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Migration and pastoral power through life course: Evidence from Georgia

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ABSTRACT

This article advances critical migration theory by exploring how pastoral power works through relational life courses. Extending governmentality accounts, we posit and trace the circulation of use, exchange, and surplus values across the life courses of migrants from the former Soviet republic of Georgia. Field evidence shows how practices of migration, remitting, and familyhood are associated with dependent social relations and concealment, and negotiated through tests of truth of prayer, biographical management, and family remitting. This conduct of everyday life simultaneously invokes life courses as registers of resources and possibilities and subjects of the multiple governmentalities associated with recent discourse and European and Georgian migration policy initiatives, including "Safe Migration" and migration management systems. We conclude that studying how pastoral power works through relational life courses expands understanding of migration and, in the case of Georgia, highlights the importance of gender, family, and religious organisations for contemporary migration issues.

1. Introduction

While migration has long transformed society in contemporary times this relationship is intricate, complex, even fraught (GCIM, 2005, United Nations, 2016). Modes of migration regulation and policy initiatives are diversifying and becoming more experimental (Nance and Cottrell, 2014). Theoretical explanations continue to stress economic and social factors (Massey, 2004) while accenting scalar and spatial realignments of migration regulation, including hardened border controls (for example, Wunderlich, 2012, Cardwell, 2013, Jones and Johnson, 2016). Acknowledging the presence of this multi-dimensional external context, an alternative body of migration theory has looked to the everyday experiences of migrants to study micro-power relations. Analyses reveal complexity in terms of multiplication in forms of migrant strategy, attachments, and memberships (for example, Smith, 2005, Topol, 2011, Bailey et al., 2014).

This paper contributes to critical migration theory by going beyond what Jessop characterises as "the dichotomy of micro- and macro-power, the antimony of an analytics of micro-powers and a theory of sovereignty, and the problematic relation between micro-diversity and macro-necessity" (2007: 39, also Smith and King, 2012). We do this in two steps. First, and recognising that governmentality is a useful platform from which to study the complexities and intricacies of power (cf Hoang, 2016), we interface Foucault's discussion of pastoral power with recent scholarship on relational life courses to argue that studying how pastoral power works through life courses provides a richer, intersectional and constitutive account of power. Second, we illustrate this argument using the exceptional case of the overseas migration of Georgians. Apart from being understudied, the case is important because the migration and return migration of Georgians is a long standing social process with profound economic, social, geopolitical, and cultural implications for Georgia (Badurashvili, 2004, IOM, 2008, ICMPD, 2015). For example, net migration rates have been negative for 17 of the 22 years up to and including 2012 (Salukvadze and Meladze, 2014, Table 2). Despite significant inbound remittances there is demographic pressure on the internal labour market (European Training Foundation, 2013) and fractious debate about the nature of the family given the increased incidence of split families (GIZ, 2014, GYLA, 2014).

2. Governmentality, pastoral power and life course

Governmentality offers a broad platform from which to study complex relations between migration and society. It focuses attention on how different forms of power are involved in the organisation and experiences of everyday life and the organisation and conduct of conduct (Rabinow and Rose, 2006, Rose and Miller, 2008). Power has been described in terms of modalities, including disciplinary, sovereign, neoliberal, socialist, and pastoral (Fletcher, 2017). However, some

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applications of governmentality are criticised for eliding the role of ideology, mis-specifying the position of the subaltern, and not providing a sufficiently nuanced account of the complexity of power (Spivak, 1988; Cheah, 2007). One such lack of nuance concerns the treatment of spatial, scalar, and temporal relations which "may not accommodate the range of negotiations involved in the gatherings, coherences, and dispersions of social change" (Bailey, 2013: 204). We argue that applications of governmentality which assume spatial and temporal relations can be taken as an *a priori* condition or setting through which power works ignore the constitutive nature of society, and impoverish the theorisation of agency (Chakrabarty, 2009, Minca, 2015). As Fletcher notes (2007: xx) we need analyses of how "different forms of governance…articulate with different levels and scales".

We turn to scholarship on everyday life to better specify articulation and constitutive relations (for applications to migration see Ley, 2004, Reeves, 2012). Everyday life is where, when, and how individuals experience and negotiate a "messy 'scenography' of numberless power-laden confrontations" (Philo, 2012: 502). Crucially, practice theorists argue that the acts, social practices, orientations, and practical consciousness of everyday life do not just reflect difference, but produce diversity through the mutual constitution of social, spatial and temporal relations (for example, Schatzki, 2002). Indeed, Jones and Jessop (2010) contend that scenographies and intersections of power render the multiple possibilities and compossibilities of everyday life. We take from this scholarship the idea that, through everyday life, power does not simply flow in finite and path dependent ways but works intersectionally and constitutively, variably and restlessly.

To open the governmentality framework to this intersectional and constitutive reading we feather Foucault's "all-but-unknown" (in the geographic literature) study of pastoral power (Philo, 2012: 508) into recent work on relational life courses (for example, Hörschelmann, 2011, Stratford, 2015). We join with Blake (1999: 85) who notes: "the anatomy of governmentality …must… evoke pastoral power…for it lies at the intersection of these [sovereign power; disciplinary power; biopower etcetera] forms". While detailed exegeses of Foucault's discussion lies beyond the scope of this article, we emphasise how its relational ontology implies a constitutive view of conduct by drawing on his Collège de France lectures (for example, 22 February 1978 lecture, Foucault, 2009: 164–185), "The Hermeneutics of the Subject" (Foucault, 2005), "The Government of Self and Others" (Foucault, 2010) and, in particular, "The Courage of Truth" (Foucault, 2012: 231–289).

Foucault assumes everyday life has interior (for example, matters of philosophy and ethics) and exterior domains (for example, social practices). Pastoral power is about how truth-seeking conduct occurs across these domains, that is "through life not just through speeches and rhetoric" (Foucault, 2012: 233–4). Because "the practice of telling the truth about oneself relies upon and appeals to the presence of the other person who listens and enjoins one to speak, and who speaks himself" (2012: 4–5) conduct implies a dependent relationship between what Foucault describes as "care of the self" and "care for others" (Foucault, 2012: 234). His relational notion of conduct means "there is no establishment of truth without an essential position of otherness" and further implies that conduct reproduces spatial relations that can distinguish between self and other (340). Similarly, as conduct is "a (repeated) training for the soul of the listener" (2012: 64) it reproduces temporal relations. In summary, Foucault implies that spatial and temporal relations (of interior and exterior domains, of self and other, of training) are intersectional and mutually constitute (dependent) social relations linking care of the self and care for others. The ontology accompanying pastoral power supports an intersectional and constitutive reading of everyday life. We therefore follow Foucault's "pastoral" move in shifting analysis of the everyday from a sole/soul concern with "the question of what this *being* I must care for is in its reality and truth" onto the broader problematic of "what this care must be and *what a life must be* which claims to care about self" (2012: 246; 270, italics added).

Asides from its enabling ontology, Foucault's discussion of pastoral power also notes that social, spatial, and temporal relations work constitutively through exchange value. To show how the exchange necessary for the dependent relationship between care of the self and care for others works he introduces the principle of "revaluing (exchanging) currency" using the metaphor of coinage. He notes that for two people to engage in a currency exchange requires a symbol that can guarantee and legitimise the exchange. This legitimacy has a temporal and spatial component in that value has to be able to hold long enough and over a secure enough territory. While a monarch's head was often used to securitise currency exchange, Foucault contends it is *parrhesia* which secures the exchange necessary for care of self and care for others. *Parrhesia* is the repeated demonstration of truth to self and others through conduct in everyday life. He notes that because the "currency of one's own life comes to represent true value" (2012: 242) the exchange needed for care of self and care for others is legitimised by conduct. This reinforces the idea that social relations arising from exchange are enabled by the spatial and temporal relations of everyday life.

Moreover, Foucault implies that conduct is both enabled by, and reworks spatial and temporal relations through tests of truth in everyday life. Examining the interior and exterior domains of Cynic life, he notes idealised Cynic life was exclusively conducted in an exterior domain in an open and unconcealed manner. Its essential un-concealment implies that, as nothing could be concealed, a fully exterior life demonstrated truth (2012: 253). Thus, everyday life, necessarily conducted across exterior and interior domains, carries the potential for concealment and, in his terms, the potential for less than truth, i.e. sin. The crucial point is that *parrhesia* and the pursuit of truth seeking conduct necessary to exchange value has to be somehow socially monitored, tracked, and proven. Such events of demonstration he refers to as "tests of truth". One test of truth took the form of religious confession across Europe circa the Fifteenth century. Here, repeated acts of confession of sin by a member of a Christian congregation to a pastor/priest figure enabled individuals to demonstrate their orientation to truthful conduct. This test re-constitutes spatial and temporal relations. Its promise of absolution of sins provides a bridge between a concealing and contingent everyday and a universal afterlife. This means that it is the repeated act of confession that constitutes spatial and temporal relations as variously permanent (in the sense that the bridge of absolution is always available) and temporary (in the sense that sin will re-appear, Foucault, 2012: 243-4). Of course, repeated acts of confession and religious adherence also re-constitute social relations between a shepherd/priest and their flock/congregation (Foucault, 2012: 239).

While generative of an intersectional and constitutive account of power, it seems that Foucault's account of pastoral power relies on the *a priori* assertion that everyday life is partitioned into interior and exterior domains. To avoid imposing such a binary we recognise recent life course scholarship that advocates a relational ontology (for example, Andrucki and Dickinson, 2014: 208). The concept of life course has long provided a vocabulary and grammar for considering interdependent relationships between acts (including migration, family status changes, deportation, confession, etc), projects, pathways, and practices (including familyhood and remitting), biographies (including the curation of experiences, memories, imaginations, and sequences) and enacted lives (for example Elder, 1994, Wright, 2016). Recent research on relational life courses recognises interdependence but, crucially, does not assume its pre-existence (for example, Marcu, 2016, Bailey et al., 2016, Garcia-Lamarca and Kaika, 2016). For Eleveld (2010), the case of the Dutch Life Course Arrangement shows how the conduct of workers is governed by the enabling of a life course to be a technology or down payment for future career breaks where "workers… come to experience themselves as active responsible life planners" (132).

We argue that pastoral power works through relational life courses