

## Gender and Labor Market Experiences of Albanian Immigrants in Greece

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**Abstract:** *The fall of the communist system, along with the transition from a centrally-planned to a market-oriented economy, unleashed massive migration of people from Eastern to Western Europe. Nowhere has this been more evident than in Albania, a country which in a space of two decades has gone from having no emigration to one in which at least 20 per cent of its citizens live abroad. During four and a half decades of communist rule (1945–1990), the government of Albania imposed one of the strictest migration controls in the whole former communist bloc, and perhaps in the world. This state of ‘no migration’ would come to an end in the early 1990s, when the dictatorial regime in Albania, as elsewhere in Eastern Europe, collapsed, fostering a large-scale flight of Albanians to Western countries. In the years to come, unprecedented numbers would follow, moving in particular to Greece, where Albanians are by far the largest migrant group, and Italy, where they now constitute the second largest immigrant group after Romanians. This article examines through the gender lens the labor market adaptation of Albanian migrants in Greece. I argue that in order to understand Albanian labour market adaptation, we need to examine the economic environment of their socialist past. This, I suggest, provides a better framework within which we can fully understand labour market experiences of Albanians in Greece, although, of course, the particular structure and demands of the Greek economy also play a vital role.*

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### Data and methodology

This paper draws on work for my doctoral thesis for which 64 in-depth interviews were conducted with Albanian immigrants who live and work in Greece. In-depth interviews have the potential of providing rich and highly illuminating material allowing the researcher the opportunity to understand and to capture the richness of the social phenomenon that is the object of inquiry (Robson 1993: 229). Two kinds of interviews were used: face-to-face and over the telephone. I conducted telephone interviews with 52 people, the majority of whom lived and worked in Athens, while the rest were based in Thessaloniki and Crete. This broadly reflects the overall geographical concentration of Albanian migrants in Greece, whereby the largest communities live in Athens and Thessaloniki in that descending order. In addition, I was assisted by a research collaborator who conducted 12 face-to-face interviews in the city of Korça with migrants living in Greece but who were on return visits. The fieldwork took place between August 2006 and August 2007.

Recruitment of interviewees was done through the use of social networks as well as through snowball referrals. The interviewees' profiles were mixed. First, there was an equal number of women and men who participated. Second, in terms of educational level, eight participants had just primary education (eight years of school); 33 had completed secondary education (twelve years of school); ten people had university degrees; seven had postgraduate degrees; the remaining six respondents had all completed secondary education, but had also done one or more years of vocational training or university. Third, regarding their rural or urban background, the shares were 12 and 52 originating in rural and urban areas respectively. Fourth, in terms of their marital status, only three people were single, two of whom were women, and the rest (61) were married. Finally, their ages ranged from 25 to 60 years old; some 11 respondents had no personal experience of working during the communist years, either because they were still studying or they were too young. However, they too were immersed in the same environment as the others, especially through the experiences of their parents and other relatives.

Coming back to the data collection methods, some more elaboration is helpful regarding the telephone interviews, as well as my positionality as a researcher. According to Berg, although telephone interviews may lack the face-to-face interaction, they provide a very effective way of collecting data in certain situations, such as dispersed geographic locations. This is the case with immigrants from Albania who live and work in various parts of Greece. In doing telephone interviews, I had to overcome the difficulty that exists in the nature such a method, i.e. the lack of face-to-face interaction, which is important in establishing rapport and trust between the interviewee and the interviewer. This becomes even more serious in the case of Albanians, since, given the socio-political realities under which they lived, many people were for a long time afraid of the political repercussions of giving out detailed information to outsiders. This is not to be taken lightly, given that after forty years of a despotic regime, wherein torture and exile were frequently meted out on the most capricious of pretences, Albanians became naturally fearful of political reprisals.

In this process, my own social network and key informants were an invaluable help in establishing much of the trust

needed in an interview setting like this. Without their assistance this study would have been impossible. In addition, my status as a doctoral student at an American university proved to be highly useful during the interview process. Americans, for the most part, are viewed with a combination of respect and admiration. Furthermore, any individual attending an American university, in particular a doctoral degree, is granted a high level of respect and status among Albanians; hence a reason to trust a faceless voice.

Finally, my status as a community 'insider' was another advantage in my work.<sup>1</sup> I was born and raised in Albania and I speak the language fluently (it being my mother tongue), both of which equip me with deep insights into Albanian culture, life and events. This further eased the process of the telephone interviews and encouraged people to be more open to tell their stories.

All interviews were conducted in Albanian and were later translated into English. Particular attention was paid to the protection of participants' identity. Thus, in order to preserve respondents' anonymity, all names in this paper – as in my thesis and other publications – are pseudonyms.

### Gender and Labor Market Outcomes

Gender plays a crucial role in the labor market incorporation of immigrants. Scholarship on immigration and labor market indicates that men and women display differences in terms of labor market outcomes in the host societies, with women being at a more disadvantaged position vis-à-vis immigrant men (Logan and Drew 2011; Remennick 2007; 2005; Lewin-Epstein, Semyonov and Kogan 2003; Hagan 2004; Wright and Ellis 2000; Knocke 1999; Pedraza 1991). This is seen in various aspects, such as number of occupational concentrations, wages, rates of return on human capital levels, likelihood of being un/employed, and so on.

For example, Wright and Ellis (2000) found out that among Los Angeles' six largest immigrant groups (Mexicans, Salvadoreans, Filipinos, Guatemalans, South Koreans and Chinese), immigrant men occupied a greater number of occupational niches than did women. Similarly, Hagan's (2004) analysis of US census data revealed that while a large number of women were concentrated primarily in domestic services, men were concentrated in a more diverse number of occupations. Knocke (1999) noticed similar trends in Sweden. Remennick (2005) in her study of Jewish immigrants from Former Soviet Union to Israel, found out that while both men and women had experienced occupational downgrading in Israel, women suffered a more dramatic occupational decline than men, despite their similar level of education and pre-migration experience.

As a result of this, women receive lower wages and experience less mobility than men (Logan and Drew 2011; Foner 1986; Foner 2005; Knocke 1999; Repak 1994; 1995; Remennick 2007a). In her study of Central American immigrants in the United States, Repak (1994; 1995) noticed that men earned higher wages and were more mobile than women, regardless of the fact that women had higher human capital levels. Foner 1986; 2005 reveals similar patterns for Jamaicans in New York and London. Knocke (1999), in her analysis of data from Sweden, revealed that immigrant women who had come to Sweden as part of labor recruitment efforts in the sixties, and were recruited to perform low-status, and physically hazardous jobs, were still doing the same jobs three decades later. Moreover, very few women were given any chance to attend training courses and to advance to better jobs. Also, Logan and Drew (2011) found out that women from Former Soviet Union who had emigrated to United States, if employed, worked in less prestigious occupations and earned much less than their male counterpart.

Some scholars have also noted the impact on women of economic restructuring that began in 1970s. A shift from manufacturing to the service economy has meant that these women have made the same move. Economic restructuring, however, has hit immigrant women the hardest, given the fact that a great number of immigrant women worked in manufacturing labor intensive industries such as garments and electronics (Morokvasic 2000: 103). And, while native women have been able to enter white collar jobs, immigrant women have moved into the lowest rung of service jobs (Morokvasic 2000; Phizacklea 1983).

In her research on the Greek-Cypriot ethnic economy, Anthias (1983) found out that women were the backbone of the clothing industry, by serving as a source of cheap labor. And whereas both males and females were exploited by their coethnic employers, males had more opportunities for social advancement (i.e., starting their own business), compared to women. Similarly, Zhou (1992) found that although Chinese immigrant women provided the major part of Chinatown's

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<sup>1</sup>Like me, other researchers have conducted research with their own communities. See for instance Abusharaf, (2002); Kishinevsky (2004); Remennick (2007b).

economy, they still received very low wages. Moreover, men experienced a higher return on their human capital variables, something that cannot be said for women. Gilbertson's findings (1995) showed that enclave employment provided Dominican and Colombian women with very low wages, minimal fringe benefits, and few opportunities for social mobility.

Gender is also a crucial dimension of entrepreneurship and self-employment. For one, the motivation to start a business is different for women than for men. While men and women may share similar problems in the host society that push them toward self-employment, such as discrimination and racism in the mainstream labor market, lack of recognition of education, or lack of knowledge of the receiving society's language, research (Anthias and Mehta 2003)<sup>2</sup> found that for women, unlike men, life crises such as abusive relationships, ill health, and not being permitted to return to work after childbirth by former employers, were important factors that drove them toward self-employment. Furthermore, women who are married and have children, consider self-employment as a flexible work option which would allow them to take care of their childcare responsibilities, since women still carry their household duties themselves (Hillman 1999). In addition, escaping the conditions of a domestic servant has been found important motivation to start a business of their own (Morokvasic 1991). Finally, women have been found to be much more motivated by symbolic factors (a sense of empowerment) than the men, who are largely motivated by financial profits (Anthias and Mehta 2003).

An increasing body of scholarship has demonstrated that domestic work is the most common occupation among immigrant women<sup>3</sup> in the labor market in the receiving countries (Anderson 2003; Akalin 2007; Constable 2003; Degiuli 2007; Escriva 2000; Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2003; Hondagneu-Sotelo 2000; Lutz 2007; see articles in Momsen 1999). Domestic service is characterized by low status, low wages, and in a few exceptional cases, no benefits are involved. Women in this service, in particular, live-in domestics, work long and unpredictable hours, performing a multitude of jobs such as cleaning, taking care of children, the elderly and so on. The multiple jobs women have to perform mean "the extension of the subordinate role of women as unpaid family workers to paid family workers" (Anthias 2000: 27). In addition to performing practical tasks, domestic works, especially in the case of children and the elderly, involves a lot of emotional labor, in that women have to give part of themselves, their emotions (Degiuli 2007; Lutz 2007). Furthermore, domestic women workers, in particular live-in ones are subject to various kinds of physical and psychological abuses<sup>4</sup>, especially young, unmarried women who are easy prey to those who might take advantage of their sexuality (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1997).

Significant as this literature is in highlighting the importance of gender in migration process, I argue that it cannot fully explain experience of Albanian migrant women in Greece. A large literature on migration, gender, and labor market adaptation has focused mostly on women who for the first time have access to paid income, or regular paid employment<sup>5</sup>. Albanian women, on the other hand, come from a country where, as elsewhere in former communist countries of Eastern Europe, paid employment was a norm (Einhorn 1993: 113). Equal access to education and employment of women was central to the socialist state's social project. In fact, women's employment was a state's protected social right. By moving to Greece, Albanian women, like men will no longer have the opportunity of "guaranteed jobs". Moreover, Albanian women, in particular mothers with small children, will also lose the social benefits that they had under socialist society, since being non-EU citizens, as well as being often illegal, they cannot qualify for the limited Greek childcare facilities (Lazaridis and Psimmenos. 2000: 181). These factors then make for a unique environment, which will greatly impact the experiences of Albanians in Greece.

In view of these circumstances, I argue, as Gold (1995; see also Balli 2011) has done for Russian immigrants in California, that in order to fully understand experiences of Albanian women in the Greek labour market, we need to

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<sup>2</sup>These research findings in this paper are part of the projects called "Self-employment activities of women and minorities: their success or failure in relation to social citizenship policies (SEM)." This was a European Community funded project conducted in six European countries (Sweden, UK, Denmark, Greece, Italy, Germany). For more results of this project see a collection of articles published in *International Review of Sociology* (13): 1

<sup>3</sup>Literature has offered examples where men also has worked as domestics. We should point out here research by Margolis (1994) among Brazilian immigrants in New York, where she found out that Brazilian men too did domestic work. However, as the author shows us, even in those cases when both women and men are employed in domestic service, the division of labor in these jobs is along traditional lines: the woman cleans, does the laundry, cooks and cares for children, while the man is a butler, gardener, and/or chauffeur.

<sup>4</sup>For example, Anderson (2003), citing figures from Kalayaan (a British support organization) reported that between 1996-1997, 84 percent of domestics reported psychological abuse, 34 percent physical abuse, and 10 percent sexual abuse. Additionally, 54 percent were locked in, 55 percent did not have their own beds, and 38 percent were not fed regularly (Anderson 2003: 108).

<sup>5</sup>Remennick (2007) has also emphasized the paucity of research on experiences of migrants women from former socialist countries who have moved to the West

examine the work environment of their socialist past. Indeed, as various authors have demonstrated, migrants' experiences in their country of origin will influence their adaptation in the host societies (Morawska 2001; Remennick 2007; Boeschoten 2007). Morawska (2001), for example, found how practices during the communist past (Soviet-style 'beat the system/bend-the-law') that informed the daily lives of citizens of former communist societies proved to be useful tools in coping with their life as sojourners in the West. Boeschoten's (2007) interviews with Albanian migrant men and women living in Greece revealed how memories of their communist past have influenced the ways in which they give meanings to their gendered experiences in Greece. Along similar lines, Morawska (2003) has shown how migrants' pre-migration background influenced migrants' transnational practices, as well as their adaptation in the US. Remennick (2007) also revealed how past experiences of Russian Jewish women from FSU who had migrated to the US influenced their adjustment in the U.S.

### Immigrants' New Experience

To begin with, labor market insertion of immigrants who participated in this study was different for men and women. The overwhelming majority of the men were employed in construction. The rest worked in small factories, car repair services, gas stations, cleaning and building maintenance, transportation, agriculture, hospitals, stores, as gardeners, as parking attendants, while only a few were self-employed. Most of the women worked in domestic service, performing tasks such as house cleaning, cooking, child-care and taking care of the elderly. Of the rest of the women, one was working in the restaurant/taverna, one as a privately employed nurse (in Greek: an *apokalistiki*), one as a tailor in small family run firm, and one as a supervisor in the factory. Only two were working as professionals. Both were self-employed: one was working full time, while the other one was working part time. Three other women were not working at the time of the interview. One, who had worked in a factory, had just lost her job. Another one had quit her job at a store, because she became ill and was in the process of recovery. One was staying at home to raise her kids. It should be noted, however, that even women who were not currently working in domestic service, had (with one exception) done so for most of their employment career in Greece. The employment concentration of immigrants in my sample are consistent with results derived from surveys/census analysis on Albanians immigrant performance in Greek labor market as well as various qualitative (field studies) carried out with Albanian immigrants in Greece (Baldwin-Edwards 2004; Hatziprokopiou 2006; 2003; Iosifides and King 1998; Lazaridis and Romaniszyn 1998; Lazaridis, and Psimmenos 2000).

The concentration of women in these particular occupations, in particular domestic service, has placed women in a more disadvantageous position than immigrant men in several respects. To begin with, as Repak (1995) has argued the very nature of the jobs domestic workers perform carries a stigma as "degrading" work, since it involves cleaning other people's bathrooms and kitchens and picking up after employers' families (Repak 1995: 102). Such work is among others low status, poorly remunerated, involves long and indefinite hours, absence of formal contract, and with the exception of few cases, (as my sample clearly indicates) absence of benefits such as health insurance, paid vacation, sick leave (Repak 1995: 102; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1997: 109).

Indeed, several women who were working or had previously worked as domestic in Greece, complained of the length and unpredictability of their work hours, as well as the often unpredictability of job demands. For example, women who were working as cleaners said that they had to work long hours at the time before and right after the holidays (i.e., Christmas, Easter), often cleaning two houses in one day. In another case one woman said that in addition to taking care of the children, a job for which she was initially hired, she then started to do other jobs such as cooking for the whole family, and occasionally cleaning, in other words performing multi-tasks an experience found among women of other immigrant groups. (Cheever, 2003). The performance of a multiplicity of such domestic tasks is nothing more but an extension of women's tasks they perform at home. As one woman told me: "Here I do every day, what I used to do in Albania every Sunday: clean the entire house, all of it".

The issue that immigrant women were highly concerned, however, was that of social security benefits. As noted previously, under the communist regime, work was secured and fear of losing the job was non-existent. Moreover, people enjoyed various fringe benefits such as universal free health care, under which everybody was covered, paid vacation time, consultation clinics, vacation centers for workers and their families (Jacques 1995: 539). In addition, Albania's social security system extending literally from "womb to tomb," covered disability, old age pensions, and burial expenses (Jacques 1995: 530- 540).

In my sample, however, a total of five women received work related benefit.

Of these five, only two of those who were working in domestic service, received such benefits. Instead, married women asserted that they relied for these benefits through their husband's work. In addition, their residence permit depended on their husband's, since he was the one who had social insurance through his work, which is one of the main



criteria to live and work in Greece.

Klodiana: "Under Enver regime, I had a job. Yes, Yes. Work was secured. I worked 10 years. I made carpets. The work was very, very hard. The wage was very, very low. In Greece, in the beginning, I took care of an old lady for three years. Then the lady died, so I left. I had to find a job cleaning the houses. So I began to clean the houses. Even now I clean the houses.

Interviewer: "How do you compare your past job with the present job?"

Klodiana: "Compared with my past job, this job is much easier. Only that I do not have social security benefits. Back then, I had a pension. When I would get old, I would retire. While now, I do not have a pension, I am not secured. They do not give you *ensima* in this job. Jobs with social security are in the tailor shops. But I do not know how to do that job. So I clean houses... I am secured through my husbands' work. He has *ensima*. He has the green card, and I depend on my husband. I do not get a pension. Only my husband gets pension."

Women also complained that their husband's pension will not be enough when they retire. One immigrant said: "The pension that the Greeks give you is very little, even for the Greek themselves. I worry a lot, because my husband's pension will not be enough for him, let alone for me. It is very expensive to live and pay the rent; you cannot live on that pension."

Several women also mentioned the fact that while social security benefits through their husbands' work covered visits to doctors and medicines, it did not provide women with days off in case they became sick. Fatjona said: "They do not pay me if I stay at home. The doctor cannot give me days off. All medicines are free, because I am insured through my husband. But if I get sick and I cannot work, they do not pay me."

In addition to the lack of social security benefits, instances of which were found by other scholars of Albanian migration (Lazaridis and Koumandraki 2007) fear of losing the job was also a grave concern for women, even in those cases when the job did not provide any benefits. For example, Etina, who is single, expressed a high degree of anxiety, given she had no other means of support, and her employer did not provide any social security benefit: "What was positive for me in the past was job security. The hospitals also were free. You did not have the anxiety: 'Now I do not have money, and I cannot go to the hospital. I can't pay the doctor. In Albania, you would go to the doctor, and you paid nothing. There was security before... I work without *IKA* (social security), and I am obliged to pay in Albania some money, so that I can get a pension. But, also you do not have the energy to work. I am by myself, for example, and always worry about how I am going to pay the rent. In the past, you could get a letter from the doctor saying that were sick and you had to stay at home. If you were sick or not, if you knew somebody, you could get a letter from the doctor, and nobody would say you anything. Here, if you do not work, you do not eat. Nobody helps you. For example, I work for an older lady, and I always ask myself, 'What if she dies. Will I be able to find another job quickly.' I am anxious about that, because I say to myself, 'Who is going to pay for the water and electricity and telephone? Who will pay for these things?' If something happens to me, I will be in the middle of four roads. They can easily fire you. I am really anxious. What if I do not have energy to work any longer? Because age plays its role. Before, you had your job and it was there. Here, if you do not know somebody to find you a job, you are stuck... In Albania, the work was much harder. I worked in a factory. I could do it. Now, I can also do the job. But I am more scared, because I say, 'What if the old woman does not want me tomorrow. What am I going to do?' The problem is that I do not want to expect things from a husband. Why should I put up with a husband?... Only few women work with *IKA*. They do not give you social security. You need to work only in one house, so they can put you social security'. Now, all these years passed, and we are left with nothing."

For those few who had access to social security through their work, the fear of losing the job loomed large, given that the loss of a job meant the loss of benefits. Blerta said, "I work in a restaurant. My husband works in construction. I have social security. My husband's social security depends on his work. When he works a lot he has social security. Sometimes we have to buy ourselves the social security (stamps).

Interviewer: What about a pension?

Blerta: What pension? I need to work 18 more years to get a pension. Do I have the security in this country that I will have a job? I do not have any security in my country, let alone in Greece. Today they keep you in work, tomorrow they fire you. They do not care. They do not hire you, especially when they hear you are Albanian. In the past, I remember. My parents worked, my brother worked. You were not left without a job. Now, who knows?"

One of the major issues immigrant women are faced with in immigration is that of childcare. Various researchers (Kusakabe and Pearson 2010; Foner 2005; Foner 1986; Hochschild 2003; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1997; Hondagneu-Sotelo and Ernestine Avila. 1997; Mahler 1995) including earlier research on Albanian immigrants. Lazaridis (2000) have observed these concerns in their studies as well as strategies women employed to cope with these particular situations: immigrant women often left their children behind under the care of their mothers, grandmothers, neighbors, children's fathers, other female relatives, sometimes with paid caregivers, other times they bring relatives to come and take care for

infants, or in the worst case scenario in the orphanage. In a few cases, both husband and wife would work opposite shift. In other instances, as Lazaridis (2000) tells us, parents are compelled to take the children out of the school to look after younger siblings.

Child care was a major concern for Albanian women with children as well. It should be worth reiterating, however, what we have mentioned earlier. Unlike women in many parts of the world, working women hailing from former communist countries enjoyed an array of benefits, such as paid maternity leave for women, free health care, low-cost government provided-daycare and kindergarten. These benefits, while inadequate and of lower quality by Western standards, greatly facilitated mother-worker role of women, assuming that women were both expected to work and be solely responsible for the domestic realm, since Albanian men, like Russian men are famous for not assisting with household tasks, regardless of their wives' occupational commitment (Gold 1995).<sup>6</sup> In addition, like elsewhere, (see for example Foner 1986; Zhou 2000) family members, in particular grandparents often took care of grandchildren when mothers were working. In some cases too, family's relatives assisted in child caring. In Greece, however, child-care responsibilities pose serious problem because of several factors: To begin with, for a considerable amount of time, many women and their families were working and living without papers. As such, they were not eligible for state subsidized child-care.

One woman recounted her difficulties of taking care of her newly born child, during the time she and her husband were working and living illegally in Greece. "I gave birth to my son, and I had to leave him at home after forty days. I left him with my husband and my older son. I worked all night, and during the day I would take care of my son. My husband would take care of my son during the night. When there was nobody at home, then my older son would take care of his younger brother. A child would take care of a child. Because we did not have papers. If you do not have emigration papers, they could not take the child to day care, or kindergarten. They would not take it. It was very difficult. I can't even describe it."

In addition, however, even in those cases when women possessed legal resident papers, but were working in domestic service under the conditions of informal employment, which meant lack of social security benefits, they were not eligible for state subsidized day-care centers. Such is the case of Afërdita, who were not able to take her newly born child to day care, even though she was residing legally in Greece, because she was working "off the books" as house cleaner: "I could not take my child to day care. According to Greek law, if a mother is employed, she needs to show a document that verifies that she is employed somewhere. I was not employed legally. I was doing "black" (illegal) work, because I was cleaning houses. When you clean the houses, you are not registered legally, because I did not have an employer. I was not employed in a job legally, so I could not get a letter from social security. I worked daily, wherever I could find work... It was too expensive to take my child to a private day care. In addition, the work schedule was inconvenient. I was on the road, from job- to- job all day. I could not manage to pick up the daughter from the day care. ... So I sent my daughter back to Albania to stay with my mother. Many people have done this. This is very, very difficult..."

Not all women I interviewed, however, were lucky enough to have their relatives, taking care of their children. As a result, they pursued other alternatives, such as taking children to private day-care, though these instances were quite rare. Drita, however, who came to Greece with her husband upon finishing her university studies, decided to stay at home and raise her Greek born children, while her husband works in two jobs. She lamented the fact that she had come to Greece, considering it to be a big loss for her professional career and life in general. "Under Enver, I would be better.

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<sup>6</sup> The communist regime, as part of socialist state's project of emancipation of women, put a lot of efforts to provide women with equal access to education and employment opportunities as those of men. While the status in the educational and occupational sphere improved significantly for Albanian women during socialist regime, the same achievements could not be said about family sphere, even though the most extreme and traditions that had historically characterized Albanian family were also challenged and partially changed (Mai 2001), yet the patriarchal mentality was never undermined (Mai 2001: 268-269). As elsewhere in Eastern Europe, "any development of women's roles took place within a vacuum, by dint of communist party diktat and largely without any commensurate comprehensive change in social attitudes" (Hall 1994: 88). Women had to work as hard as men at work, only to go home and start the "second shift" of cooking, washing, cleaning the house, taking care of kids. Surveys (Tarifa and Barjaba 1986, 1990 cited by Hall (1994) conducted with 450 Tirana residents in 1986 showed that "80 per cent of female workers spent more than two hours a day on housework compared to only 20 per cent of male workers. During no-working days 63 percent of female workers spent more than three hours on housework (with 30 per cent spending more than five hours), compared to 14 per cent of male workers. Moreover, when it came to the division of responsibilities for the care of children, whereas 47 per cent of women in the sample spent between 1.5 and three hours a day looking after children, only 15 per cent of men devoted this amount of time to child care. This figure ranged from 12 per cent for manual workers to 19 per cent for intellectuals (Hall 1994: 86).

Because I would finish the university, and I would find a job. Now, I have ten years in Greece, and what do I do besides raise kids? I have turned into a housewife. There at least, I would work. Do you understand me? All those years of school are gone for me. I emigrated for what? There I would have been better; not only would be better, but surely I would be much better.”

The experiences of Drita, the university graduate turned stay-home mom, are found among other immigrants of similar position as Drita. For example, Ho (2006) interviewed women from Hong Kong and China, who, like Albanian women, have a strong history of high level of participation in paid work. Upon moving to Australia, the challenges of settling in a new society as well as lack of domestic support they had at home, pushed these women to devote all their energies to facilitating family's settlement in the new country by completely withdrawing from the labor market, or limiting themselves to part-time work. Gold (2002) too found similar patterns for Israeli immigrant women in the United States.

The experiences of Albanian immigrant women can be fully understood in the context of the Greek economic and social institutions. Hondagneu-Sotelo (2003) has argued that gender is critical to the constitution of social institutions, not just family and household, but other institutions as well, labor market being one.<sup>7</sup> Following this argument, we would state, as others have remarked as well (Lazaridis 1996; Lazaridis and Romaniszyn 1998) that Greek labor market, is highly gendered too, where men are clustered into “men's job”, while women have been funneled into “women's job”, the most common of which is that of domestic worker. Particular types of societies create particularly gendered labor markets (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2003: 8). In Greece, an ageing population; changing family structure; rising participation of women in the labor force; longer periods spent by females in full-time education; incapability of welfare state to provide adequate care for the children (i.e., limited number of kindergarten), the elderly and the sick as well as for people with special needs; continuous enlargement of housing space; the still rather limited participation of males in housework and the prestige considerations in many middle-class households to have a foreign domestic maid, creates a demand for domestic service jobs (Lazaridis 2000: 50; Fakiolas 2000: 60).

The insertion of immigrant women in these jobs, has affected women on several level: In addition to “degrading” nature of the job, low remuneration, lack of contract and unpredictable and long hours, immigrant women have lost access to various social security benefits, benefits which were taken for granted under the communist regime. Married women have secured these benefits through their husband's work, including the right to residence, although none of them have the right to a pension upon retirement. This situation will most likely increase dependence of women on men. As one woman immigrant who had worked as domestics all her migrant life in Greece and did not have retirement benefit, told me: “If tomorrow my husband divorces me, I do not know what I am going to do.” These findings, therefore contradict the existing findings that women (in particular women who obtain access to paid employment for the first time in their life), gain from migration, while men lose. Instead, however, the findings show that women have experienced a loss, which will, in turn, in all likelihood, increase the dependence of women upon men, and therefore their subordinate status.

In sum, we could say that our study indicates that gender influenced immigrants' experiences in profound ways. For one, the concentration of the overwhelming number of women in domestic service meant a lack of work-related benefits, such as health insurance, vacations, sick leave days, the right to a pension when they retired, all benefits which were taken for granted under the communist regime. As a result of this situation, women have had to rely on their husband's work to obtain these benefits, although none of the women had the right to a pension. This situation will further increase the dependence of women on the men. Moreover, women with children, given their lack of formal employment, were not eligible for child-care facilities. In view of these circumstances women often had to resort to other childcare methods, such as sending them to expensive private day care, leaving them under the care of their older child, or even staying at home to take care of their kids themselves. These findings are contrary to what other researchers have found, revealing that women lose, rather than gain, in immigration.

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<sup>7</sup> Repak (1995) found out that informal recruitment of Central Americans to serve as domestic workers and child-care providers for Washington D.C.'s government, diplomatic and professional employers, was a highly gendered process, whereby only women were hired to fill in these positions.

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