

***Intercultural Education: Balancing Tradition and Multiculturalism
in a Technological Society***

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The Asian Conference on the Social Sciences 2014
Official Conference Proceedings
0555

Abstract

Our global community lives in an intercultural world, the clichéd melting pot of values, integrated into a unified global culture, where unique nations strive to retain their originality and promote individualism. Cultural unification is one of the challenging social issues of contemporary life, as present as a society's need to survive in different climates, geographic conditions, and for and foremost survive in a global world with mixed social rules and conditions. Cultural “measurements” of difference in terms of regions, ethnicities, religions, genders, generations and class are popular in the social sciences, and the development of intercultural education as a part of curriculum has become key. Yet, it is difficult to measure intrinsic knowledge, let alone the spiritual health of a community or ethnic enclave. Social knowledge and the individuals' sense of connection within a community—be it national or ethnic—is immeasurable and *immeasurably* important. This paper will address the regulation of such ‘measures’ as they are mediated through the educational process. Specifically, we will focus on how to implement and measure the acknowledgement and respect of difference within an educational setting, such that a unified nationality maintains the traditions and nuances of subgroups and encourages individuals to tailor their own cultural originality to become a worthy member of the global community. We will present a case study to illustrate these challenges, centering our research on the Georgian community in the United States.

Keywords: Georgia, Traditions, Assimilation, Education, Technology, Balance

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World society lives and develops in an intercultural environment. The universe is adjusting its existence to the conditions of globalization. Living in a century of technological change, for better or worse, means that this is a significant time when each minute gives us new chances for technological improvement. The opportunity for the rapid dissemination of information hastens the formation of an intercultural, unified and global society. The process of accumulation of different cultural values in a unified culture is a rapid and ongoing process, though still progress is complicated. Isolation, which is controlled with borders, stage-by-stage loses its power as far as the most communication is implemented via online space, area that is free from borders and problems handicapping the spread of any information novelties. Quite frequently the novelties are in contradiction with pre-existing rules and thus confrontation occurs. In contemporary society, the promotion of novelties and innovations are implemented so hastily that society cannot get well acquainted/educated with the novelties and thus it turns into a social issue. A relevant education should be an inseparable part of everyday life, though the contemporary world looks at this education in a different way.

The purpose of the current study is to explore the role of environment and role of family education on saving unique nations traditions in support of human happiness. To find out the relationship between ancient traditions and environmental influences based on Georgian and American cultural differences. In now days it is obvious that even every society is experiencing some kind of impact on their traditions and living habits. Rapidly developing modern technologies promote the popularization of intercultural perception. New styles of communication, online friendship, and the organization of online communities have generated interesting questions for researchers. The main purpose of these investigations is to make clear the positive and negative aspects regarding intercultural perception which become dominant in today's world. There are a lot of questions about how online communication changes our society, and why this new technological lifestyle (messaging, texting, online meetings) has become very useful.

National cultures despite their diversity face similar problems integrating old and new customs and traditions, managing the opposition between generations, and alleviating social conflict or alienation due to diversity, especially as technology invented to foster connection often proves isolating. Different cultures also facing the same difficulties in terms of saving their own specific life styles or cultural differences. Technological revolution made this process fast and uncontrolled. That is why in now days family role, early education and the living environment become very important and attributive. As is widely accepted, knowledge which comes from parents has enormous power and plays a significant role for every human personality, for the formation beliefs, which becomes the basis for choosing and defining one's own happiness. We will present an case study based on the observations and questionnaires to illustrate these challenges, centering this research on Georgian and American cultural differences. It is interesting to see how fast is influence from outside, from global world when people are immigrating from their country and what kind of impact globalisation makes on a society which keeps together people with absolutely same culture and traditions.

The psychological characterization of human qualities allows us to agree that, in general, despite cultural differences, or life style each of us wants to be a happy. Happiness is the most important basic condition, feeling, and emotion for every human. We can agree about it. But happiness can be very different for most of us. To find out the relationship or balance why happiness can have a different understanding must be not easy. Surely, we agree on its value, but its definition is more difficult to agree on. Happiness has a different meaning for different people, different ethnic groups, different cultures, nations, and different societies... Yes, of course, there are some general or basic features, such as health, which are universal for most of all humans, but still differences are significant, broad, meaningful and deep. Happiness is a belief. It is a thought, which comes from an understanding of the appearance, from an understanding of the problem or its outcomes. Understanding is related to knowledge. Likewise, knowledge is related to education. This makes it simple. Happiness is too close to education. Happiness is a very basic, fundamental, and no doubt, the most basic aspect/thought of a human being. At the same time we can say that we learn from our yearly childhood what is right, wrong, good, or bad. This means that instinctively we feel what provokes pleasure in us, and to we are called to happy moments in our lives, but the fact is that happiness can be more global and emotional than physical emotions only. This is a more meaningful thought, which calls forth happiness. This is a notion, further, which comes from a family value, cultural differences, or social rules we are used to and we come to appreciate. Human values can be different. The understanding of “wrong” or “right” can be exceptional, and this is why globalization and multiculturalism causes a lot of confusions in today’s world. Every individual is learning what makes him or her happy. This is basic knowledge, which is called culture. Sometimes culture is taken like a tool of stability and understanding of life. Sometimes it is characterized like an obstacle on a way of happy, free, and easy life.

For ancient culture disregard of traditions means the loss of individualism. Yet, cultures, which are blended by the influence of contemporary life, face a loss of origins. Traditions carry the information and ceremony essential for the transmission of cultures. This is a vision in many countries. Georgia is one of the best examples among the countries thinking in this way. Georgia has a position as a crossroads between the continents of Europe and Asia. The culture of the Georgians is a similar mix. Their history stretches back unbroken for many thousands of years. Local difficulties, traditions, and rules of life are distinctly Georgian. The Georgians were among the first peoples to convert as a nation to Christianity in the fourth century, and the Georgian Orthodox church has been the mainstay and today still plays an important role in modern society. Christianity is the state religion in Georgia, and it helps integrate all members of Georgian society. Time-worn traditions are still very important in Georgia of origin; for example, three generations usually live together under one roof, girls must remain virgins until marriage, and parents try to play an important role in their children’s future continuously even after they become an adult. For example, one of the very characteristic ancestral traditions which Georgians still value is the quality of invitation and hospitality at home, including welcoming unexpected guests at any time of day or night without any exceptions. Georgians always are ready to entertain guests without prior discussion or personal invitation. This ancient nation preserves and practices a special protocol regarding the entertaining of guests and table rules. Similarly, without question, Georgians value education and encourage their children to obtain a diploma and then seek a good job.

Lastly, Georgia survived as a nation because of family education, which means to teach generations exactly how to follow traditions.

Currently, Georgian society living in Georgia or abroad, like other historical nations around the globe, faces cardinal different challenges. Many old traditions are timeworn, inappropriate for present-day life and impede the development of certain nations and peoples. Quite frequently, within the same cultures, the different generations disagree about how it is possible to ignore inherited, obsolete traditions. It is obvious that ancient nations and cultures are proud of their historical past and the heroic achievements of ancestors. Such pride is a testament to the fact that many powerful and ancient cultures and civilizations have died out and still the small nation of Georgia is vibrant. Talks on ancient cultures, extinct or survived civilizations will drive us into the depths. Many ancient nations cite traditions as paramount to the basis (and perhaps the only way) for their survival; the national identity demands that certain lifestyle habits carry through the centuries and be kept with delicacy. But being proud does not mean that nation is ready to follow the same living rules on traditions. That is why the entire Georgian society face several problems: sexual minorities and attitude towards them; religion and government cooperation, the problem of alienation of generations; aggression; complicated public relations; disenfranchised teenagers and the deterioration of family.

Therefore, it is hypothesized that happiness is a thought which comes from free will, from free choice, and happiness starts with freedom. Understanding is related to knowledge. Likewise, knowledge is related to education. So, coming from that we have to choose or in a better way, we have to balance between Happiness of Novelties and Happiness of Traditions; Family Education or Environmental Teaching. For a Georgian raised in the traditional Georgian family, a sense of history and traditional attitudes and values are defining and *a priori*. However, American born Georgian children have quite different attitudes regarding the traditions. It is a fact that environment has a significant influence on a person. The surrounding environment where these children were born (the USA) is significantly different from the environment in which their parents were brought up (republic of Georgia). American born young Georgians better understand the American culture than Georgian traditions, despite the fact that still how strongly every immigrant family tries to keep the balanced Georgian traditions inside of family. It is obvious that some archaic traditions are look like being an unacceptable for youth the contemporary times. As for every Georgian we have no intention to offend the traditions of people in general, nor the memory of our ancestors' ways and values. It is truly hard and needs to be explained specifically how the word "tradition" carries crucial importance for nations with long histories and deeply ingrained cultural customs and mores and, further, why this issue is complicated and delicate. Traditions sometimes are very closely connected to self-esteem. Ancient nations equate the rejection of traditions with disrespect or a disavowal of one's true self. This is very strong side of the problem on a way to understand deepness of Georgian culture, but meaning of all these ancient traditions becoming weaker at American environment even at republic of Georgia where entire society was raised on the same cultural specifics.

The massive immigration of Georgians to the United States started over two decades ago. This is one reason why the issue of keeping traditions was not a painful and noticeable process for the Georgian immigration in the USA. After Georgian children

grew up in the USA, an American childhood defined their different perception of life. Youth do not understand as much the need for living with and preserving old Georgian traditions, which led our Georgian ancestors through centuries up to present days. At this crossroads stands, now, the real opportunity of keeping the national Georgian language and culture, keeping of traditions of relatives, hospitality, marriages and family. Youth choose the modern, particularly American style of life. Still, the problem of the influence of globalization is painful in Georgia as well. As I noticed above, due to modern technologies now it is not necessary for a human to travel a lot. Gaining information on different life styles is simplified. Consequently, future generations overlook the traditional lifestyle without thinking twice and give advantage to the modern and contemporary one. At this point, traditions can be erased when young Georgians assimilate into American culture.

As given in the title of the topic, the attitude to the issue of this research determines the intention not to reject the traditions but to recast them in balanced focus. The surroundings, where the observation took place is more than suitable for this productive research and for making systematic observation. North East Philadelphia is an area which is densely settled with Georgian immigrants who arrived in the USA during the last two decades. In the neighborhood there is a Georgian orthodox church which keeps Georgian community more unified together and somehow it helps to save ancient Georgian traditions too. This observation include to study a lifestyle of the Georgian families living in the USA and try to analyze the natural synchronization of the ancient Georgian traditions and modern contemporary American lifestyle.

Ten years ago, when I first started my observation of Georgian immigrants living at the USA, I discovered how different was the cultural world here from Georgian traditional life style. American living environment was full with different cultural interests, and new values. The differences between Georgian and American cultures are broad and distinct. Of course, there are many interesting details and similarities between too. For example, the aspiration for freedom, the love of hospitality, and a sense of purpose and curiosity for new things; a respect of family and have pride in the children. But on the other hand, there are a significant differences. One major difference entails the interrelation between generations in the family. For example, American parents have a different way of raising the future generation; they are more open with their children and give them freedom very early. American youths start to live without their parents at age 17-18. They earn their own money and don't feel responsible to assist their parents. They seek to purchase their own homes early in adulthood, instead of residing on their parents' property, as Georgians do. Americans youth are more independent at choosing their future education and making living plans; they apply themselves to finding the career in which they will feel comfortable in life, and seek to achieve the American dream of prosperity. In Georgia, the younger generation very often chooses a profession because of its popularity. Georgian youth very often are not as much independent in their educational goals because mostly there are dependent at their parents financially and morally too. On the other hand, Georgian parents are thinking there are fully responsible for their childrens financial side of education.

American and Georgian people have different views concerning friendship. For Americans friendship is more valued and popular during adolescence and young adulthood. In later life, new friendships develop less frequently than among

Georgians. On some stages of my research I used questionnaires. When I asked the reasons, why Americans lose touch with each other, the most of them explained it because of having very busy life and have little time to develop new friends. For Georgians friendship is like family in every life stages; this American phenomenon is unacceptable. Friends are part of the very fabric of a good life. They are considered part of every family, and Georgians spend a lot of time with friends whether they have time for this or not. Even neighbors wish to know each other, and very often they have very close relationships.

To changing living environment which Georgian immigrants are facing after immigration to the USA raises the importance of the question how to find a balance between old traditions and new challenges. The USA is a unique country in this regard. It is the most obvious and celebrated example of multiculturalism. America is a country, which does not force individuals to reject their traditions, religion, and cultural specifications, no matter how diverse or out of date these habits. America offers the freedom of choice and simultaneously suggests a great lure of becoming a typical American without having a historical motherland. This means that any ancient tradition is powerless against modernization. Though on the other hand, we should admit that close system cultural trends or cultural unions based on religions. Based on my observation the most strong tool (lever), for saving the historical culture is related to close to family education.

One of the brightest examples of this is the Amish community. This is a large group of people who immigrated to the USA in the early 18th century. The Amish have been able to maintain an 18th century lifestyle in a 21st century world and the establishment of new Amish communities is ongoing in nowadays. These people trace heritage back hundreds of years, and yet, despite all the time that has passed. They created their own world based on separation themselves from the rest of American society. The Amish are very devout in their faith. Belief in God and their separation from the rest of society actually helps them to strengthen their community with very strong sense of community spirit. The Amish culture continues its existence because America's Amish communities don't have electricity and there are living without technological improvements. They have other top priorities: Their families, their farms, and the God. Happiness for them has a different definition. This seems to be a question: what kind of life style is mostly beneficial for human being in general; Is there any specific formula what kind of personality traits should we (parents!) try to raise into our kids (future generations!) to help them avoid confusion from living independent life; How to teach youth to associated themselves with positive psychological and social outcomes; How to avoid be involved into negative personal experiences and social consequences. The number one forbid for the Amish people are does not join world culture. Inaccessible separation is a strong point for existence of Amish today. They maintain this kind of life style, but not all culture or nation is as stronger in their beliefs. Go back to Georgian nation. It is obvious that as it in republic of Georgia, also in Georgian communities living abroad a nation has more and more disappointments between of generations or between a people itself with different understanding of nowadays problems.

Cohabitation of intercultural values means the creation of joint world culture, where each diverse trend should keep its individualism and universality despite of existence within the united society. This formulation of the issue is not a subject of complicated

perception, but is absolutely harmless, though when it comes to practical implementation, the difficulties we all are facing become seriously oppressive. Is there an opportunity for the formation of an intercultural, conflict free human focused society at the basis of traditions, national diversity and various perceptions of “right living”? How we can elaborate on such a joint vision in the perspective of mutual respect of differences and through the prism of a more accomplished, peaceful society oriented on human values, where each of us have more opportunities for a happy life?

The children are in a tough position developing in a globalized society using technological novelties continuously. Family has not enough time and power to keep a child in a close environment, which would help parents to raise a child with knowledge related to traditions, which can be transformed into confident beliefs. Only knowledge which evolves into a belief tends to survive. Otherwise, it has a chance to be under question and be changed. Coming from such consequences we can predict that every nation has a tendency to change, and it is matter of time.

Family Education (Yearly education) has gained more importance in comparison with the past. The 21st century proposes still more unanswered questions, and that’s precisely why it is so important for a given society to refresh itself through young people who are well informed on the histories of different nations. "Imagination is more important than knowledge," says Einstein. Knowledge makes the ability of imagination more vivid and sensible. This is a primary reason why education is an inseparable part of life. An individual, who is well informed and has the practice of information analysis and reasonable thinking, will be able to accept the modern challenges and participate actively in life and in the competitive environment dubbed as multicultural. In terms of teaching our children the right attitudes and values, first of all we should have the proper answer of the question asking, “What is *right*? Is there time for reassessing the system of values? It is a fact, that the universe still considers this issue in diverse ways.

American born Georgian children are rising not in a separate environment like Amish community for example. They are Americans with Georgian background, and Georgian immigrants families values the culture and traditions, which are American national traditions and living style as much as Georgian traditions. On the other hand, Georgians have a strong living in America still keep their Georgian traditions in their future generations somehow. The question stands like that: Both American and Georgian cultural specifics have some great and not us much helpful for life specifics in it. For most Georgian immigrants families the most important is to save the Georgian roots which at first means to have the religion(practicing , Georgian language, cultural features we always been proud of. The problem is to find a balance between them. There must be the better traditions for Americans which helps most of them to be a strong motivated people for example it must be great to learn for every Georgian how Americans are choose their future education. On the other hand, there are better Georgian traditions, which played survivor role in Georgian nations character and still have a vital importance for it. The best example is friendship and sense of community spirit between friends, which starts built from yearly childhood. The main purpose of this study is to help parents of “new Georgians” to understand importance of finding balance between right and useful educations. To help youth integrate easily and save their Georgian roots also based on their internal will and love of traditions. Based on Georgian traditions, to know more about your own ancestors helps every person to

better understand itself and life also. The history convince them how much it is possible from yearly age the human qualities which going to be helpful for them.

One of the questions of interest to the Georgian community at large living at Republic of Georgia and also immigrated and living at the USA is thr measure of degree of satisfaction with practicing Georgian traditions. As this study show there are considerable change in practicing time worn traditions and habits when Georgian people are living Republic of Georgia ans they are living in a different invironment like United States America. Thee hundred Georgians (160 females, 140 males) completed a packet of questionnaires regarding of importance of keeping Georgian tradicions, specifically in reference to teaching a young generations of their ancestors living priorities. Participants were recruited from Georgians living at republic of Georgia and Georgian immigrants living at the USA (Pennsilvania). The age group of participants were vary devided in a two groups: age group from 17 to 35 age group from 35 to 65. For this specific study, formed a questionnaire was formed to investigate the hypothesis. The questionnaire was used to measure participants' purpose, satisfaction, importance of keeping Georgian traditions.

Figure 1 displays the hypothesized results.

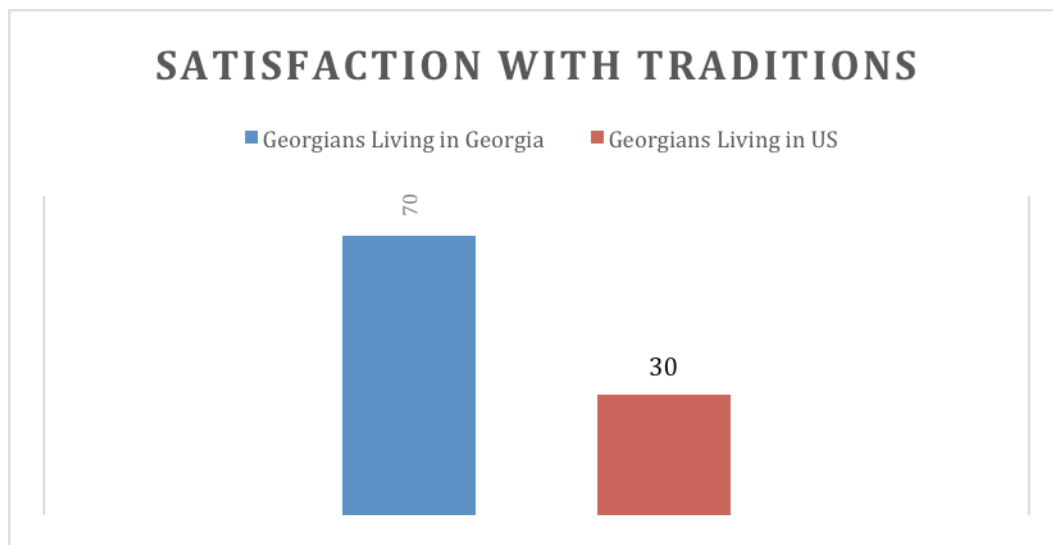
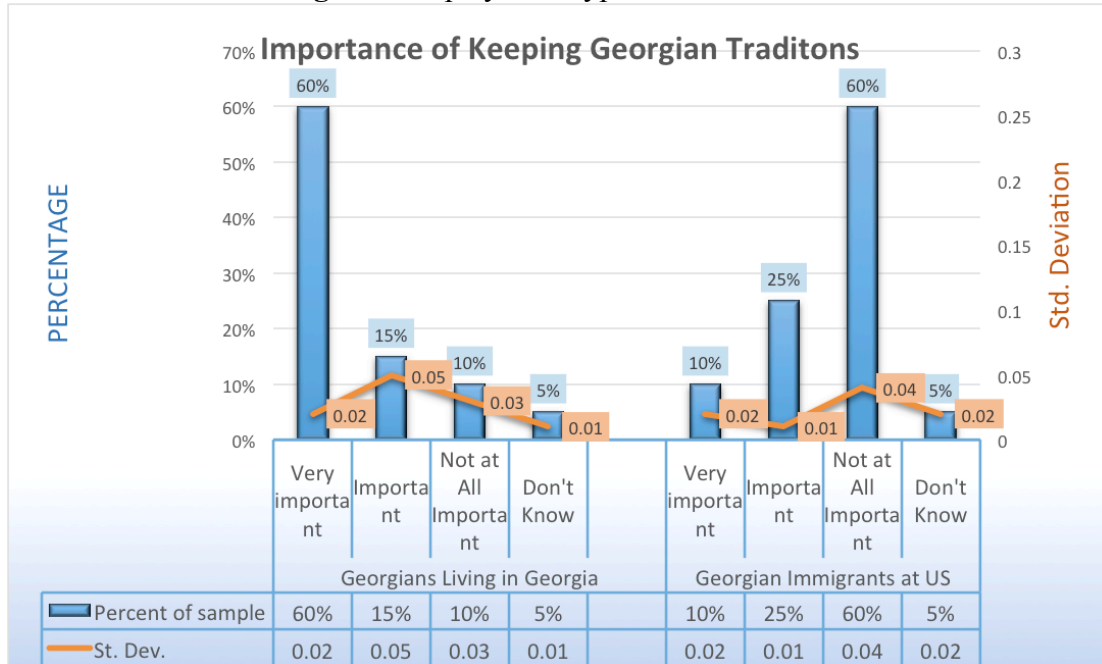


Figure 2 displays the hypothesized results.



The attraction of modernization among the youth becomes a reason for many problems. Actually, the intercultural formation is a painless process itself; it goes consciously and sensibly. Before one ignores a traditional lifestyle and chooses a new one, it is necessary to know the sense and ramifications of the new option. In the best case, one finds the golden mean, however this needs to elaborate the forms of cultural studies: Diverse cultures tend to merge with each other if these cultures exist side by side. Isolation is the strongest guarantee for keeping a culture specific. Thus the skills, habits and respect of traditions gained in the family from the early age provide a positive result. If a child assumes and believes that the family traditions are the only source for happiness, in such case he/she will rarely avoid this way to happiness. However, again we should take into consideration and deem as a determinant the fact that the learning of traditions in not to be conducted in an intercultural environment. Surrounded by different cultures, the influence of tradition on adolescents, in particular, is less effective, and further, the mentality of a young person starts the process of comparisons from the early age. If we teach love, conviction and traditional family attitudes in a certain culture to a young person, this will become his own and unique sense, and therefore there is more chance that such person will be more predisposed for defending the traditions. Simply said, this person will choose the form of life he comprehends and knows.

There is no precise definition of happiness, though a huge majority of people identifies it with freedom. The feeling of freedom for human beings comes with knowledge, self-esteem, and the right of choice. Knowledge can be based on different grounds. Let's glance back at the theme of traditions. There is a paradox: if a human is taught that traditions are equal to dogma, which limits the freedom of life, of course he or she will disregard such tradition. But on the other hand, when a person is taught traditions as strong tool and advantageous path to a happier life, he or she will feel comfortable finding a balance between preserving a strong national culture while making allowances to break comfortably with tradition to accommodate technology

and globalization. This is a formula experienced by the centuries, and humans choose traditions as a tool for the better life. If the basis for self-knowledge is accumulated in education, we should learn *living*. We should find the golden mean and show this way of education to the next generations.

This comparison was very illuminating for this research. It underlined once again that the differing roles played by persons of specific cultural differences and how vastly different people can be from each other. This study was made based on comparison Georgian and American environments and discussed how the factor of cultural difference is very important. A nation can keep cultural differences only if the same people share their values and their collective experiences. Otherwise, a nation has an influence and cultural differences tend to change.

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