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8 Task sharing and sex-role attitudes in Greek returnees: a combination of cross-sectional and longitudinal data

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One phenomenon of globalization is the movement of workers across borders to fill labor shortages, to find higher wages, or to escape unfavorable conditions in their homeland. These migrant workers may or may not become integrated into the host country, and they may or may not return home. In Greece, many workers have migrated to other countries but are now returning to their homeland. The re-integration of returning migrants poses unique challenges for the migrants, for their families, and for both the host and the home countries. This study addresses some of those challenges. It also poses some interesting questions regarding the family's role in education for global citizenship.

One of the impacts of migration reported in other studies is a change of sex roles in the families. This is also an outcome of modernization, as families move away from a traditional division of labor toward a more egalitarian one as they modernize (See Chapter 4 for a discussion of this trend). We believe that the study of sex-role change in return migrant families in both the host and home countries has distinct benefits because of its theoretical and practical implications for the social adjustment process. In addition, because human rights, and equal rights for women more specifically, have been posed as some basic tenets of the «New World Order» (Rapoport, 1997), how sex-role division is impacted by the migration cycle is also of special interest to those

concerned with the processes associated with globalization. Nevertheless, return migration is as yet a rather neglected and little-researched topic, especially in regard to rural families. In an attempt to interpret the changes in sex-role conceptions and behavior, two main explanations have been put forth in the literature concerning migration. These are (a) the increased participation of migrant women in the labor force in the host country and (b) the acculturation process.

Women's participation in the labor force

According to sociological data, role changes in migrant families are the result of women's employment outside of the home in the host country. Through employment women gain financial independence and, consequently, decision-making power within the household. Thus, there is a tendency for the roles of women in the migrant family to change in a non-traditional direction (Espin, 1982; Kosack, 1976; Whiteford, 1978). Extending this line of thought, some authors even reach the conclusion that migration leads to women's emancipation (Whiteford, 1978). The focus of these studies is exclusively on women, as a reaction to past research concerning only migrant men, since migrant women undergo the migration process in equal numbers as migrant men.

Contrary to this view but examining the same phenomena, other writers suggest that emancipation of women is impossible in this setting, given the fact that migrant women are of minority status (Defigou & Koufakou, 1990; Berg-Eldering, 1986). Moreover, migrant women are in a worse position than migrant men because of their gender, and accordingly migration makes greater demands on the female population.

Lack of emancipation is also evidenced by return migration studies, which show that women adopt old patterns of behavior upon return (Abadan-Unat, 1977; Collaros & Moussourou, 1978). Among the factors contributing to this outcome are employment status, type of migrant family, and social norms in the home country concerning women's employment.

Useful as they are, the above studies relate sex-role change within the family with only one aspect of migration--that of women's employment, ignoring other social or psychological factors involved. Another difficulty with the existing data on sex roles in returning migrant families is that the term «role change» is very broadly defined as the women's acquisition of decision-making power and women's gain of financial independence. This is a problem because decision-making among spouses is only one dimension of family organization. It is possible, therefore, that, while decision-making between husbands and wives does change, attitudes or other aspects of sex roles remain the same as they were prior to migration.

Sex roles and acculturation

Socio-psychological accounts attribute changes in the structure of the migrant family to the acculturation process, i.e., to the acquisition of the predominant values in the host country. The model assumes that changing roles are associated with a corresponding decline in native ethnicity, implying that family change is a simple substitution of the modern patterns of the host country for traditional ones (Kranau, Green, & Valencia-Weber, 1982; Torres-Matrullo, 1980).

This type of research, however, continues to be limited by an over-reliance on the acculturation framework, which restricts analysis to cultural values surrounding familial roles and ignores the economic and social conditions either in the home or host country. It is well documented in literature concerning the issue of adjustment that the progressions toward integration of migrant families are directly related to these economic and social conditions (Beiser & Collomb, 1981; Kim, 1988; Cerase, 1974; Gmelch, 1980). Moreover, the term «role change» most often refers to the adoption of the abstract notion of «non-traditionalism,» which supposedly characterizes the host country. It is implied, therefore, that egalitarian marital roles and native ethnic family patterns are mutually exclusive.

Sex roles and adaptation to changing conditions

In the study we conducted, we attempted to examine sex role change as an adaptive behavior to new surroundings and not either as a consequence of conditions of employment or in relation to acculturation. Some clinical studies concerning migration have already suggested that role change is indeed the family's response to changing conditions during migration. According to Sluzki (1979) and Espin (1982), roles of all members of the migrant family are redefined in order to become more functional under the new circumstances experienced at each stage of migration. These studies, however, concern only out-migration and not the last stage of the migration cycle--that of return migration.

Our study focuses on Greek returnees who had previously lived in the former West Germany and then returned back to rural or semi-rural Greece. We believe that, given the fact that return migration involves a change between cultural environments which are in different levels of development, returnees' adaptive behavior concerning sex roles within the family is of special importance.

The process of migration and return migration

Migrants lived before migration under difficult financial conditions in rural areas where sex roles in the family were organized in terms of the age and sex of its members (Abdelkader, 1983; Kataki, 1985). During migration they lived in an industrial society where roles are more flexible and permissive and relations between women and men are more informal. The latter does not mean, however, that sex role stereotypes are not also apparent in the host country (Pleck & Brannon, 1978; Benin & Agostinelli, 1988). Upon return, migrants bring with them whatever experience of village life they had acquired before migration along with the experience acquired abroad. Moreover, they are faced with the changing Greek village society.

With the term «sex roles» we mean the role division between spouses in both the family and the employment context. The spouse (either male or female) was our unit of analysis. We also examined attitudes about sex-role division since it is well documented that changes in behavior are not necessarily accompanied by a change in attitudes, especially among first-generation migrants (Rosario, 1982; Pacheco, 1981; Feather & Wasyluk, 1973). Finally, care has been taken in this study to examine sex roles in relation to some factors concerning the individual conditions of life before and during migration.

At this point, it should be noted that a major part of what is usually meant by «change in sex roles» is specifically change in the traditional allocation of work and family roles between men and women. Moreover, traditional sex role attitudes prescribe the specialization of work and family responsibilities by sex, but a new option for each sex to integrate roles in both work and family is now emerging (Pleck et al., 1978; Scanzoni, 1980; Bird, Bird, & Scruggs, 1984; Benin et al., 1988).

In our study, we defined the term «change» as the degree of differentiation (or the degree of similarity) between return migrants and non-migrants, both of whom were living in Greece at the time of the study. This comparison allowed us to study the influence of the migration-return migration experience on task allocation among spouses and sex role attitudes.

In order to evaluate «change,» we took into consideration the fact that return migration itself is not a static process. It involves different phases that have not yet been fully explored (Defigou & Koufakou., 1990; Patiniotis, 1985), although it is well documented that adjustment is an on-going process and not a static event (Kim, 1988; Gmelch, 1980). Changes can be studied only in relation to time. In research which assesses adjustment (i.e.,

analyzes the process over time) a variety of methodological approaches can be considered: longitudinal analysis, quasi-longitudinal or cross-sectional analysis (Michalowski, 1987). We

used a combination of longitudinal and cross-sectional designs in the present study in order to control for differences due to individual characteristics or the individual conditions of migration-return migration.

Method

Sample

Our study surveyed Greek citizens who had migrated to the former Federal Republic of West Germany and then had returned within the previous three years to the District of Drama in East Macedonia, Greece. All subjects lived in agricultural or semi-agricultural areas. Data from 28 migrant men and 28 migrant women were included. In addition to the sample of returned migrants, we collected data from a comparison group made up of people of the same ages who were randomly identified in the same villages (14 men and 15 women). Migrant families were divided into three groups: those who had been back in Greece for one year (Group 1), those who had been back for two years (Group 2), and those who had been back for three years (Group 3).

Subjects were between the ages of 26 and 50 and judged themselves as having a moderate to low level of income. They tended to have low levels of education and live in semi-agricultural villages of 2000-5000 inhabitants. The majority of the respondents had only school-age children (72.7%), a very small percentage had children in young adulthood (11.9%), and 15.5% had children in more than one age grouping. With respect to family characteristics, 71.8% indicated that their families were nuclear, while only 28.2% reported that their families were extended. These characteristics were fairly consistent across groups.

It seems, therefore, that even for non-migrants, the structure of the family has changed, a fact that has been indicated by several studies of the Greek family. Traditionally, the family in rural areas has been extended, but it seems that this situation has changed over the last thirty years (Abdelkader, 1983; Katakis, 1985). A large proportion of women were employed, both in the migrant and non-migrant groups. At this point it should be noted that the high percentage of employed women among return migrants of Groups 2 and 3 and the unexpectedly high percentage of employed non-migrant women may be due to local economic conditions. The District of Drama had shown a high development

rate in the '80's because of the large numbers of businesses in the textile area (National Statistics Service of Greece [N.S.S.G.], 1991).

Data concerning the degree of interaction with the host country come from the variable «time lived abroad.» The largest category of respondents (41.8%) lived abroad for 16 to 20 years, and 23.6% lived abroad for 10-15 years. Group 1 tended to have been out of the country longer than the other two migrant groups.

Instruments

Each spouse was interviewed using two questionnaires and an open-ended interview constructed for the purpose of the study. One questionnaire focused on the extent to which husband and wife shared the work role and house and parental responsibilities. Items included house maintenance, meal preparation, errands, financial management, etc. The other questionnaire measured attitudes, specifically the sex-role norms intrinsic to the family positions of wife/mother and husband/father. Some sample items are «A married woman's most important task should be caring for her husband and children,» «A husband should not be upset if his wife is obliged by her work to spend a few nights away from home,» and «When there is no financial need, a wife should give up her job if it interferes with fulfilling her roles as wife and mother.» Data were collected at two points in time, separated by one year. Interviews were carried out separately for husbands and wives.

Comparisons among groups

Task-sharing questionnaire. There are some interesting comparisons that can be seen when examining the data on employment and task-sharing along with demographic data. Although the most recent returnees report that their income is lower than the other groups, their satisfaction with their financial situation is very similar to that of the other groups, including the comparison group. It may be that this group expects to make some financial sacrifices as they readjust.

There are some real contrasts in employment variables. One quarter (25%) of Group 1 was unemployed, while 17% of Group 2 and 8% of Group 3 fit in that category. Only 3% of the non-migrants were unemployed. This supports the idea that it takes some time to find employment after returning home. Perhaps reflecting a similar trend, between 22 and 33% of the migrants reported being housewives, while only 7% of the non-migrants fit in that category. It may be that the migrant families place a

priority on getting jobs first for the men rather than for the women.

The type of job also varies for the different groups. While 37% of the non-migrants were farmers, only three respondents in all of the migrant groups together reported farming as their occupation. This makes sense, as many families migrate in the first place to escape agricultural jobs. Participation in skilled work increases the longer the families are back in the country, from around 5% for Groups 1 and 2 to 25% for Group 3. In contrast, 40% of the non-migrants were skilled laborers. Some have speculated that the skills learned in the more technologically advanced host country may not be marketable when migrants return home.

One route back to employment for returning migrants appears to be establishing their own businesses. It could be that returning migrants bring their earnings from their jobs in the host country and use them as seed money to get re-established at home. In Group 1, 20% report having their own business. This decreases to 17 % of Group 2 and 8% of Group 3. Only 6% of the non-migrants own their own businesses. It seems, therefore, that recent return migrants of Groups 1 and 2 adopt a job pattern that shows upward financial mobility as opposed to returnees of Group 3 and non-migrants.

The employment data from this sample suggest that the work role is shared among spouses in a high percentage of return migrant and non-migrant families with the exception of returnees with one year of residence in Greece. The data further suggest that a high percentage of newly returned migrant women do not seek, or do not find, employment at least for the first year or two upon return, even though only a small percentage indicate satisfaction with their financial situation. This result is counter to the dominant assumption (Collaros & Moussourou, 1978; Abadan-Unat, 1977) that the lack of job availability in the host country drives migrant women back home.

Household responsibilities. In general, data from the Task-Sharing Questionnaire indicate that return migrants are less likely to share household tasks between husband and wife than are non-migrants. Those who have returned to Greece most recently appear to be the least likely to share tasks.

With respect to correlations, demographic variables relate to different tasks for each group. In accordance with previous studies (Bird et al., 1984; Pleck & Brannon, 1978; Scanzoni, 1980; Maret & Finay, 1984), a low frequency of sharing is associated with an extended type of family for some, a negative evaluation of financial situation for others, and a low level of education for others. In contrast, high sharing is correlated with a positive evaluation of financial situation and a high income for non-migrants, as well as a nuclear type of family and a semi-rural place of residence for some of the migrants.

It is interesting to note, however, that the correlations show different patterns for recent returnees. Contrary to expectations, low sharing relates with being young in Group 1, whereas it relates to a high income, a semi-rural place of residence, and a nuclear type of family in Group 2. These results taken together with the employment status of these groups lead to the conclusion that upward financial mobility may result indeed in a traditional

allocation of tasks. This traditional allocation means the male spouse is responsible for the financial support of the family, and the female spouse is responsible for house maintenance tasks.

In addition, the variable «time lived abroad» relates to task division in the groups of migrants, but the relationships are inconsistent. For some groups, the lower the number of years abroad, the less the sharing of tasks, while for other groups the lower numbers of years abroad, the greater the amount of sharing of tasks.

Attitude questionnaire. Data on Attitudes did not reveal any significant differences either among groups or between the two measurements (Phase 1 and Phase 2). In both measurements, return migrants and non-migrants tend to agree with the notion of traditional family. However, they also agree with the groups of items that measure attitudes regarding «extended role of husband» and «participation of women in family decision making.» Finally, they accept the wife's employment only when it is necessary, but at the same time are rather neutral toward the belief that familial needs should be put higher than the woman's needs.

Demographic variables are related to Attitudes in expected ways. Traditional attitudes are correlated with rural place of residence, being older, and lower income or perception of financial situation. On the other hand, less traditional attitudes are related to a positive evaluation of financial situation and higher educational attainment.

Discussion

Employment Data

Using data from the task-sharing questionnaire, results showed that sex-role division within migrant families is indeed different from that of the non-migrant families on one hand, and also different for recent- vs. non-recent returnees on the other. Specifically, the majority of recent returnees (returnees of Groups 1 and 2) adopt a sex-typed pattern of task division of work and house roles differing from both return migrants with three years of residence in Greece and non-migrants. It seems that the work

role is a non-shared task among recent returnees whereas it is a shared task among return migrants with three years of residence in Greece and also among non-migrants. Moreover, traditionally female or male house tasks are not shared within the families of returnees with one and two years of residence in Greece, whereas this is not true for families with three years of residence in Greece or again non-migrants.

In agreement with our previous study (Haritos-Fatouros, Sakka, & Dikaiou, 1988) the above results show that the process of migration-return migration indeed affects task-sharing behavior, although it affects it in different ways. It differentiates on one hand between returnees with different times of residence, and on the other, it differentiates return migrants from non-migrants.

These findings about sharing of the work role and household roles may be linked. If the wife is employed outside the home, she will not have as much time to complete household tasks and will need assistance. In contrast, women who are not employed may see themselves as having the job of housewife, doing more in the home than their employed peers. Therefore, employment status may force them into non-traditional roles and into roles they have not chosen directly.

One might conclude from the comparisons among the groups that the variable «number of years in Greece» plays in itself a significant role in task allocation. Along this line of thought, the longer return migrants stay at the home country, the more they will resemble non-migrants. Results of the longitudinal study, however, do not support this conclusion.

According to the longitudinal data, the behavior of recent returnees does not change over the interval of one year to resemble either the non-recent return migrants or their co-villagers who never migrated. Whatever changes in task-sharing behavior could be measured in the second testing were due to changes observed mainly among returnees with three years of residence in Greece and non-migrants and not among recent returnees as was expected. These changes, however, may be superficial

It is suggested by the above results, therefore, that the length of time a family is back in the home country does not play in itself a significant role in task division. Taking both parts of the study into consideration, it is rather more accurate to conclude that the variable «number of years in Greece» plays a role only in combination with the special contextual factors that follow migration-repatriation and the demographic characteristics of returnees. Group correlations of task sharing with these intervening variables support this conclusion.

Low sharing among spouses in the two groups of recent returnees unexpectedly relates to a young age and a long

residence in Germany (Group 1) as well as a high income and a semi-rural place of residence (Group 2). It may be best to consider these findings together with the fact that a high number of return men, as opposed to women, work in their own business. Together, these results seem to suggest that those returnees who seek the improvement of their economic condition also adopt a role pattern similar to the petit-bourgeois model usually exercised by the financially wealthy strata.

In contrast, high sharing of family tasks in group 3 relates to a number of factors concerning previous experience acquired abroad (i.e., a long residence in Germany) and individual characteristics or contextual factors concerning life in Greece (i.e., a high education, a nuclear type of family, and a semi-rural place of residence). These findings taken together with the employment situation of men and women of this group lead to the conclusion that the returnees adopt a role pattern which is more congruent with the demands of a shared work role. On the other hand, it also seems that this role pattern is probably acquired abroad, and it is exercised when the contextual factors permit it.

The above findings suggest that husbands and wives take on new patterns of behavior or maintain traditional ones only if these are more congruent with the financial aims and circumstances of the family or if they can be integrated into conditions of living in Greece upon return. Moreover, individual characteristics seem to be important in determining the direction of these changes. Further research is needed to investigate the dynamic interaction between task sharing and factors concerning the returnees' familial and social context.

Attitude questionnaire

With respect to sex-role attitudes, findings are somewhat different. First, results of both the cross-sectional and longitudinal parts of the study showed that sex-role attitudes are similar across groups. All groups indicate a positive attitude towards the traditional family, expressing at the same time a positive attitude towards the extended role of the father and the participation of women in family decision-making. Moreover, respondents accept women's employment only if it is necessary and in accord with the financial needs of the family, whereas they do not take a clear position towards the traditional belief that the familial needs should be put higher than the wife's needs.

These data suggest that, at least for those attitudes concerning the traditional roles of men and women, there is a strong cultural pattern that has not been affected by changes in the socio-cultural environment. As group correlations show, this pattern is influenced by the demographic characteristics of the respondents.

At this point, it should be mentioned that agreement with the attitude «acceptance of women's employment» relates mostly to a poor financial situation. It seems, therefore, that women's employment is accepted only if it serves the financial needs of the family. According to Collaros Moussourou, (1978), this is an extreme aspect of the traditional role of women, and it should not be confused with a non-traditional attitude towards women's employment.

Sex-role attitudes as measured in the present study, therefore, reflect general social changes. This is demonstrated by the fact that sex role attitudes reported in the present study are conflicting as far as the roles of men and women within the family are concerned. Both men and women accept the extension of the role of the father as well as the extension of the role of the mother. They do not, however, reach the point of acceptance the interchangeability of roles, especially with respect to women's employment and women's individual needs.

The above findings are in agreement with others from studies on family values in urban Greek society. According to Katakis (1985) and Markoulis & Dikaiou (1993), the modern Greek family is in transition, and as such it contains many conflicting expectations about the roles of spouses.

Conclusion

In conclusion, results of both parts of the study (longitudinal and cross-sectional) show very small levels of change in both task-sharing behavior and the attitudes towards sex roles across time. These findings run counter to the belief that role change in return-migrant families is an assimilative response to changing environments. It does not appear that the change is either a return to old attitudes (Moussourou, 1990) or a simple substitution of their family's existing patterns for the predominant ones of the country where they live (Kranau et al., 1982; Torres-Matrullo, 1980).

Results rather show that sex-role change is an on-going process, which is influenced by many factors within the whole migration-repatriation cycle. As such, it seems that the changing of sex-role behaviors is an adaptive response to the existing conditions with which returnees are faced, which also relates to the previous experience acquired before or during migration. Thus, individuals as active agents choose the types of behavior that are useful to them in order to adjust in the new environment. In addition, sex-role change can be said to be a multi-dimensional process in the sense that it involves both attitudes and behaviors that are influenced differently during the course of adaptation.

Implications for education for global citizenship

As other chapters suggest (see Chapter 1, 2, 7, and 17), the parents' behavior is an important model for children and becomes a central aspect of their educational role regarding global citizenship. If gender equality is a basic value contributing to the «New World Order» (Rapoport, 1997), it would be imperative that further studies investigate how the behavioral and attitudinal patterns reported here are understood and incorporated by the children in these families. Another critical question is how the children's attitudes and expectations are impacted by their years in the host country.

Migrant families are a special group of global citizens. They have come to know multiple cultures, yet they are often not fully accepted as citizens in the host country and are often marginal citizens in their home country. They experience cultural norms and live within the civil society of both home and host cultures, yet many struggle with difficult financial and social realities both at home and abroad. Because of fragile financial conditions and social status, they may not be able to process and understand the cultural contrasts or implications, yet much can be learned from them.

As world trade and culture exchanges continue to increase, it can be expected that there will be an increasing trend toward migration, although the circumstances may change from one situation or era to another. Scholars who are interested in families and in globalization must tap the valuable insights and information carried by migrant families. Their insights will help future individuals, families, communities, and countries adapt to the movement of families across borders in a way that contributes to a positive world future.

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Table 8.1
Demographic characteristics by group

Variable	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Total
Sex					
Male	10	12	6	14	42
Female	10	12	6	15	43
Age					
26-30	2	6	2	4	14
31-35	4	3	2	8	17
36-40	5	6	2	9	22
41-45	5	5	4	4	18
46-50	4	3	2	5	14
<i>Mean age (category)</i>	3.25	2.83	3.17	2.93	3.01
Education					
Third grade/elem. school	1	0	0	2	3
Finished elem. school	12	14	9	26	61
Third grade high school	7	7	1	1	16
Technical school	0	2	2	1	5
<i>Mean education (category)</i>	2.30	2.48	2.42	1.96	2.27
Income					
Low	9	8	5	7	29
Medium	4	12	5	20	41
High	1	2	2	2	7
<i>Mean income (category)</i>	1.43	1.73	1.75	1.83	1.71
Subjective evaluation of financial situation					
Bad	5	3	3	7	18
Medium	12	18	6	19	55
Good	3	2	3	4	12
<i>Mean evaluation (category)</i>	1.90	1.96	2.00	1.9	1.93

Table 8.2
Task-sharing questionnaire: Means and standard deviations for each composite variable in the two phases

Composite Variable Name	Phase	Group 1 N=20		Group 2 N=23		Group 3 N=12		Group 4 N= 30	
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
House Maintenance	Ph. 1	1.51	.39	1.57	.55	1.94	.61	2.05	.63
	Ph. 2	1.45	.43	1.57	.59	2.00	.58	2.03	.57
Shopping/ Children	Ph. 1	1.88	.69	2.20	.68	1.58	.63	1.92	.75
	Ph. 2	1.87	.62	2.15	.43	1.75	.58	1.84	.76
Meal Preparation	Ph. 1	1.35	.43	1.28	.33	1.62	.57	1.26	.34
	Ph. 2	1.40	.47	1.34	.38	1.33	.38	1.30	.36
Errands	Ph. 1	1.70	.57	1.65	.57	1.62	.48	2.10	.59
	Ph. 2	1.87	.64	1.73	.54	1.75	.40	1.90	.62
Financial Management	Ph. 1	2.40	.75	2.52	.61	2.58	.63	2.85	.37
	Ph. 2	2.55	.58	2.58	.53	2.62	.52	2.61	.50

Table 8.3
Sex role attitude questionnaire: Means and standard deviations for each composite variable in the two phases

Composite Variable Name	Phase	Group 1 N=20		Group 2 N=23		Group 3 N=12		Group 4 N= 30	
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Traditional family	Ph. 1	3.08	.94	3.94	.82	3.22	.94	3.36	.76
	Ph. 2	3.20	.90	3.50	.74	3.11	.71	3.24	.76
Extended role of husband	Ph. 1	3.43	.81	3.59	.58	3.63	.61	3.53	.61
	Ph. 2	3.50	.74	3.62	.66	3.72	.37	3.47	.63
Participation of women in decisions	Ph. 1	3.40	.67	3.65	.41	3.52	.48	3.68	.42
	Ph. 2	3.48	.66	3.78	.35	3.72	.31	3.67	.41
Acceptance of women's employment	Ph. 1	3.57	.73	3.54	.70	3.62	.74	3.08	.94
	Ph. 2	3.50	.72	3.60	.86	3.70	.54	3.23	.85
Emphasis on maternal role	Ph. 1	2.55	.68	2.84	.78	2.20	1.0	2.64	.85
	Ph. 2	2.65	.76	2.56	.88	2.45	.83	2.58	.84

