence permit issuance took a lot of time and was very expensive for an immigrant (Triadafilidou, 2005). There was no reference about the ways the state could confront the issue of the large population of illegal immigrants who lived and worked in Greece.

The law 3386/2005 “Entry, stay and social integration of third country nationals in the Greek Territory” referred to a third legalization programme and establishes new simplified procedures for the issuance of residency permits. The law also regulated the issue related to the immigrant’s family reunion. The law also refers to the social inclusion of immigrants to the economic, social and cultural aspects of the country’s life. This action focused on these domains:

- *Certified knowledge of Greek language*
- *Attendance in introductory courses of the history, the civilization and the way of living of Greece*
- *Integration to the Greek labour market*
- *Active social participation*

The 2005 law constitutes the last official attempt of the Greek authorities to administrate and regulate the immigration phenomenon.

Greek immigration policy during the last 15 years can be characterized by an uncoordinated and ineffective attempt to restrict immigration due to its conceptualization as economically, socially and culturally harmful to society, (Pavlou, 2005).

Female immigrants

While the initial migration stream was initially dominated by male, in the past few years women have come to comprise half of the world international migrant population, although the proportion varies depending on the region (Freedman, 2003).

In early 1990s a significant number of women emigrated to Greece, coming mainly from the Balkans and the former socialist countries of Eastern Europe. The immigrant population, which lives and works in Greece is estimated to be almost 1 million and 330.000 of them are women (Maratou and Fakiolas 2003). The exact number of immigrant women who reside in Greece is not known due to a significant number of illegal and undocumented immigrants, who are not formally registered. With respect to the registered immigrant women, those coming from Albania represent 43% of all foreign women, followed by Bulgarians 15%, Ukrainians 8%, Rumanians 5.5%, Georgians 5%, Filipinos 4% and Poles 3%. Some women emigrated to Greece in order to reside permanently others temporarily (Maratou-Alipranti, Fakiolas, 2003).

The population of immigrant women can be distinguished in two categories, the ones who have emigrated for reasons of family reunification and the ones who have emigrated on their own for economic or political reasons in order to help their families or to improve their living conditions. Another distinction is between the women who don't work and obtain their husband's status and the women who work to make their living (Kofman, Phizacklea, Raghuram and Sales, 2000).

Women immigrants often have limited labour market opportunities. They are usually employed in the informal economy and in activities that are traditionally considered as feminine, like domestic services, tourism and the sex industry (Tastsoglou, Maratou-Alipranti, 2003). Immigrant women who are illegal and undocumented are even more constrained. According to General Secretariat of National Statistical Service of Greece data for 2005, 41% of immigrant women are employed in domestic services. In many European countries, domestic workers are not registered in the state social security system. In Greece according to law, employers are obligated to provide a major financial portion of the social security contributions for their domestic workers. Most of the employers are reluctant to fulfill this obligation, resulting in many immigrant women having no social protection as working persons, although they have the necessary residence and work permits.

A large number of immigrant women are also employed in tourism as Greece's economy is mainly based in this sector and there is a major need for the coverage of these employment positions. There is a wide range of other jobs in which immigrant women participate: as private nurses/caregivers and auxiliaries in hospitals and other institutions, and as helpers in retailing, hairdressing, etc. Despite the fact that immigrant women are occupied in a wide range of jobs, all present a common element that can be regarded as traditional female jobs and an extension of the stereotyped role of women. Many studies conducted, conclude that immigrant female workers are financially and often sexually exploited in their working environment. As Tastsoglou (2003) points out, immigrant women face many problems such as:

1. low wages and salaries
2. absence of social security

3. working long hours without payment
4. working in tedious kinds of work
5. They are sometimes sexually harassed and exploited.
6. language barriers
7. education and qualifications and skills that are not recognised by the potential employers

Immigrant women pressured by economic necessity and the threat of deportation are not protected by the Greek labour code, and are forced to work long hours receiving the minimum financial compensation, without having any social insurance and health benefits.

Another important issue and problem which arises from the uncoordinated Greek immigration policy combined with the absence of gender mainstreaming policy in Greece is the growth of trafficking and prostitution of immigrant women. Female trafficking and prostitution is an important parameter of immigration in Greece (Lazaridis, 2001). Greece has emerged as a major destination and transit country in female trafficking because of its geographic position and the inefficient control of borders. There are no reliable statistical data concerning female trafficking and prostitution, since these women are illegal immigrants and the only available data relates to the deportation from Greek authorities (Psimmenos, 2000). Many studies indicate that women who are victims of trafficking suffer physical, sexual and psychological violence, which they almost never dare to report (Emke- Pouloupoulos, 2001). This issue has concerned the European Commission and European Council. EC directive 2004/81/CE referred to the residence permits issued to third country nationals who are victims of trafficking in human beings or who have been the subject of an action to facilitate illegal immigration, who cooperate with the competent authorities (Greek articles 46-52). This directive was incorporated and transposed into the Greek law 2005.

Conclusions

The measures, which were taken by the Greek governments, about the immigration phenomenon, derive from the directives of EU. Although the Greek immigration policy is mainly affected by the European policy, there are some deficiencies of the state policy, which are caused by ethical factors such as: the complexity of the legislation process and bureaucratic nature of its implementation, as well as being inordinately time consuming and costly for immigrants (Baldwin-Edwards, 2001). These conditions lead many immigrants, especially women who live and work in Greece into illegality. Concerning the issue of integration of immigrants, Greece enactment of the 2005 law, defines some constraining conditions and focuses on: certified knowledge of Greek language and attendance in introductory history and the Greek civilization courses. It makes no reference to the acceptance and recognition of the immigrant's culture by Greek society. Greece tends to adapt the assimilation model of France, which is in contradiction with the multiculturalism model, which dominates in England and in Germany (VPRC, 2006).

With respect to women, the development of gender equality policies in Greece has two important landmarks in its policy history. The first legal landmark is the 1975

Constitutional revision wherein equal rights of men and women are guaranteed for the first time. The second landmark was when the socialist party in 1981 advocated an extensive social reform. Where women are concerned the policy objectives focus on equality in the labour market, women's position in the family and the legal protection of motherhood (Deligianni-Kouimtzi, 2003). Greek policy constitutes an example of an EU driven model concerning gender issues as well as immigration policy. It was in 2000 as a result of a strict demand from the EU that the Greek government was essentially forced to utilize at least 10% of the funds of the Third Community Support Framework in actions to promote gender equality in all the aspects of social life. The logic behind the designing and the implementation of both immigration and gender equality policy in Greece are similar and consequently comprise an important factor for women immigrants constituting a disadvantaged group for which no specific welfare essentially exist.

In conclusion, for many women factors relating to their social identity such as race, colour, ethnicity and national origin become "differences that make a difference" (Phinney, 1990). These factors can create problems that are unique to particular groups of immigrant women or that disproportionately affect some women relative to others; while policy says one thing, it appears that in terms of practice the situation has a long way to go in Greece.

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Presidential Decree 358/1997

Presidential Decree 359/1997

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