

Migration and integration issues: The case of Azerbaijanis in the United States

Rufat Efendiyev, Assoc. Prof., Ph.D.

January – August 2020 Fulbright Visiting Scholar

Center for Comparative Immigration Studies

University of California, San Diego, USA

erufat@gmail.com

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Center for Comparative Immigration Studies
University of California, San Diego, USA
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Introduction

The Republic of Azerbaijan has faced a sizeable migration for last thirty years when profound social and economic transformation process started and Nagorno-Karabakh conflict¹ combusted in 1988. A large number of people had to immigrate to Azerbaijan and leave the country provoking thereby enormous short-term changes in demographic situation of the state².

Following collapse of the USSR in 1991, post-Soviet emigration in Azerbaijan underwent several phases with their specific characteristics and different impact at social, economic and political life of the country. Mass labor emigration generally started in 1995 with the end of the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh. Labor migration outflows normally headed for the Russian Federation until a major financial crisis hit this country in 1998 and leaving fewer job opportunities for labor migrants there. Since then, Azerbaijani migration was redirected towards other countries, including the USA, Germany and Turkey³. According to World Bank figures, 1,432,600 Azerbaijani nationals resided outside of Azerbaijan in 2010. That means roughly 16% of the entire country's population at that time. Russia was noted as the major destination country absorbing some 60% of Azerbaijani emigrants, followed by Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Israel, Germany and Turkey⁴.

The United States is one of the destination countries for Azerbaijani immigrants (as mentioned, amongst Russia, Turkey, Germany, and other European countries). Most Azerbaijani-Americans immigrated to the USA from Azerbaijan, Iran, Turkey and Russia (Guliyev, 2015). In general, the United States receive more immigrants than any other country in the world. In 2019, more than 40 million people residing within the U.S. had been born in another country, accounting for

¹ The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (1988-2020) is an ethnic and territorial conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the region of Nagorno-Karabakh, (by 1988) inhabited by Armenians (76,9%), and seven surrounding districts, mostly populated by Azerbaijanis until their expulsion during the First Nagorno-Karabakh War. Self-proclaimed so-called "Republic of Artsakh" used to set de facto control over Nagorno-Karabakh and adjacent regions, but the entire territory is universally recognized as de jure part of Azerbaijan. The conflict dates back to the early XX century, though the present conflict began in 1988, when the Karabakh Armenians called for transfer of Nagorno-Karabakh from Soviet Azerbaijan to Soviet Armenia. The conflict escalated into a full-scale war in the early 1990s. A ceasefire signed in 1994 provided for two decades of relative stability, which significantly deteriorated along with Azerbaijan's increasing frustration with the status quo, at odds with Armenia's efforts to cement it. A four-day escalation in April 2016 became the deadliest ceasefire violation until September 2020. Between September 27 and November 10, 2020 Armenia and Azerbaijan fought the Second major war over the Nagorno-Karabakh region and surrounding districts of Azerbaijan occupied by Armenia in the wake of the First Karabakh War in the early 1990s. The fighting stopped with a ceasefire agreement on November 10, 2020, by which most of the territories lost by Azerbaijan during the First Nagorno-Karabakh war were returned to Azerbaijan. The President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev claimed that the conflict ended.

More on this: Efendiyev, Rufat (2021). Ethno-demographic evolution of the population of Karabakh: stages of development / Этно-демографическая эволюция населения Карабаха: этапы развития (in Russian). The Center of Analysis of International Relations, Baku, 2021. ISBN: 978 9952 414 11 0. Retrieved February 8, 2021 from: <https://aircenter.az/uploads/files/Demografiya%20for%20web%20final.pdf>

² Social Impact of Emigration and Rural-Urban Migration in Central and Eastern Europe. Final Country Report. Azerbaijan, April 2012. Gesellschaft für Versicherungswissenschaft und -gestaltung e.V. (GVG), p. 4. Retrieved February 6, 2020 from: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=8832>

³ Azerbaijan. MPC – Migration Profile, June, 2013. Report written by the MPC Team on the basis of CARIM East database and publications, p. 1. Retrieved February 6, 2020 from: https://migrationpolicycentre.eu/docs/migration_profiles/Azerbaijan.pdf

⁴ Social Impact of Emigration and Rural-Urban Migration in Central and Eastern Europe. Final Country Report. Azerbaijan, April 2012. Gesellschaft für Versicherungswissenschaft und -gestaltung e.V. (GVG), p. 5. Retrieved February 6, 2020 from: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=8832>

about 1/5 of the world's migrants in 2017⁵. Every nation in the world represented among immigrants in the USA. Azerbaijani community in the USA is the way smaller and younger as compared with the largest established ethnical communities of the country. Objectively, there are very few published academic studies on Azerbaijani immigrants in the USA. This again proves fragmentation and incomplete demographic knowledge about U.S.-based Azerbaijanis.

The primary objective of the present study is the following:

- systematization of the available demographic information on U.S.-based Azerbaijanis; and
- exploration of migration behavior, as part of demographic behavior of Azerbaijani immigrants based in the USA asking them about their experience of residing in the U.S. as an ethnic minority and impact at their consciousness, language, ethnic identity, social and economic situation and civil position.

We examine socio-demographic characteristics of U.S.-based Azerbaijani community by checking the Department of Homeland Security, U.S. and other statistics on international migration. Based on In-Depth Interview qualitative research method that implies intensive individual interviews with a small number of respondents, we explore and perceive the fundamental motivations, beliefs, attitudes, and feelings of Azerbaijani immigrants on their migration and integration issues in the U.S. No doubt, studies on Azerbaijani migrants' community are very crucial to figure out the key drivers and pull/push factors of migration. This multidisciplinary study considers the case of Azerbaijani immigrants in the U.S. from the social, behavioral, demographic, gender and economic perspectives.

⁵ Pew Research Center (2019). Key findings about U.S. immigrants. Retrieved February 6, 2020 from: <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/08/20/key-findings-about-u-s-immigrants/>

The Demographics of Immigration: A Socio-Demographic Profile of Azerbaijani-Born Population in the U.S.

In their paper, Ramazan Uslu and Sinan Kocaman (2013) study the activities of the Azerbaijani Diaspora in the United States of America⁶. According to their findings, immigration of Azerbaijanis to the U.S. underwent four phases. The 1st phase started in 1920 after disintegration of Azerbaijan Democratic Republic through the immigration of wealthy segment, dissident politicians, and scientists. The 2nd phase dates to the years of 1940-1950 and is associated with captured Azerbaijani soldiers who were captured after the World War II and chose the USA as the permanent place of residence. The 3rd phase includes immigration of Azerbaijanis from Iran to the U.S. in years of 1950-1960. And the last 4th phase has arisen from Azerbaijanis who opposed the authorities of Iran and outflow of population from the Republic of Azerbaijan to the U.S. when the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan emerged in the 70-90th of XX century. M. Denisenko et al. (2020) show in their study that the maximal migration losses in Azerbaijan occurred at the very end of the Soviet period. According to their research, in 1990 and 1991 the net outflow of migrants from Azerbaijan amounted to 90,000 (with 170,000 persons over the entire post-Soviet period)⁷.

According to the 2000 U.S. census, estimated 14,205 Azerbaijan-born people were residing in the U.S., out of which 5,530 were naturalized U.S. citizens and 8675 not U.S. citizens, 47,9% males and 52,1% females in total⁸. As U.S. Census 2000 did not count Azerbaijani-Americans born in countries other than Azerbaijan (Guliyev, 2015)⁹, evidently, the real size of the Azerbaijani American community is much bigger. For example, Iranian-American Community Survey 2005 Results tell us, that 11% of respondents had Azeri (Iranian term “Azari” denotes the second largest ethnic group after Persians in Iran) ethnic background¹⁰. According to different estimates an approximate number of Azerbaijanis living in the U.S. ranges from 400 thousand (Mishory, 2006)¹¹ up to 700 thousand and more (Uslu & Kocaman, 2013)¹².

⁶ Uslu, Ramazan & Kocaman, Sinan (2013). The activities of the Azerbaijani Diaspora in the United States of America // The 2013 WEI International Academic Conference Proceedings. Orlando, USA. Retrieved February 7, 2020 from: <https://www.westeastinstitute.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/ORL13-222-Ramazan-USLU-Sinan-KOCAMAN.pdf>

⁷ Denisenko M., Mkrtchyan N., Chudinovskikh O. (2020). Permanent Migration in the Post-Soviet Countries. In: Denisenko M., Strozza S., Light M. (eds) Migration from the Newly Independent States. Societies and Political Orders in Transition. Springer Nature Switzerland AG 2020, p. 36. Retrieved February 8, 2021 from: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-36075-7_3

⁸ U.S. Census Bureau (2000). Table FBP-1. Profile of Selected Demographic and Social Characteristics: 2000. Population Universe: People Born in Azerbaijan. Geographic Area: United States. Retrieved February 7, 2020 from: <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial/tables/2000/stp-159/national/fbp-1-2000.pdf>

⁹ Guliyev, Ahmad (2015). First generation Azerbaijani immigrants in the United States: socio-cultural characteristics and identity issues // Khazar Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences, Volume 18, Number 2, 2015, pp.70-91 DOI: 10.5782/2223-2621.2014.18.2.70 ISSN: 2223-2613 (Print), ISSN: 2223-2621 (Online). Retrieved February 7, 2020 from: <http://jhss-khazar.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/1005.18.02.2015-1-1.pdf>

¹⁰ Iranian Studies Group at MIT. Iranian-American Community Survey 2005. Retrieved February 7, 2020 from: <http://web.mit.edu/isg/survey.htm>

¹¹ Mishory, Jennifer (2006). Azerbaijan deserves U.S. public attention. The Daily Bruin. Retrieved February 7, 2020 from: <https://dailybruin.com/2006/10/22/azerbaijan-deserves-us-public>

¹² Uslu, Ramazan & Kocaman, Sinan (2013). The activities of the Azerbaijani Diaspora in the United States of America // The 2013 WEI International Academic Conference Proceedings. Orlando, USA. Retrieved February 7, 2020 from: <https://www.westeastinstitute.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/ORL13-222-Ramazan-USLU-Sinan-KOCAMAN.pdf>

Subsequent U.S. Census 2010 didn't count residents of Azerbaijani descent (Guliyev, 2015)¹³. The U.S. Census 2020 is the 24th United States Census. National Census Day - April 1, 2020 is a reference day used for the census¹⁴. This is the first U.S. census to offer options to respond by phone or online, in addition to the option to respond on a paper form as with previous censuses¹⁵. The tabulation of the official 2020 Census count of the U.S. population is not yet complete¹⁶.

Hence, we have to refer to yearbooks of Immigration Statistics of Department of Homeland Security aiming to analyze the most recent available data on Azerbaijani population in the U.S.

As we know, on 26 December 1991 the Supreme Soviet of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) voted itself out of existence and dissolution of the country, following the Belovezha Accords. Declaration #142-H by the Supreme Soviet granted self-governing independence to the Republics of the USSR, who formally left the USSR¹⁷. On January 1, 1992, the United States formally recognized 12 independent republics within the former Soviet Union: Armenia; Azerbaijan; Belarus; Georgia; Kazakhstan; Kyrgyzstan; Moldova; Russia; Tajikistan; Turkmenistan; Ukraine; and Uzbekistan¹⁸. The independent republics have been assigned nationality codes in the various U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) data bases.

According to DHS data and as it can be seen from Figure 1 and Table 1 below, for the period of 2000 - 2017 the number of Azerbaijani immigrants in the U.S. was decreasing in key 5 categories besides nonimmigrant admissions of Azerbaijanis, based both on the country of residence and the country of citizenship. In both categories, we can observe a sharp 2,4-3,4 times increase in migration flow.

¹³ Guliyev, Ahmad (2015). First generation Azerbaijani immigrants in the United States: socio-cultural characteristics and identity issues // Khazar Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences, Volume 18, Number 2, 2015, pp.70-91 DOI: 10.5782/2223-2621.2014.18.2.70 ISSN: 2223-2613 (Print), ISSN: 2223-2621 (Online). Retrieved February 7, 2020 from: <http://jhss-khazar.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/1005.18.02.2015-1-1.pdf>

¹⁴ United States Census 2020. Retrieved February 7, 2020 from: <https://2020census.gov/en.html>

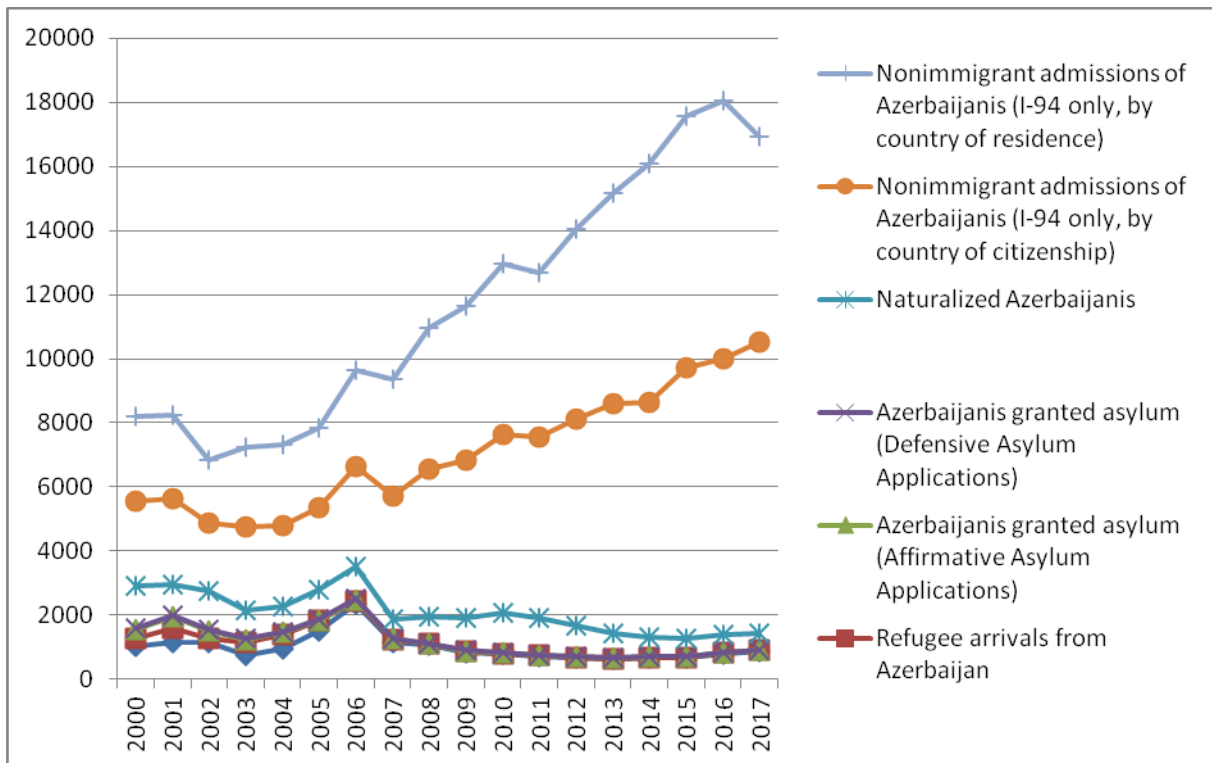
¹⁵ U.S. Census Bureau (2018). 2020 Census Operational Plan v.4.0. Retrieved February 7, 2020 from: <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial/2020/program-management/planning-docs/2020-oper-plan4.pdf>

¹⁶ U.S. Census Bureau (2020). Demographic Analysis Uses Birth and Death Records, International Migration Data and Medicare Records to Produce a Range of Population Estimates as of April 1, 2020. Retrieved December 23, 2020 from: <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2020/12/census-bureau-provides-population-estimates-for-independent-evaluation-of-upcoming-census-results.html>

¹⁷ Declaration # 142-H of the Soviet of the Republics of the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union, formally establishing the dissolution of the Soviet Union as a state and subject of international law (in Russian). Retrieved February 9, 2020 from: https://ru.wikisource.org/wiki/%D0%94%D0%B5%D0%BA%D0%BB%D0%B0%D1%80%D0%B0%D1%86%D0%B8%D1%8F_%D0%A1%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0%B5%D1%82%D0%B0_%D0%A0%D0%B5%D1%81%D0%BF%D1%83%D0%B1%D0%BB%D0%B8%D0%BA_%D0%92%D0%A1_%D0%A1%D0%A1%D0%A1%D0%A0_%D0%BE%D1%82_26.12.1991_%E2%84%96_142-%D0%9D

¹⁸ U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, Statistical Yearbook of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, 2000, U.S. Government Printing Office: Washington, D.C., 2002, p. 10.

Figure 1. Azerbaijanis in the U.S.



Source: United States. Department of Homeland Security.

Figure 1 shows that in the mid-2000s, emigration rate from Azerbaijan to the U.S. declined and began to demonstrate a new and downward trend. According to recent international migration studies, especially after 2006-2007 Azerbaijan became an immigrant-receiving country (Yüksel & Mukhtarov & Mahmudlu & Mikayilov & Iskandarov, 2018)¹⁹.

According to DHS data, a total of 15,813 people from Azerbaijan were naturalized as U.S. citizens in 2000-2017. 2,289 refugees arrived from Azerbaijan. 1,316 persons were granted asylum based on Affirmative Asylum Applications and 363 persons based on Defensive Asylum Applications. 17,854 Azerbaijanis obtained legal permanent resident status in the U.S. in 2000-2017.

The number of nonimmigrant admissions of Azerbaijanis by country of citizenship to the U.S. made up 89,970 persons, and there were 83110 nonimmigrant admissions from Azerbaijan by country of residence in 2000-2017.

¹⁹ Yüksel, S.; Mukhtarov, S.; Mahmudlu, C.; Mikayilov, J.I.; Iskandarov, A. Measuring International Migration in Azerbaijan. Sustainability 2018, 10, 132.

Table 1. Department of Homeland Security data on Azerbaijanis in the U.S.

Persons / Years	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2017 to 2000
Azerbaijanis obtaining legal permanent resident status in the U.S.	1036	1152	1164	746	969	1523	2371	1166	1071	834	781	728	663	637	672	676	784	881	0,85
Refugee arrivals from Azerbaijan	259	449	114	406	407	299	77	78	30	38	18	16	10	3	15	18	32	20	0,08
Azerbaijanis granted asylum (Affirmative Asylum Applications)	266	367	254	75	88	34	28	16	10	23	21	18	28	23	16	16	14	19	0,07
Azerbaijanis granted asylum (Defensive Asylum Applications)	32	33	38	46	31	30	27	23	12	14	9	11	16	6	10	11	Data withheld to limit disclosure	14	0,44
Naturalized Azerbaijanis	1315	946	1187	886	793	904	997	606	834	1005	1233	1153	958	786	585	568	574	483	0,37
Nonimmigrant admissions of Azerbaijanis (I-94 only, by country of citizenship)	2638	2698	2126	2613	2523	2570	3142	3839	4591	4938	5596	5623	6464	7162	7347	8419	8577	9104	3,45
Nonimmigrant admissions of Azerbaijanis (I-94 only, by country of residence)	2634	2614	1946	2471	2509	2467	3016	3647	4411	4786	5296	5141	5908	6545	7426	7862	8046	6385	2,42

Source: United States. Department of Homeland Security. Yearbook of Immigration Statistics: 2008. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of Immigration Statistics, 2009; United States. Department of Homeland Security. Yearbook of Immigration Statistics: 2017. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of Immigration Statistics, 2017.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Migration is a universal phenomenon and people move from rural to urban areas, from developing countries to developed ones and from societies with stagnant economic conditions to societies for searching better socio-economic status to address their economic and social needs (Muhammad Iqbal Zafar et al., 2013)²⁰.

As it was mentioned earlier, the subject of Azerbaijani immigration and integration issues in the USA has not received due attention in academic papers. However, there were several attempts to explore these issues by various researchers in different sources.

In the Harvard encyclopedia of American Ethnic groups published in 1980 S. Thernstrom, A. Orlov and O. Handlin also provide us with the facts regarding the first wave of Azerbaijani immigrants to the United States of America. According to encyclopedia, World War II German prisoners²¹ generally composed this wave, which also included refugees who fled from the country after the demise of the Azerbaijan independent government and managed to make their way to the U.S. in the 1950-60s²².

M. Arif Ghayur in his study "Muslims in the United States: Settlers and Visitors" (1981) states that a reason for the lack of awareness of the scope of Muslim settlement in the U.S. is arrival of most Muslims only after the liberalization of immigration laws in 1965. Arabs and Iranians were recorded as the largest Muslim groups in the U.S. According to the study, there were around 3,000 Azerbaijanis living in Newark and Paterson, New Jersey, Brooklyn and Chicago at those times²³. Recent studies show that Azerbaijani community used to live in the states of California, New Jersey, New York, Michigan, Pennsylvania and District of Columbia. Most of Azerbaijanis reside in Southern California, especially in Los Angeles. Moreover, it is possible to encounter Azerbaijanis in Newark, Washington and Chicago dispersedly²⁴.

Noteworthy, there are some studies on Iranian Americans, where Azerbaijanis sometimes noted as a part of Iranian community. For example, Chiba Naoki (2001) in his PhD thesis in Anthropology on "Iranians in the United States and Japan: Self-Imagery and Individual-Collective Dynamics" indicates, that Iranians in the U.S. are ethnically and religiously

²⁰ Muhammad Iqbal Zafar et al. (2013). Migration Behavior within Socio-Cultural and Demographic Context: A Case Study of Faisalabad City, Pakistan. *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, Vol. 2 No. 2, July 2013. Retrieved February 6, 2020 from:

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/312250311_Migration_Behavior_within_Socio-Cultural_and_Demographic_Context_A_Case_Study_of_Faisalabad_City_Pakistan

²¹ Azerbaijan mobilized for the army more than 700,000 of its sons and daughters, half of whom sacrificed their lives. Source: Permanent Mission of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the United Nations (2016). Azerbaijan's contribution to the Victory in the World War II. Retrieved February 7, 2020 from:

<https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/azerbaijans-contribution-to-the-victory-in-the-world-war-ii-300265354.html>

²² Thernstrom, S., Orlov, A. & Handlin, O. (Eds.).(1980). Harvard encyclopedia of American Ethnic groups. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

²³ Ghayur, M. A. (1981). Muslims in the United States: Settlers and Visitors. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 454(1), 150–163. Retrieved February 7, 2020 from:

<https://doi.org/10.1177/000271628145400113>

²⁴ Uslu, Ramazan & Kocaman, Sinan (2013). The activities of the Azerbaijani Diaspora in the United States of America // The 2013 WEI International Academic Conference Proceedings. Orlando, USA. Retrieved February 7, 2020 from: <https://www.westeastinstitute.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/ORL13-222-Ramazan-USLU-Sinan-KOCAMAN.pdf>

divergent and each sub-group has a different cultural repertoire and social orientation. Author assumes that Southern California, especially Los Angeles and its vicinity, has the largest Iranian population in the world outside the Middle East²⁵. In support of the above mentioned, let's cite the research of Shirin Hakimzadeh (2006), which shows a full mosaic of visible diverse ethnic groups in Iran today, where Persians compose only 51 percent of the population, while other groups include the Azeris (24%), Gilaki and Mazandarani (8%), Kurds (7%), Arabs (3%), Lurs (2%), Baluchs (2%) and Turkmens (2%)²⁶.

However, there are very few studies of Azerbaijani scholars regarding migration and integration issues of Azerbaijanis in the U.S.

Lala Hajibayova (2012), alumna of Indiana University, Bloomington, in her paper on "Online Representation of Azerbaijani Online Community" mostly focuses on online representation of the Azerbaijani Diaspora through ethnographic research of the most popular forums and websites²⁷.

The first comprehensive article specifically covering Azerbaijani immigrants to the U.S. appeared in the *Khazar Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* in 2015 (Guliyev, 2015). In this article, based on author's sociological survey among 103 respondents, Ahmad Guliyev (George Washington University, USA) studied social and cultural characteristics, and identity issues of first generation Azerbaijani immigrants in the United States²⁸. Before this study, there was not any reliable academic population survey reporting any kind on the attitudes and opinions of Azerbaijani Americans. Based on the survey among Azerbaijani immigrants, this paper provides us with the profile of the Azerbaijani community in the U.S. and assesses immigrant's identification with their native culture, ethnic affiliation, their emotional ties to the homeland and rate of integration in the USA.

Our study aims to deepen the knowledge about Azerbaijani immigrants in the U.S. through in-depth interviews revealing fundamental motivations and migratory behavior of Azerbaijani immigrants/respondents.

It should be noted that migration and mobility research for the last decades already focused upon mental maps of movement behavior, the role of search, place preference and the motives of stayers as well as movers (Reginald G. Golledge, 1980)²⁹.

²⁵ Naoki, Ch. (2001). *Iranians in the United States and Japan: Self-Imagery and Individual-Collective Dynamics*, (Ph.D. dissertation), University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, USA. Retrieved February 7, 2020 from: <http://search.proquest.com/docview/251784064>

²⁶ Hakimzadeh, Sh. (2006). *Iran: A Vast Diaspora Abroad and Millions of Refugees at Home*. Migration Policy Institute. Retrieved February 7, 2020 from: <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/iran-vast-diaspora-abroad-and-millions-refugees-home/>

²⁷ Hajibayova, L. (2012). *Online Representation of Azerbaijani Online Community*. *Khazar Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*. Baku, Volume 15, Number 4, 2012, pp. 34-49. Retrieved February 7, 2020 from: <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/0ad9/0d7928c6513955151c362f91fca7fbb64285.pdf>

²⁸ Guliyev, Ahmad (2015). *First generation Azerbaijani immigrants in the United States: socio-cultural characteristics and identity issues* // *Khazar Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, Volume 18, Number 2, 2015, pp.70-91 DOI: 10.5782/2223-2621.2014.18.2.70 ISSN: 2223-2613 (Print), ISSN: 2223-2621 (Online). Retrieved February 6, 2020 from: <http://jhss-khazar.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/1005.18.02.2015-1-1.pdf>

²⁹ Reginald G. Golledge (1980). *A behavioral view of mobility and migration research*. *The Professional Geographer*, 32:1, 14-21. Retrieved February 6, 2020 from: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.0033-0124.1980.00014.x>

The key focus in recent migration and mobility studies was on concept development and model formulation. Ineta Žičkutė and Vilmante Kumpikaite (2015) in their study suggest a theoretical model of economic behavior insights based on decision to migrate³⁰. The proposed model extends the limits of analysis based on standard economics approach to the aspects of behavioral economics, including framing effects, gains, losses, reference point, loss aversion, risk aversion, risk seeking, endowment effect and comparison of the situation in source and destination countries.

As stated above, the key objective of this study is to explore to what extent actual residence in the U.S. as an ethnic minority impacts ethnical identity perception of Azerbaijani immigrants and to examine the major motives for their migratory behavior.

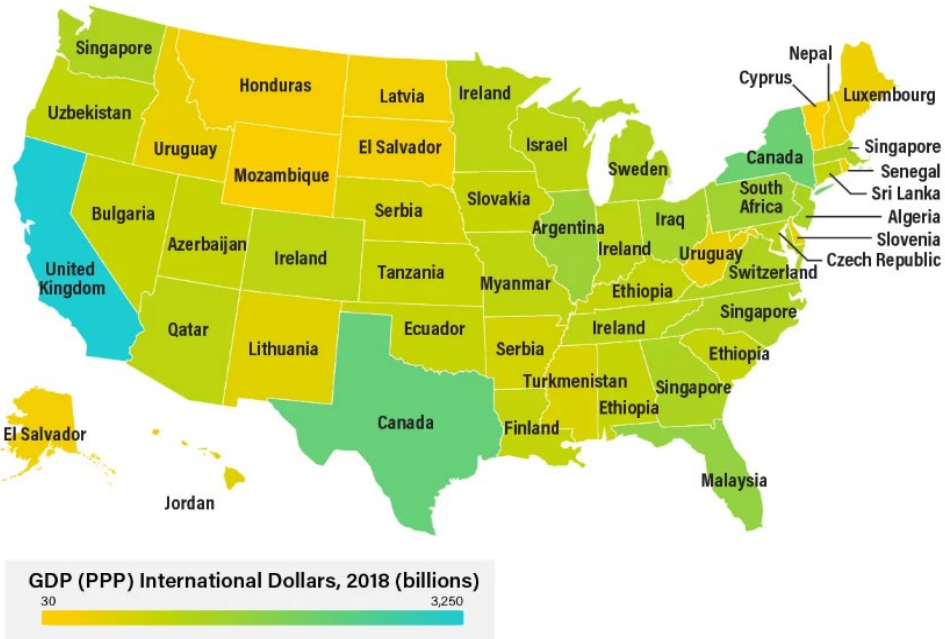
³⁰ Žičkutė, Ineta & Kumpikaite, Vilmante. (2015). Theoretical Insights on the Migration Process from Economic Behaviour's Perspective. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*. 213. 873-878. Retrieved February 6, 2020 from: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S187704281505853X>

Methodology

Center for Comparative Immigration Studies at the University of California, San Diego became a primary place for the study. According to World Population Review, California is a big state on the west coast of the United States and the home to one of the world's most diverse population. Ranking first in population among US states, estimate for California's population in 2020 is 39.56 million³¹. On the other hand, California's total area of about 163,696 square miles (423,970 km²) is the third largest by area among the US states. Actually, Azerbaijan with the total area of 33,400 square miles (86,600 km²) is almost 4.9 times smaller than California and with the estimated population of 10,2 million (July 2020) is 3.9 times less than California's one³².

From the economic perspective, according to the special report published in 2019 by The Economist, if the state of California was an independent country, it would have the fifth largest economy in the world³³. In this report, The Economist sees California and Texas states as the harbingers of two alternative futures for the United States. Later (2019), inspired by the report above, GZERO Media, a subsidiary of Eurasia Group, the world's leading political risk analysis firm, produced a visualization on: how do the economies of the individual US states stack up against other countries? As we see below from the Figure 2, California's economy is about the size of the United Kingdom's, while Utah's matches up with Azerbaijan's³⁴.

Figure 2. Every U.S. state shown as a country with similar GDP



Source: IMF, Bureau of Economic Analysis.

³¹ World Population Review (2020). California Population 2020 (Demographics, Maps, Graphs). Retrieved December 23, 2020 from: <http://worldpopulationreview.com/states/california-population/>

³² CIA. The World Factbook. Azerbaijan. Retrieved December 23, 2020 from: <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/azerbaijan/>

³³ The Economist (2019). California and Texas have different visions for America’s future. Special report. Jun 20th, 2019 edition. Retrieved March 23, 2020 from: <https://www.economist.com/special-report/2019/06/20/california-and-texas-have-different-visions-for-americas-future>

³⁴ GZERO (2019). Graphic Truth: The 50 Countries (Worth) of America. Retrieved March 23, 2020 from: <https://www.gzeromedia.com/the-graphic-truth-the-50-countries-worth-of-america>

It turns out that California State should be an ideal place in the U.S. for the migration studies.

Based on the grounds above, we developed and conducted random 10 anonymous in-depth interviews with the Azerbaijanis born in the Republic of Azerbaijan and residing in the USA. Some interviews took place face-to-face, in other cases - over the phone, when the respondent/participant was outside California State. Thus, among 10 respondents - 3 persons are from California State, 2 persons from Illinois, 1 person from Michigan, 1 person from Ohio, 1 person from Maine, 1 person from New York and 1 person from Massachusetts State; 4 females and 6 males, with a range of ages from 24 y.o. up to 71 y.o. The median age of respondent/participant is 43. We approached many other ethnical Azerbaijani residing in San Diego, California and beyond the state, but, unfortunately, they gave no consent to the interviews.

In-depth interview technique allowed us to establish rapport with participants to make them feel more comfortable and that helped generate more insightful responses, especially when it comes to dealing with sensitive topics. We had a great opportunity to ask follow-up questions, probe for additional information, and circle back to the key questions later on in the interview to generate a rich understanding of attitudes, perceptions and motivations. When interviews took place face-to-face we were able to monitor changes in tone and word choice to gain a deeper understanding with precise focus on non-verbal communications too. In general, in-depth interview technique allowed us to have fewer participants to glean useful and relevant insights. Ultimately, since in-depth interviews can potentially be so insightful, it is possible to identify highly valuable findings quickly.

For convenience and as the framework for the actual issues identification, we have designed 20 general questions split into 2 blocks: *demographic* questions and the questions covering *migration and integration* issues of the respondents.

Demographic block includes the following questions: What is your gender? What is your age? What is your nationality? What is your educational background? What is your marital status? Do you have children (if so, how many)? Is your family currently in the USA together with you? How long have you lived (or been) in the USA? How long time has passed since you moved to the USA? What languages do you speak?

Migration and integration block consists of the following questions: What is your place of birth? Could you say a few words about the conditions and standard of living in your former place of residence (i.e., home country- Azerbaijan)? What was your occupation (or employment) at homeland? What is your occupation (or employment) in the USA? What is the main reason for your move to the USA? Do you visit your home country (country of birth, - Azerbaijan), and, if so, how often? Could you say a few words about the conditions and standard of living in the USA? Could you mention main advantages of living in the USA? Could you mention main disadvantages of living in the USA (What you dislike most about the USA)? What are/were (in your opinion) the main issues of your integration in the USA? Do you intend to go back to Azerbaijan (please, motivate)?

Due to in-depth interview technique, we were able to understand some aspects of Azerbaijani community life in the U.S., different socio-economic and socio-cultural characteristics, assess identification of Azerbaijani immigrants with Azerbaijani culture, ethnic affiliation as well as emotional and economic ties to the homeland, and level of immigrants' integration in the

United States. All above-stated assisted us to explore the migration behavior (as a part of demographic behavior) of Azerbaijani immigrants living in the USA by raising the question of how their experience of living in the U.S. as an ethnic minority has influenced their consciousness, language, culture from the perspective of their ethnic identity, but also the socio-economic situation and civil position.

Research Findings

Socio-demographic indicators

As a rule, in-depth interviews tend to outreach representatives of a real or potential target audience. For us, this audience is immigrants born in Azerbaijan but currently residing in the United States. Due to the sudden global coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) outbreak in early 2020 and due to the fact that social contacts between people decreased drastically, this research method allowed us to focus not on a large sample as in regular social surveys, but on a small segment of the total random sample of 10 people - Azerbaijani immigrants. As stated above, some interviews took place face-to-face, in other cases - over the phone, when the respondent/participant was outside California State. Among 10 respondents, 3 persons were from California State, 2 persons from Illinois, 1 person from Michigan, 1 person from Ohio, 1 person from Maine, 1 person from New York and 1 person from Massachusetts State; 4 females and 6 males, with a range of ages from 24 y.o. up to 71 y.o. The median age of respondents/participants was 43. In this regard, it makes sense to refer to Guliyev's (2015) study³⁵. His survey with 103 respondents (51 men and 52 women) revealed respondents' mean age of 37 years with a range of between 18 and 74 years. If we assume that the same persons could be involved in both studies, four to six years of age difference seem quite understandable.

All 10 respondents/immigrants were representatives of Azerbaijani nationality. Six out of 10 persons were married, 2 - single, 1 divorced and 1 widowed. 7 out of 10 Azerbaijani immigrants have children. According to our study, the average number of children in a family of Azerbaijani immigrants is 2.15. Six families of immigrants (with children) live all together and a family of one (divorced) immigrant stayed in Azerbaijan.

The study has revealed that period of residence of 10 immigrants in the United States varies from 3 up to 30 years, while an average period is 13.6 years.

The study also shows a very high percentage of people with university background - 9 persons out of 10, while one respondent, who reported a secondary technical educational background, is currently undergoing further training in the United States. Earlier studies also prove this phenomenon and reveal an "epidemiologic paradox" in that former Soviet Union (FSU) immigrants possess higher levels of education compared with U.S.-born whites³⁶. In fact, wide availability and access to tertiary education may explain the phenomenon of coverage of higher education in post-Soviet Azerbaijan.

English language proficiency rate represents one of the key components of successful adaptation in American society. Our study revealed a unique aspect: each Azerbaijani immigrant freely speaks at least 3 languages - Azerbaijani, English and Russian (all 10 respondents reported this), of which 4 people also speak Turkish, 2 Persian, 2 French and 2

³⁵ Guliyev, Ahmad (2015). First generation Azerbaijani immigrants in the United States: socio-cultural characteristics and identity issues // *Khazar Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, Volume 18, Number 2, 2015, pp.70-91 DOI: 10.5782/2223-2621.2014.18.2.70 ISSN: 2223-2613 (Print), ISSN: 2223-2621 (Online). Retrieved February 6, 2020 from: <http://jhss-khazar.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/1005.18.02.2015-1-1.pdf>

³⁶ Mehta, N. K., & Elo, I. T. (2012). Migrant selection and the health of U.S. immigrants from the former Soviet Union. *Demography*, 49(2), 425–447. Retrieved March 28, 2020 from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3347764/>

German. This, in fact, is a clear indication of a very high level of both intellectual development and the educational background of Azerbaijani immigrants.

Standard of living at homeland: pros and cons

We conditionally divide the opinions of Azerbaijani immigrants in the US regarding their standard of living at homeland (Azerbaijan) into 3 categories.

The first category pointed to generally *favorable* standard of living in Azerbaijan before their departure to the USA. Amongst them:

Male, 45 years old, 15 years of residence in the US (Maine): "... *Everything was fine. We had our own apartment and job. We were a "middle-class" people.*"

Male, 45 years old, 22 years of residence in the US (Illinois): "... *When I arrived in the USA, the most difficult period in our life was already over. Hence, my move to the USA, in general, had nothing to do with my economic situation or, say, conditions. If I may say so, I do not consider myself an economic immigrant. Everything was fine with us. I wanted to know the world. You face new opportunities, a new country and a new culture ...*"

The second category noted their standard of living in Azerbaijan as normal or mostly *neutral*:

Female, 71 years old, 30 years of residence in the US (California): "... *We lived like a regular Soviet family.*"

Female, 42 years old, 17 years of residence in the US (California): "... *The conditions were normal. I worked and received salary but lived with my parents. They did not allow me to live separately. Therefore, I had to live in my parents' house. Parents were middle-class people. But ...it was difficult to me to accept different cultural prohibitions.*"

Female, 24 years old, 10 years of residence in the US (Massachusetts): "... *We were an average household, and we led an average lifestyle. Dad was in public service at a middle management position and mom was a housewife. We lived as a middle-class family - neither very rich, nor very poor. We lived normally.*"

Male, 46 years old, 16 years of residence in the US (Michigan): "... *In the country where I lived 16 years ago, everything depended on your job. If you had the opportunity to have a good job and get decent money, then you could say that everything was at a good level. However, as far as I remember, there were very few people like that around me. Objectively, people with diplomas could hardly run their career best way. Well, I would say the situation was satisfactory... hm... or, rather normal one.*"

Male, 41 years old, 3 years of residence in the US (Ohio): "... *The standard of living in Azerbaijan was normal. My family and I had no financial problems. In general, I was happy with my life. From economic perspective, I was fully content with my life. But, when it comes to political point of view, I would highly likely say "no" than "yes" ... I was always looking for a democratic state. In Azerbaijan, I was engaged in political activities for a long time... There is a real justice in the USA, there are opportunities for development.*"

The last, third category expressed a *negative* opinion regarding the standard of living in Azerbaijan before leaving for the United States:

Male, 27 years old, 2 years of residence in the US (New York): "*... Personally, I created conditions for myself in Azerbaijan and here, in the USA. Nevertheless, of course, it is impossible to compare the former and the latter. The conditions are incomparable. Here in the USA, there is a different society and different values. You feel freedom here. It was very difficult to me to live in Azerbaijan.*"

Male, 30 years old, 10 years of residence in the US (California): "*... I grew up and lived in Azerbaijan until about 18 years old. Then I failed to go to university. On the other hand, I had a chance to continue my education in Russia and I took it. I studied there for 2 years and then had the opportunity to come to the US. I came and later decided to stay and continue my education here. My living conditions in Azerbaijan were difficult. Our family was in need. I'm talking about the standard of living and the cost of living.*"

Female, 60 years old, 10 years of residence in the US (Illinois): "*... I believe that we did not get a decent salary in Azerbaijan for our work done. You could lead a normal life only if you work multiple jobs. I am not speaking about all the people but, at least it was difficult to me and my family.*"

The narratives above allow us to draw several conclusions. As in any other society, there is no consensus among all the people on some phenomena. We distinguish three categories in the responses of immigrants: favorable, neutral and negative reviews because their answers indicate the following:

- Favorable conditions of standard of living at homeland, Azerbaijani immigrants in the US associate with availability of own property (home or apartment) and job. In essence, it builds a solid basis for human life. A different and new culture plays the role of pull factor to move to the United States;
- Neutral conditions in several responses are described as "normal", "average" or "middle". You can really find these characteristics in the narratives of different people while referring to the wording like average income, middle management, average lifestyle, a regular Soviet family, etc. Although the Soviet Union collapsed some 30 years ago, the phenomenon of "averaging" is still firmly rooted in the mindset of people as a kind of a standard. Surprisingly, this wording is inherent not only older generation immigrants, but also to the younger generations. Again, the pull/push factors impacting the decision to migrate are cultural, economic and political;
- Some immigrants associate negative living conditions in Azerbaijan before departure to the US with low wages, the cost of living and different social values.

As a summary, the narratives of Azerbaijani immigrants generally denote different economic, socio-cultural and political factors while describing a standard of living in Azerbaijan at the time of their move to the US.

Push Factors: reasons for immigration

The study revealed an overall complexity of the question of the main reason for immigration to the United States. The respondents mostly showed very little enthusiasm; immigrants briefly motivated the main reason of their decision to leave Azerbaijan, some were trying to skip this direct question. Let us analyze the answers and then systematize them.

Male, 27 years old, 2 years of residence in the US (New York): "... Well, I got the opportunity to move to the USA. I won the US Green Card Lottery."

Female, 42 years old, 17 years of residence in the US (California): "... The main reason for my move to the USA was a moral dissatisfaction at homeland. I did not have financial difficulties; it was about moral ones... I felt displeased."

Male, 46 years old, 16 years of residence in the US (Michigan): "... It may sound trite, but those times I wanted more freedom for myself, my family. I would say a freedom of self-promotion: to live where you want, to do exactly what you want... I can afford it here."

Female, 60 years old, 10 years of residence in the US (Illinois): "... The main reason for my move to the USA was a financial distress. My salary was not enough to me. If I stayed there, my pension would be too low... Being retired, how would I pay for medical treatment, medicines? I am reunited here with my family. I am fine now."

Male, 41 years old, 3 years of residence in the US (Ohio): "... My answer will be very short: in the USA, I can freely express my thoughts."

Male, 45 years old, 15 years of residence in the US (Maine): "... Our close relatives moved to the United States many years ago. The main reason for my moving to the USA was family reunification. Later, my other relatives also immigrated to the USA."

Female, 71 years old, 30 years of residence in the US (California): "... My husband was a highly qualified specialist. He was offered a good job here, in the States; we all thought it over and moved here. I supported him in his choice."

Male, 30 years old, 10 years of residence in the US (California): "... I moved to the USA not directly from Azerbaijan, but from Russia. The main purpose of my first visit was to learn English. I came as a tourist to the US and then decided to stay here as a student. There are many possibilities to continue your education. At last, I got married here."

Female, 24 years old, 10 years of residence in the US (Massachusetts): "... My aunt, my mother's sister, moved to the United States many years ago after the collapse of the USSR, after that her parents moved here, in other words, my grandfather and grandmother. And finally, my family won the US Green Card Lottery."

Male, 45 years old, 22 years of residence in the US (Illinois): "... I wanted to know the world. I wanted to discover America. I wanted to compare how people live in different countries. I am very glad that I moved to the USA."

As we see from the brief replies above, some factors pushed Azerbaijanis from home country, while other factors pulled them towards the US. In general, there will always be "push"

factors that encourage and motivate people to leave the place of their residence, while, at the same time, "pull" factors will draw people to leave everything they have ever known in search for something better. Based on above-stated narratives, we can identify the following main reasons for emigration from Azerbaijan among the respondents:

1. Winning of the US Green Card Lottery;
2. Family reunification;
3. New educational opportunities or purposes;
4. Better occupational opportunities; and
5. Relocation to a country with a higher standard of living, including expanded social, economic, and political freedoms and opportunities.

Besides, our study revealed some gender aspects of the phenomenon. Women tend to immigrate for family reasons, while men are more likely to demonstrate economic motivation, an interest in educational opportunities and extended freedoms. However, it is logical to argue that the last, fifth motivation was the principal one for all the immigrants, regardless their gender or age.

One of the missed reasons for emigration not fully covered by the replies of immigrants in our study was an international marriage. Even if there is no reliable statistics on international marriages in Azerbaijan, the US Census Bureau shows that the percentage of married-couple households that are interracial or interethnic grew across the United States from 7.4 to 10.2 percent from 2000 to 2012-2016³⁷. This change varied across states and counties and for specific interracial/interethnic combinations. Beyond all doubt, an international marriage can also be the pull factor for a potential immigrant to the USA.

Pull Factors: what drives Azerbaijani migrants to the USA?

Earlier in the study, we revealed what the main reasons for immigration of Azerbaijanis to the United States are. Then we found out what the conditions and standard of living of immigrants in the US are. Now, aspired to deepen our research of migration behavior, we will try to identify the main "pull" factors that attract immigrants to the United States, using the case of Azerbaijanis.

Referring to the theory of this phenomenon, let us note, "pull/push" factors were first proposed by Everett Lee³⁸. Aside from characteristics unique to specific ethnic minority areas, the "pull/push" factors are the main determinants for migration. Lee's theory views population migration as the physical change of residence in specific contexts and points out that migration is the result of the interplay between pull / push factors associated with the *area of origin*, *area of destination*, *intervening obstacles*, and *personal factors*. It is a process affected by the "pull" factors of the destination, and the "push" factors of the place of origin. Everett Lee explained that the natural "push" factors of the area of residence, such as hardships (in the place of origin) and the "pull" factors of the destination (area of destination) which are more favorable, offers more life and work opportunities have objectively created flows of migration.

³⁷ The US Census Bureau (2018). Growth in Interracial and Interethnic Married-Couple Households. Retrieved March 28, 2020 from: <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2018/07/interracial-marriages.html>

³⁸ Everett S. Lee (1966). A Theory of Migration // Demography. Vol. 3, N 1 (1966). P. 47–57. Retrieved April 16, 2020 from: <https://emigratecaportuguesa.files.wordpress.com/2015/04/1966-a-theory-of-migration.pdf>

Hence, Lee's theory divides the factors that determine the decision to migrate and the process of migration into four categories:

1. *Factors associated with the Area of Origin*: there are many factors motivating people to leave their place of origin to outside area. They are push factors.
2. *Factors associated with the Area of Destination*: there are very attractive forces at the area of destination to which the proportion of "selectivity" migrants is high. According to Lee, such forces are found in metropolitan areas of a country. Pull factors are present in such areas.
3. *Intervening Obstacles*: there are intervening obstacles like distance and transportation that increase migrant selectivity of the area of destination. Technological advance may reduce those obstacles in our time. Lee also refers to cost of movements, ethnic barriers and personal factors as intervening obstacles.
4. *Personal Factors*: lastly, it is the personal factors on which the decision to migrate from the place of origin to the place of destination depends. In fact, it is an individual's perception of the 'pull and push forces' that impact actual migration. He categorizes these forces into "pluses" and "minuses" respectively. In other words, pluses are pull factors and minuses are push factors. Besides, there are "zeros" in between balancing the competing forces.

Based upon this theory, many other academic researchers have further developed its offshoots, making it much more applicable in various conditions and circumstances.

In our study, we focus more on *personal factors* through studies on real practices of immigrants and identification of pull factors from perspective of those who have already moved to the United States, though the study itself also contributes to all the above four categories. All the participants in our control group were asked a question regarding main advantages of living in the US. The goal is to determine what attracted them the most in the United States. The narratives below reveal the nature of this question:

Female, 42 years old, 17 years of residence in the US (California): "... *I would like to name a few advantages among others. Well, firstly, it is easy to find a job. Secondly, the products in stores are of a very high quality. Finally, the ecology is good. But the main thing is that you can feel here the rule of law. For example, if you drive a car, nobody will stop you asking for something... No bribes! There is the rule of law here.*"

Female, 60 years old, 10 years of residence in the US (Illinois): "... *You can live in America quite well even without knowing perfect English! Of course, if you do not work for government... You can speak your native Azerbaijani or other language and speak English only at an elementary level and this will be enough to live here. In the US, you can find any job starting from the service sector and ending with opening your own business. You need only desire, diligence, and patience. You should not be a drug addict or an alcoholic... You need to work hard, and you will get what you want.*"

Male, 46 years old, 16 years of residence in the US (Michigan): "... *You can simultaneously have 2 or 3 jobs; you can do exactly what you want to do. You are not bound to one workplace. The USA is a country where you do not need to live in New York to become a millionaire, you can live in any other state, in a small town, in a village, if you wish so, and if you find your niche, if you have own business, you can become a wealthy person without visiting New York ever. Are you concerned about climate? No problem, go to the North, there are always snow places there, or move to southern states, where is always warm. There are a lot of opportunities in America.*"

Male, 41 years old, 3 years of residence in the US (Ohio): "... *The advantages of residence in the USA can be viewed from different perspectives. For example, if you approach the issue from a socio-economic perspective - the USA is a land of opportunities! You can manage your opportunities in accordance with your knowledge and capacity. Besides, on the other hand, if you consider the advantages of living here from a socio-political perspective, you will see that the USA is a country of various and essential freedoms. You can freely express your thoughts and ideas here. Undoubtedly, you will not be able to do that in any other country of the world, where human rights are seriously violated.*"

Male, 45 years old, 15 years of residence in the US (Maine): "... *There are many opportunities for doing business in the USA. Corruption is close to zero. Here, there is a lot of freedom. You can start from scratch and achieve a lot. That was the path for our family. The USA is a land of opportunities.*"

Male, 45 years old, 22 years of residence in the US (Illinois): "... *The biggest plus in the USA for immigrants is relatively painless integration into American society. That is the main advantage.*"

Male, 27 years old, 2 years of residence in the US (New York): "... *Well, there are lots of advantages in the USA. Learning and getting to know other cultures is one of them. The place where I live, the city of New York, is the place where all cultures meet, and it is really the world's capital. In every area of life in the USA, everyone can draw something of their own, learn something, and know something. For example, if a person is young in spirit and not in age, he or she will always find something and gleaned for himself or herself from this city, from this independent way of life, from this rich country. If only I was 10 years younger, I would move from state to state, I would live, working part-time, I would visit more and more places. All the states! Sometimes, I wonder why young people in the USA do not do that... There are a lot of opportunities here. Till now I have traveled to more than 20 states and I can say there are lots of opportunities to make money, the way you like. You can even buy a real estate if you wish. Of course, if we are talking about California, Florida or Hawaii, your home may be worth a fabulous amount of money... But everything is relative. If you wish, you can do even that.*"

Female, 24 years old, 10 years of residence in the US (Massachusetts): "... *For me, the most important factor is that you can get to university or even find a job without any connections. Of course, not all here so ideal. Often connections help a lot, but it's much easier here to live a decent life without having powerful friends.*"

Female, 71 years old, 30 years of residence in the US (California): "... *There is the rule of law in the United States. Although life is expensive, it is very comfortable, but you have to work hard for it. My husband is a high-level specialist. His work was very well paid. What else... I like the air in the USA as it is clean. Plus, a feeling of freedom or something ... You can get full information about environmental situation here. This is a big plus. The products, clothes in the USA are of a very high quality. This is also a big plus. And yet, you know, it immediately catches your eye - the respect that you feel here everywhere... Politeness is a trait of Americans. Maybe it is not sincerity, but it is politeness. Here you rarely see rudeness.*"

Male, 30 years old, 10 years of residence in the US (California): "... *There are many freedoms here. A person who works even in a low-paid and possibly not very respectable job can rise and become a famous one. You just need to work hard. This is a country with a lot of opportunities and chances. This is the biggest advantage in the USA in my opinion. If you really want something, you can achieve it.*"

Hence, based on narratives, we can identify the main and often repeated advantages of living in the USA, which, in fact, are the main "pull" factors that attract people to move to the US:

1. The USA is a country of freedoms and lots of opportunities for self-promotion;
2. The rule of law;
3. No corruption;
4. Ease of integration into American society;
5. Wide opportunities for economic activity: lack of barriers in doing business, ease of finding a new job, high mobility of the workforce, no need to be tied to one place;
6. Attractive cultural environment (courtesy, diversity of ethnic groups, the ability to communicate with former compatriots in their native language);
7. High quality of food & clothing;
8. Clean environment.

These advantages form a kind of sustainable structure of viable factors working to effectively pull new immigrants to the United States.

Standard of living in the USA: pros and cons

As part of the study, Azerbaijani immigrants were asked to characterize their standard of living in the United States after the move. Let us study all the replies reported by immigrants and based on their narratives, but also highlight the *strengths* and *weaknesses* of their living in the United States:

Female, 24 years old, 10 years of residence in the US (Massachusetts): "... *The standard of living was not very satisfactory when we just moved. It was hard to my parents to find a job at first and to get used to a new language... I think it was much easier to me, since I went to an American school, and later entered the university. I am sure the standard of living of my generation is better. I would say, as a second generation, it was much easier to me.*"

Male, 27 years old, 2 years of residence in the US (New York): "... *There are amazing opportunities and living conditions in the USA. The American dream we all heard about from media, Internet, friends, and acquaintances - it does exist. Everything depends on the person himself or herself. The opportunities to achieve something here are hundreds of times more than in another country. For example, if you were able to achieve something in Azerbaijan, here you can do it ten times more and really succeed.*"

Male, 30 years old, 10 years of residence in the US (California): "... *Well, I live in California. The states are very different from each other. I believe California is very different from other American states and I traveled a lot. I studied here for 5 years, now I work. My salary can be said a very good one. In general, the salaries in the US are very high, but again, they differ from state to state.*"

Male, 41 years old, 3 years of residence in the US (Ohio): "... *I would like to mention one fact. My eldest son did not want to stay here after arrival to the US. He really missed Baku and his*

friends. He is an emotional kid and returned to Azerbaijan to his grandparents. My wife and I work here in the USA. Another son is studying. In general, we do not have any serious problems here. Everything's good."

Female, 42 years old, 17 years of residence in the US (California): "*... The US is a country with a democratic society, where the government cares about its citizens. There is a high standard of living here. People respect each other. Let us say, you do not have to pay a bribe for getting some documents. There is no corruption here."*

Male, 45 years old, 15 years of residence in the US (Maine): "*... I belong to an upper middle class here. My wife and I have good jobs, and we have our own cars and houses. We have high quality of life here."*

Male, 45 years old, 22 years of residence in the US (Illinois): "*... In the USA, in my opinion, there is the possibility of real integration of migrants as in no other country in the world. I would say this is a unique feature of this country. Of course, it will take a certain time, but here, it seems to me, it is easy to get integrated."*

Male, 46 years old, 16 years of residence in the US (Michigan): "*... The USA is truly a land of opportunities. If you have ambitions and a desire to make money, all roads are open here."*

Female, 60 years old, 10 years of residence in the US (Illinois): "*... Every state in the USA has its own standard of living, I think so. The migrants who do not speak English need to move to the cities with a large concentration of Russian speakers, if they speak Russian, for example. I used to live in Maine, in a small town where there was almost no work for me. I know a few people from Maine, which later moved to Boston, New York, Washington, and other cities where there are large concentrations of the Russian-speaking communities. In general, I believe that everyone in the United States gets according to his or her abilities, strengths and knowledge."*

Female, 71 years old, 30 years of residence in the US (California): "*... The US as a country has a high standard of living. Everyone knows that. But on the other hand, there are disadvantages. Residence in the USA is expensive. My husband immediately went to work when we moved many years ago. But I had problems: it was very difficult to me to find a job in my field. Migrants, people with higher education often accepted low skilled jobs. Because you had to survive. I could not accept that... In Baku, we lived in a neo-classical Stalin era building. I want to note that housing in the USA is not of very high quality, very poor sound insulation, although, on the other hand, very low interest on a home loan is a big plus. Sometimes the rent pay took more than half of my husband's salary. Really, it was difficult time... It's still very expensive, especially here, in California."*

The narratives of Azerbaijani immigrants give us the opportunity to draw a list of characteristics we systematized as follows:

Strengths of living in the USA in the eyes of immigrants:

- a democratic society;
- tremendous development opportunities;
- lack of corruption;
- high salaries;
- the existence of various ethnic enclaves in biggest cities of the USA;

- ease of integration into American society for the younger (or second) generation of immigrant families;
- low interest on home loans, mortgages; and because of all of the above -
- high quality of life.

Weaknesses of living in the USA in the eyes of immigrants:

- difficulties associated with lack of English language skills;
- difficulties associated with primary adaptation, nostalgia for the homeland;
- difficulties associated with job search (especially in respective fields);
- high cost of living;
- high cost of rental housing;
- quality of housing (poor sound insulation, etc.).

Employment aspects: homeland and the US

Employment and areas of activity of Azerbaijani immigrants in both Azerbaijan and the USA are of a high interest in our study. The results of conducted in-depth interviews suggest that Azerbaijani immigrants in the USA mostly work in the area of professional translation services and they are highly represented in social, technical and financial areas too. Some respondents take managerial positions, some are pensioners, while one respondent is still a student.

Also, nine out of ten respondents engaged with professional activity and had a job in Azerbaijan, while one female did not work due to young age. We presume that an extended response of one immigrant vividly illustrates existing differences in employment challenges in both countries.

Man, 45 years old, 22 years of residence in the US (Illinois): "... *Despite of being too young, I got a good job right after my graduation. Or rather... somebody helped me get this job. It was an aviation company. It was really a good job for me. By the way, many employees who worked with me there did not work in their field... It was challenging to find the right job in Baku in your field that time, and especially after the collapse of the USSR. My parents were working in their fields! At that time, I had many friends who failed to find a job they sought, but I managed to do. Hence, I do believe the reasons of my move to the States were not purely economic. The other way round, it was very difficult to me to find the job I wanted here from the very beginning. Well, in the USA, there are lots of places where you can apply for a job, but... I could not find the job I wished! It took me about three years. The first year or even two I used to work for different companies and took different positions... Well, truthfully, I was practicing spoken English. In the US, I got to retrain, retrain... Now everything is fine with me. But I worked hard to achieve the targeted standard of living here. I'm still working pretty hard.*"

In support of the above-stated thesis, some recent regional studies (ADB, 2019) confirm that after 1991³⁹ labor force participation rates abruptly declined across the region, especially those of male workers, whose jobs disproportionately disappeared with the shift away from

³⁹ The year of collapse of the USSR.

the planned economy. At the same time, the region's employment shifted from wage-earning jobs to self-employment as informality in the economic system rose sharply⁴⁰.

What Azerbaijani immigrants dislike most about the USA?

People leaving their native country and entering the United States want to improve their lives: get a new career opportunity, increase wealth, and find a comfortable place for their old age. However, life in the United States, as in any other country in the world, has its pros and cons, which you should definitely know before making the decision to immigrate or stay. Objective parameters as English language command, educational background, required profession, financial capabilities and affordable legalization options describe the difficulties to migrate to the US for a particular person.

Undoubtedly, starting a new life in immigration is difficult: a lot needs to be learned from the scratch and those ones who would help and support are not always next to you. The joy and feeling of no barriers to happiness is usually only the first and one of the shortest phases that you have to go through after moving to a new country. As soon as the euphoria is gone, a lot of problems arise - from everyday questions from the series "How to pay for electricity?" and "Where can you find your favorite food?" to the more urgent ones like "How to make new friends?", "What is a good first date location?", etc.

Moving to a new country is probably always a culture shock. However, people really experience immigration in different ways: for one it is relatively easy and causes a kind of euphoria, while for another one it turns into the tragedy of a lifetime... There is a huge number of real immigrant's stories about experience of moving to the USA in various popular sources, while in the scholarly literature these issues are mainly considered in the context of the adaptation aspects of different ethnic groups of immigrants in the US.

Given the lack of scholar studies on the problems of adaptation of Azerbaijanis to living conditions in the United States, we included into our research the questions on difficulties that immigrants from Azerbaijan faced after moving to the United States. Based on their narratives, we will be able to systematize the obtained information.

Female, 42 years old, 17 years of residence in the US (California): *"... Among the shortcomings, I would mention the lack of affection, sincerity and warmth of people. I miss this... In Azerbaijan, we used to have these character traits. I think there is a simple explanation of this: basically, in Azerbaijan we have people of the same nation, while here ethnic communities are from all over the world, in other words, all people are aliens to each other. Naturally, this has a strong impact at human relations. We are still strangers here. What else? I would note the high cost of living. Everything is of high quality, but prices are really high."*

Female, 60 years old, 10 years of residence in the US (Illinois): *"... The major minus in the USA is protectionism. It's terrible when you don't have any support here. You can't get a normal job, if nobody recommends you, even for the lowest paid job. What is called parochialism in Azerbaijan, here, in the USA is protectionism. Another problem is ethnic*

⁴⁰ Good jobs for inclusive growth in Central Asia and the South Caucasus: Regional report. Asian Development Bank, February 2019. ISBN: 978-92-9261-511-6, p. 51. Retrieved May 28, 2020 from: <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/489856/jobs-inclusive-growth-central-asia-caucasus.pdf>

communities from India, China, Mexico and other countries that tend to hire employees only of the same ethnicity. Their people occupy virtually all key positions in their companies."

Male, 46 years old, 16 years of residence in the US (Michigan): "... People who didn't study English in the United States will always have a hard time understanding psychology and culture of Americans, including movies, humor, etc. We grew up in another country with a different culture, with different music, which, by the way, is fantastic in Azerbaijan. And the same thing with food. You absorb it with your mother's milk. Naturally, first you will be simply looking for those food products to which you're so used to. Some of them are here, but they are different. The process of adaptation will take some time... And again, about culture. We all grew up in Azerbaijan on some movies. Jokes that we understand perfectly. Here all this should be explained and may not be understood. It is a culture shock. Also, there is a language barrier. Even if you are living here for 16 years, or even 25 or 30, still it will be difficult to learn English and to speak as a native speaker. The language barrier is a barrier to communication. You will look for immigrants from the former USSR, you will continue to be bound by the Russian language. It is very difficult to get integrated and adapted to the American system. Of course, there are friends here, but they are more buddies. Our perception of friendship based upon our experience here and from the past- is only possible with ours."

Male, 41 years old, 3 years of residence in the US (Ohio): "... Every country has its flaws, no surprise. In my opinion, there are various flaws in the USA. For 3 years I have seen a huge amount of homeless people.... Well, maybe this is their own choice, because it's not difficult to find a job here. Or this maybe the result of some more serious problems. And yes, in general, due to the high cost of living, work here is the key for a decent life. If you become jobless, you can become homeless, because of various kinds of due payments, loans, etc. The credit system is very well developed here, interest rates are low, but these loans need to be paid back. Everything is tied to the loans, I think so. Another problem, in my opinion, is the high cost of health insurance, the high cost of housing. Although, of course, it depends on the state, you live in. These are the main points that I can note now."

Male, 45 years old, 15 years of residence in the US (Maine): "... We live far from our homeland. A long way far from our relatives... I would call it even a kind of isolation. Azerbaijanis live here, but not so many. We try to cook at home. I do not like fast food. What are the other flaws? People here are not always sincere and open - what we are used to in Azerbaijan... The country and the culture in the USA are very different from our ones; they are more isolated, and more focused on the personality of the individual, on personal independence. What we see in Azerbaijan is a kind of collectivism, many relatives, many friends, and many neighbors. We are people of a different kind."

Male, 45 years old, 22 years of residence in the US (Illinois): "... Of course, there are drawbacks. The USA is not a paradise. The drawbacks of living in the USA for those born here are fundamentally different from the drawbacks for immigrants who moved here. The biggest drawback for our immigrants is the remoteness from Azerbaijan. If a person moves here unprepared, it will take him a lot of time to get fully integrated and adapted to American society. It is very difficult to find yourself here. Language challenges are one of the two reasons why people suffer and try to find themselves here; it sometimes takes a very long period. And the second reason is specialization. If you have no proper specialization, then you'll have to learn, which also takes a lot of time. I would say, too much depends on migrant's age at the time he or she arrives here..."

Male, 27 years old, 2 years of residence in the US (New York): "... *Our information field (Azerbaijan, Russian, or Turkish) is different. Here we have another information field, even a different kind of sport, if we talk about football. In this regard, there is a certain misunderstanding in the topics of conversation. This is a culture shock, the challenges of building personal relationships, including romantic ones. I was in Maine, this was my first culture shock, and there were a lot of negative moments in these relations... I remember my first week in New York, I walked the streets and was shocked, and I was also shocked many times in transport. It is a different culture. You need to be here to understand that. There is also a different mindset. I would say everything is different here. Each city in the US has its own characteristics, but there are public transport challenges everywhere. I traveled a lot. There are drawbacks here for sure... It all depends on where you are, the flaws will be very different ones in different states, but you will almost always feel like a stranger here. You have to be born here to feel fully comfortable if you get what I mean.*"

Female, 24 years old, 10 years of residence in the US (Massachusetts): "... *The disadvantages here are most likely connected with different culture. I think people in the US are very distant from each other and it is very difficult to make good friends here. Family traditions and attitudes towards the older generations... They are different. Although I would say that this is rather not a disadvantage but maybe a difference?*"

Female, 71 years old, 30 years of residence in the US (California): "... *Everything is tied to work in the US. If a person loses his or her job, he or she loses everything at once. A car, house, everything. If it lasts for a long time, it is a way to suicide, or you can become homeless. I'm even not talking about medical services and insurance, which are very expensive here. There is a long working day in the US. Sometimes more than 8 hours. Due to the high cost of living, people have to work at several jobs. Though, much depends on the state, we moved to California several years ago... Well, life in the US is somewhat monotonous and quiet, I would say. Now I'm used to it. Due to frequent travels in our life, we could not find good friends here. In Chicago, I met several Azeri families. After we moved to California, we do not visit each other. You know, I still have the feeling that I'm an immigrant here. Sometimes I badly miss my homeland, especially the places where my youth and childhood passed...*"

Male, 30 years old, 10 years of residence in the US (California): "... *Well, firstly, you are far from your homeland- Azerbaijan. Even if you find friends here, there are not the true ones. There are no relatives close to you, your parents, brothers or sisters... Without them it was very difficult. At least for me. I can say, this was a strong negative factor for me. Secondly, since Azerbaijan is too far from California, a trip to home is very expensive. Thirdly, medical care is poor here; it is expensive but too far from being perfect.*"

The narratives above allow us to make a general conclusion that the United States is a country with many special aspects an immigrant have to face after moving. Our findings are based on subjective assessments of immigrants, their personal experience, and may not coincide, or may partially coincide with the reality that an immigrant (even Azerbaijani one) will face after moving to the United States.

We can summarize and highlight the main challenges Azerbaijani immigrants generally state:

1. Nostalgia, homesickness, remoteness from family and friends;
2. Language barriers;

3. Personal and cultural differences (a culture shock);
4. Social integration issues and interpersonal relations;
5. Gastronomic differences;
6. High cost of living;
7. Difficulties associated with job search (protectionism, work by specialty);
8. Quality and pricing of medical care (including insurance); and
9. "Immigrant complex"- a psychological pain or feeling of being second class person in relation to the local population (which affects self-esteem, etc.); not every single immigrant suffer from with this complex, but whoever experiences it has a really hard time.

Like in the case of question on weaknesses of living in the USA (in the eyes of immigrants), the question on "What Azerbaijani immigrants dislike most about the US?" with use of in-depth interview technique revealed both general and more systemic problems that immigrants face after moving to the United States.

Integration and adaptation to the mainstream culture

During our study the immigrants who participated in in-depth interviews, repeatedly articulated terms like cultural differences and a culture shock. So, what is a culture shock?

In the XX century, scholars had a clear interest in researching into the processes of adaptation of emigrants to new living conditions and culture shocks as migration became an integral part of the daily life of almost every country. Since then, a set of theories dealing with getting used to a new country of residence, and adaptation and integration emerged. "Culture shock" theory was one of the most popular but at the same times a controversial one. In 1954⁴¹, Canadian anthropologist, Kalervo Oberg (1901-1973), coined the term of "culture shock" and identified 4 phases individuals experience when they interact with a new culture. This process could last a month, a year or even much longer...

According to Oberg's theory⁴², the culture shock can be described as consisting of at least one of four distinct phases:

1. *The Honeymoon Stage*. The first stage of culture shock is often overwhelmingly positive during which travelers become infatuated with the language, people and food in their new surroundings. At this stage, the trip or move seems like the greatest decision ever made, an exciting adventure to stay forever. On short trips, the honeymoon phase may take over the entire experience as the later effects of culture shock don't have time to set in. On longer trips, the honeymoon stage will usually phase out eventually.
2. *The Crisis Stage (The Frustration Stage)*. Frustration may be the most difficult stage of culture shock and is probably familiar to anyone who has lived abroad or who travels frequently. At this stage, the fatigue of not understanding gestures, signs and the language sets in and miscommunications may happen frequently. Small things like losing keys, missing the bus or failure to order food in a restaurant easily may trigger frustration. And while frustration comes and goes, it's a natural reaction for people spending extended time in new countries. Bouts of depression or homesickness and feelings of longing to go home where everything is familiar and comfortable may regularly occur during the frustration stage.

⁴¹ Kalervo Oberg first proposed his model of cultural adjustment in a talk to the Women's Club of Rio de Janeiro in 1954.

⁴² Oberg, K. (1960). Cultural Shock: Adjustment to New Cultural Environments. *Practical Anthropology*, 05-07(4), 177-182. Retrieved February 6, 2020 from: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/009182966000700405>

3. *The Recovery Stage* (The Adjustment Stage). Frustrations are often subdued as travelers begin to feel more familiar and comfortable with the cultures, people, food and languages of new environments. Navigation becomes easier, friends and supportive communities appear, and details of local languages may become more recognizable during the adjustment stage.

4. *The Adaptation Stage* (The Acceptance Stage). Sometimes it may take weeks, months or years after combatting the emotional stages outlined above and migrants finally reach the very last stage of culture shock- acceptance. Acceptance doesn't mean that new cultures or environments are completely understood; rather it denotes the situation when complete understanding isn't necessary to function and thrive in the new surroundings. During the acceptance stage travelers have the familiarity and can draw together the resources they need to feel at ease.

This theory has been repeatedly criticized for being too universal in nature, indicating that it fails to cover the whole diversity of migrant's experience. But over the past 50 years, no other theory that would become more instrumental than this one has ever been developed. Despite its shortcomings and quite conditional nature, it was confirmed partially or completely by numerous studies of various researchers.

One thing is clear: the problems of integration and adaptation of immigrants in the host country are not exclusively personal ones; they also have a certain impact on the entire economic system of the country when the migratory influx is significant, as the migrants are already becoming a part of the host country's society. The most recent research done by Guillaume Marois, Alain Bélanger, and Wolfgang Lutz (2020) proves that in terms of policy options, lifting labor force participation among the general population (as in Sweden), and education-selective migration if accompanied by high integration, could even improve economic dependency⁴³. While on the other hand, high immigration flows combined with low levels of education and integration provokes increase in economic dependency. This shows the high stakes involved with integration outcomes under sizeable migration.

In this section, we focus on identification of the major obstacles to immigrant's integration in the US.

Female, 42 years old, 17 years of residence in the US (California): *"... In my opinion, the key problem of the integration of immigrants to the US is related to a lack of English language knowledge. Another important issue is a different mindset; it is very different from what we have. Also, it is a different culture. Besides, it is challenging to get a work visa here as well, especially if some restrictions apply to your visa status. In general, it is a very complicated and time-consuming procedure for obtaining immigration status. You can wait for years if you entered the country not as a Green Card winner."*

Female, 60 years old, 10 years of residence in the US (Illinois): *"... The biggest problem with adaptation relates to the language barrier. In my opinion, this is the only problem. For those who come to the US with English language command, adaptation period lasts around a year, while for those with no language, it may take 5 years or so. For example, Indian immigrants migrate to the US with pretty good knowledge of English; they don't need these 5 years to get adapted. They only need connections, friends and their folk, and they can take very good and highly paid positions here. You should consider this important fact and learn the language*

⁴³ Guillaume Marois, Alain Bélanger, and Wolfgang Lutz (2020). Population aging, migration, and productivity in Europe. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS), April 7, 2020, 117 (14) 7690-7695. Retrieved February 6, 2020 from: <https://www.pnas.org/content/117/14/7690>

before moving to the US. In this case, adaptation will not be that difficult. So again, in my opinion, no or almost zero English language knowledge may become the key and serious obstacle for the full integration in the US. Even without higher education you can work and live in the US, but the main thing is to know English. By the way, for this reason many people from the former USSR cannot fully socialize in the USA. Because we all had a different mindset and spoke different languages. It takes years, sometimes decades, to get adapted."

Male, 46 years old, 16 years of residence in the US (Michigan): "... In order to get integrated you have to pass a long way to obtain legal status, necessary documents, etc. No one who comes to the US receives an American passport for the next day. You have to pass all the tests, all the necessary exams, etc. All this takes a huge amount of time. You get used to this banking system, you get used to how to live here, how to pay bills here, what checks are, etc. Now all this left in the past to me, but now when I remember those times... like opening an account in a bank, get a loan, etc., it was really a problem. Personally, to me, handling some challenges tied up with the timeframe. Sometimes I had to wait up to six months for an answer from an office, and it is pretty normal here. I wanted everything to happen faster... but it generally takes some time for you to get what you want. There are a lot of bureaucratic delays here. But they will also warn you that a particular issue will be considered for 6 months, or 90 days, etc. Everyone can tell you about this. All sorts of immigration and tax authorities are all loaded. And you don't have any unusual privileges to get everything done quickly. You will be in the general line. Often you can even track something online, but as I understand, usually there are not enough people and so many things need to wait for a very, very long time ..."

Male, 41 years old, 3 years of residence in the US (Ohio): "... Yes, integration issues are becoming a problem for many immigrants. The US is not a European country; it has its own culture and its own acts. And Azerbaijanis who come to the United States cannot immediately get adapted here. Even those who come from Europe and not from Azerbaijan experience certain problems with adaptation here. I personally know these people. I can also mention several difficulties associated with adaptation. Firstly, it is a completely different culture. Secondly, a completely different mindset. It differs so much from our Azerbaijani one. People here live in a free society and enjoy all the benefits of this free society. And in connection with this, many immigrants experience a culture shock at first. And hence, in my opinion, it takes at least 1 to 2 years for adaptation to the American lifestyle. Surely, you can find your compatriots in the US, this will somehow simplify the adaptation period for a bit. Americans are very open-minded people, and they are really trying their best to help you with this."

Male, 45 years old, 15 years of residence in the US (Maine): "... New people, new culture, new cuisine, new living conditions. There were everyday problems. My English was not bad, but surely, over the years I have improved my language skills. In the beginning there were problems with business correspondence. Also, traditions are different here. There was a strong isolation. The place where we live is very poorly covered by the public transport. All people drive their own cars. At first it was a huge problem. I experienced harsh difficulties for a long time, because it took time to pass exams for a driver's license, to buy a car ... I remember how often I had to walk very long distances, since it was practically impossible to take a taxi each time. There are not so many places and cities in the US where a subway, trolleybuses, trams are available. Almost everyone has their own cars here. People move mainly by their cars. Probably, transportation problems at first were key to us. Many people already forget about this over the years, but when you come here, you see that the metrics of weights, lengths, temperatures, etc. are different, here you do not use kilometers and kilograms, but miles and pounds, etc. At first, we also experienced difficulties in purchasing

various products, since the price indicated on the package often shows the cost for some weight measure. And this is not the final price that you will see at the cash desk. In Azerbaijan, we have another system."

Male, 45 years old, 22 years of residence in the US (Illinois): "... As for many other immigrants, the biggest issue for me was legalization. This problem existed 50 years ago, 20 years ago and even today. The essence of this issue does not change. An immigrant in any country needs to be legalized. This is the problem number one. In addition, I have three children. There were problems with their upbringing. The society and values in the US are very different from ours. At first, there were problems with English language, later, the problems with our native language emerged. I will explain. At first, my eldest son had a weak knowledge of English, over time, on the contrary, he stopped speaking our native language, preferring English to Azerbaijani, and I am talking now about communication at home. Also, recalling the past I will say that education in American schools is weaker than it was in Azerbaijan. It is my own opinion. I talk about the public schools, not about the private ones. Extracurricular activities were expensive for us. In the US, there are not so many pitches. They are some, but they are few. The meals in the kindergarten (for another child - ed.) did not suit us either, it was a kind of fast food that we do not allow. We prefer quality homemade food. I'm so principled about this issue."

Male, 27 years old, 2 years of residence in the US (New York): "... I personally know people who have lived here for years and cannot get adapted, but there are those who get integrated right after arrival. Everything is very individual. After all, it's not about becoming an American, which is a collective concept, the fact is after a while a person gets a great patriotism here, in the USA, when you see the attitude of people towards the country, and, in turn, the country's attitude towards its people. My personal integration problems were related with the fact that I was given many opportunities, but I failed to take them. The psychological factor influenced me very much. The biggest problem that put pressure on me was homesickness, very strong nostalgia... This can last a long time... In Azerbaijan, we have a different mindset. Let's say the hourly salary, but we've got used to another. Here, time literally means money. We are used to long communication with our relatives and friends in Baku, while people here build their relations in a completely different way. There are no close friends here, as in Baku, whom you have been "dragging" for years from kindergarten to school, from school to college, then to the army and the rest of your life. Unless you have your own network of contacts, you will crawl the walls from loneliness. As soon as this network exists, as soon as work colleagues appear, everything becomes much better. But you will still be pulled back to homeland. You can't get rid of it. I think so."

Female, 24 years old, 10 years of residence in the US (Massachusetts): "... Of course, I had certain problems. In Azerbaijan, we studied English grammar, but we did not practice spoken language much, so it was easy to me to express my thoughts in writing, while it was very difficult for me to comprehend and speak English at first. There was a language barrier, especially at school. It lasted about a year or so. Then there were other unpleasant issues... For example, people often asked indelicate questions about my religion. Although I must say, I'm not so religious person. But there were a lot of questions about Islam, the role of woman, etc. I cannot call it discrimination, but obviously, it was a cultural difference, some kind of a barrier... I would prefer calling it this way."

Female, 71 years old, 30 years of residence in the US (California): "... The key problem of my integration? Well, everything. At first, you could say, everything was a kind of problem."

Language, culture, mindset. It was a completely different country, which could not be comparable with the former Union (USSR - ed.). It was very difficult to me to get used to. At first, we had a complete lack of communication with people. Despite their politeness, Americans turned out to be much closed people. I had problems with socialization. You can see very few people just walking around streets and parks in the US, as it was in the times of the USSR, and probably now in Russia. Now you can see in the morning and evenings only those who do sports, jogging or running. Americans rarely walk, Americans love cars. I had relatively young children when we arrived in the US. For a long time, they could not find friends and entertainment here. It was difficult. Even with food- it is a different cuisine here and different products. I can remember a lot, but this is what comes to my mind now."

Male, 30 years old, 10 years of residence in the US (California): "... *Unlike many of my compatriots, I had no problems with a visa. I had problems with English language. Without language command, it was really difficult to find a job here, because I had no friends living nearby. I also had difficulties with my personal life. During some periods of my stay in the US, I had a total lack of communication with people. Those were the main problems to me.*"

According to the narratives, almost all immigrants psychologically underwent 4 stages of a culture shock described above after their move to the United States. Yet it is difficult to establish the specific timeframe of each stage. Immigrant's experience during each stage is individual, ipso facto duration-related question maybe very conditional.

In this situation, we are more likely to identify and group the main problems associated with the integration of Azerbaijani immigrants in the United States.

Summarizing the above-mentioned, we find four major groups among the many identified issues related to the integration and adaptation of the Azerbaijani immigrants in the United States:

Group 1. *Linguistic and cultural difficulties*: language barrier/ different mindset/different values/different cuisine, etc.

Group 2. *Legal difficulties*: immigration status/legalization options/getting and extension of visas/ driver's license/ opening a bank account/ getting a loan, etc.

Group 3. *Psychological difficulties*: nostalgia for homeland/ longing for friends, relatives and close people/ lost opportunities for socialization and a sense of isolation, etc.

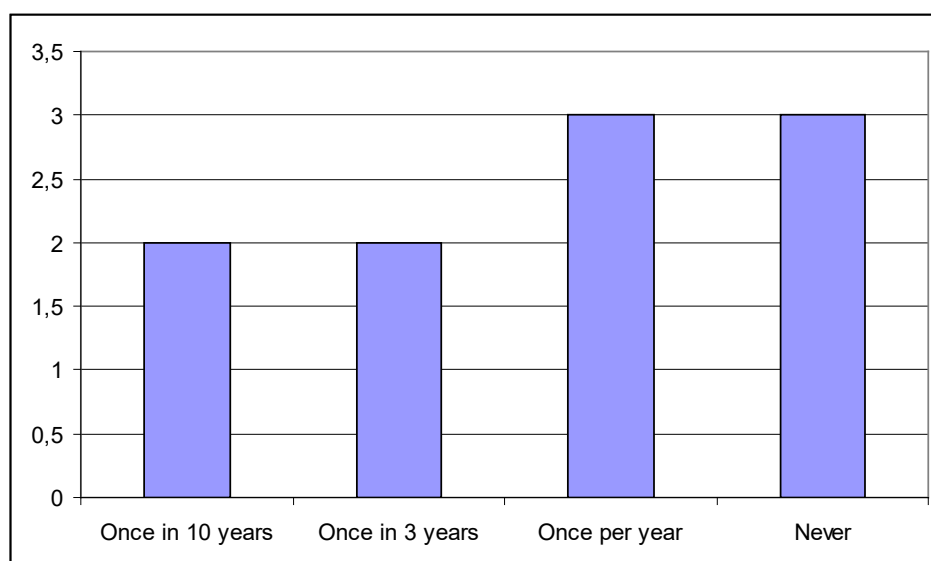
Group 4. *Domestic difficulties*: public transport problems/ different metrics of weights, temperature, distance, etc.

We can also highlight that the first 3 groups of difficulties were most often mentioned by all immigrants who took part in our study.

Visits to Azerbaijan

According to the narratives, 3 out of 10 Azerbaijani immigrants did not visited homeland after the move to the US, also 3 out of 10 persons visited Azerbaijan once per year, 2 out of 10 persons visited homeland once in 3 years and 2 persons visited Azerbaijan once in 10 years period.

Figure 3. Frequency of visits to homeland of the Azerbaijani immigrants residing in the US



As can be seen from the graph above, 70% from our sample of the Azerbaijani immigrants living in the US visited homeland at least once after the move.

There is also an obvious interrelation between immigrant's length of residence in the US and the frequency of visits to homeland. The study reveals that among 10 persons the share of people with a longer period of residence in the United States tended to visit Azerbaijan less frequently and even made no visits ever after their move to the States. This logical conclusion is consistent with the conclusions made earlier by Guliyev (2015) in his study⁴⁴. To determine a more accurate correlation between these parameters, more significant amounts of data are needed. In the framework of our study, this was not possible to fulfill.

Attitudes towards repatriation

The final question we asked the immigrants was about repatriation issues and sounded as “Do you intend to go back to Azerbaijan?” The purpose of this question was to determine the degree of connection of Azerbaijani immigrants with the homeland. We intended to clarify whether the years of residence in the United States affected their self-identity. By identity (in this context), we understand certain self-awareness based on the self-determination of individuals, which shapes a sense of belonging to “one's” community and an opinion about differences from “others”. Identity, in turn, manifests itself in the aggregate of relatively constant and interconnected images of “one's” and “others” communities. Markers of national identity in this context were commitments to the Azerbaijani state, ethnicity, the Azerbaijani language, religion and territoriality.

Our study revealed that exactly as in the case of the question about the frequency of visits to homeland we examined in detail earlier, 7 out of 10 respondents expressed their willingness to return to Azerbaijan indicating the presence of one or another of the above-stated markers

⁴⁴ Guliyev, Ahmad (2015). First generation Azerbaijani immigrants in the United States: socio-cultural characteristics and identity issues // *Khazar Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, Volume 18, Number 2, 2015, pp.70-91 DOI: 10.5782/2223-2621.2014.18.2.70 ISSN: 2223-2613 (Print), ISSN: 2223-2621 (Online). Retrieved February 6, 2020 from: <http://jhss-khazar.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/1005.18.02.2015-1-1.pdf>

and periodic visits back to the homeland. 3 immigrants indicated a total lack of desire to return to Azerbaijan.

Two diametrically opposite narratives below illustrate these existing differences in ethnical and territorial self-identity of immigrants of almost the same age (45-46 y.o.), which, in turn, is very close to the median age of 43 y.o. of participants of the in-depth interviews.

Male, 46 years old, 16 years of residence in the US (Michigan): *"... Despite the fact that Azerbaijan is my homeland, however, no, I do not want to go back. I do not have this "geographical" nostalgia. Yes, it was difficult to me to get adapted in the US at first. However, people quickly get used to everything. Now I feel more an American. It will be difficult to me to get adapted back to any living conditions in Azerbaijan again. Probably, I could only come on vacation and only because my friends and relatives, who stayed there cannot come here in the USA due to age, financial situation, etc. As for nostalgia for the country... I don't have it. I have nostalgia for the people who surrounded me years before. However, I understand that half of those who were with me many years ago also left the country due to some reasons, while others have already died. We are all growing up, aging and time is running out. One fine day, and I understand this pretty well, I just won't have anyone there to return to."*

Male, 45 years old, 22 years of residence in the US (Illinois): *"... I am a patriot in my heart and, of course, I plan to return back to Azerbaijan. I am always open to returning to my homeland because I never separated from Azerbaijan with my soul, head and heart. My physical stay in the USA is just my body. Everything else still lives in Azerbaijan. Therefore, the answer to the question is the following: it all depends on my desire and economic conditions here. Currently, I have the main goal here; it's to make more money. I have a certain plank. And here you can make really good money. As soon as I achieve what I want, I will go back. Yes, I would like to go back. But I would also like to return to another, renewed Azerbaijan."*

Conclusions

Azerbaijani immigrants' community in the US, the subject of our study has not been well researched till now. Present study helps understand the migration behavior of Azerbaijani immigrants in the US and shows how experience of residence in the U.S. as an ethnic minority influenced their consciousness, language, culture in terms of their ethnic identity, and also the social and economic situation and civil position.

In accordance with the findings based on in-depth interviews with randomly selected 10 Azerbaijani immigrants in the US (3 persons were from California, 2 persons from Illinois, 1 person from Michigan, 1 person from Ohio, 1 person from Maine, 1 person from New York and 1 person from Massachusetts State), of them, 4 females and 6 males, the range of ages of respondents is 24 y.o. up to 71 y.o. The median age of respondent-immigrants was 43. All 10 respondents/immigrants were ethnical Azerbaijani. Six out of 10 persons were married, 2 - single, 1 divorced and 1 widowed. Seven out of 10 Azerbaijani immigrants have children. According to the study, the average number of children in an Azerbaijani immigrant's family is 2.15. Six families of immigrants (with children) live all together, a family of one (divorced) immigrant stayed in Azerbaijan. The study revealed that length of residence in the United States of 10 immigrants varies from 3 up to 30 years, while an average length makes up 13.6 years. The study also shows a very high percentage of people with university background - 9 persons out of 10, while one respondent reported a secondary specialized technical educational background. The study revealed a unique aspect: each Azerbaijani immigrant freely speaks at least 3 languages - Azerbaijani, English and Russian (all 10 respondents reported this), of which 4 people also speak Turkish, 2 Persian, 2 French and 2 German.

The narratives allow us to draw several major conclusions.

Standard of living at homeland: pros and cons

As in any other society, there is no consensus among all the people on this phenomenon. We distinguish three categories in the responses of immigrants: favorable, neutral and negative reviews. Azerbaijani immigrants in the US associate favorable conditions of standard of living at homeland with an availability of own property (home or apartment) and job. Neutral conditions in several responses are pictured as an average income, average lifestyle, an ordinary "Soviet family", etc. Some immigrants associate negative standard of living in Azerbaijan before departure to the US with low wages, the cost of living and various social values.

Push Factors: reasons for immigration

The study revealed an overall complexity of the question on the main reason for immigration to the United States. Based upon narratives, we identify the following key reasons for emigration from Azerbaijan among the respondents: win of the US Green Card Lottery (1); family reunification (2); new educational opportunities or purposes (3); better occupational opportunities (4) and relocation to a country with a higher standard of living, including expanded social, economic, and political freedoms and opportunities (5). Study revealed some gender aspects of this phenomenon. Women generally tend to immigrate for family reasons, while men are more likely to demonstrate economic motivation, an interest in educational opportunities and extended freedoms.

Pull Factors: what drives Azerbaijani migrants to the USA?

In our study, we focus on personal factors, exploration of the real practices of immigrants and identification of the pull factors in the eyes of those who have already moved to the United States. Based on narratives, we identify the major and repeatedly articulated advantages of living in the USA, which, in fact, are the main "pull" factors attracting people to move to the US: the US is a country of freedoms and lots of opportunities for implementation (1); rule of law (2); no corruption (3); ease of integration into American society (4); wide opportunities for economic activity: lack of barriers in doing business, ease of finding a new job, high mobility of the workforce, no need to be tied to one place (5); attractive cultural environment (courtesy, diversity of ethnic groups, the ability to communicate with former compatriots in their native language) (6); high quality of food & clothing (7) and clean environment (8).

Standard of living in the USA: pros and cons

As part of the study, Azerbaijani immigrants were asked to describe their standard of living in the United States after the move. The narratives give us an opportunity to draw a list of the following characteristics: *Strengths* of living in the USA in the eyes of immigrants (a democratic society; tremendous development opportunities; lack of corruption; high salaries; the existence of various ethnic enclaves in biggest cities of the USA; ease of integration into American society for the younger (or second) generation of immigrant families; low interest on home loans, mortgages; and high quality of life); while *weaknesses* of living in the USA in the eyes of immigrants are difficulties associated with lack of knowledge of the English language; difficulties associated with primary adaptation, nostalgia for the homeland; difficulties associated with job search (especially by specialty); high cost of living; high cost of rental housing; quality of housing (poor sound insulation, etc.).

Employment aspects: homeland and the US

The results of conducted in-depth interviews suggest that interviewed Azerbaijani immigrants in the US mostly provide professional translation services and also participate in social, technical and financial areas.

What Azerbaijani immigrants dislike most about the USA?

The life in the United States, as in any other country in the world, has its pros and cons, which you should definitely know when making the decision to immigrate or stay. The narratives allow us to make a general conclusion that the United States is a country with many aspects an immigrant will have to face after moving. We can summarize the main difficulties mentioned by Azerbaijani immigrants: nostalgia, homesickness, remoteness from family and friends (1); a language barrier (2); personal and cultural differences (a culture shock) (3); social integration issues and interpersonal relations (4); gastronomic differences (5); high cost of living (6); difficulties associated with job search (protectionism, work in his/her field) (7); the quality and pricing of medical care (including insurance) (8) and an "immigrant complex", - a psychological pain or feeling of being second class person in relation to the local population (which affects self-esteem, etc.) (9).

Not every single immigrant suffers from the complex above, but whoever experiences it has a really hard time. That is why the study has a special focus on integration and adaptation issues of Azerbaijani immigrants into American society. While working on identification of the major obstacles, we found out that Azerbaijani immigrants are commonly disposed towards consolidation with the American culture.

Integration and adaptation to the mainstream culture

In the study, we find out four major groups among the many identified issues related to the integration and adaptation of the Azerbaijani immigrants in the United States:

Group 1. *Linguistic and cultural difficulties*: language barrier/ different mindset /other values/ different cuisine, etc.

Group 2. *Legal difficulties*: immigration status/legalization options/getting and extensions of visas/driver's license/opening a bank account/obtaining a loan, etc.

Group 3. *Psychological difficulties*: nostalgia for homeland/longing for friends, relatives and close people/lost opportunities for socialization and a sense of isolation, etc.

Group 4. *Domestic difficulties*: public transport problems/different metrics of weights, temperature, distance, etc.

Visits to Azerbaijan

According to the narratives, 3 out of 10 Azerbaijani immigrants did not visited homeland after the move to the US, also 3 out of 10 persons visited Azerbaijan once per year, 2 out of 10 persons visited homeland once in 3 years and also 2 persons visited Azerbaijan once in 10 years period. Also, there is an obvious interrelation between immigrant's length of residence in the US and the frequency of visits to homeland. The study reveals that among 10 persons the share of people with a longer period of residence in the United States tended to visit Azerbaijan less frequently and even made no visits ever after their move to the States.

Attitudes towards repatriation

The study revealed that exactly as in the case of the frequency of visits to homeland, 7 out of 10 respondents expressed their willingness to return to Azerbaijan, while 3 immigrants indicated a total lack of desire to come back to Azerbaijan.

It turns out that the length of residence in the United States affected English language proficiency, the frequency of visits to homeland and also to some extent an ethnic identity of the immigrants.

The major goal to reveal the key drivers and the pull/push factors, which influenced Azerbaijani immigrant's decision to migrate, has been achieved.

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