

Gender Ideals and Income Realities: Discourses about Labor and Gender in Uzbekistan

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In Uzbekistan, the 1990s brought significant and sometimes drastic change in employment and income security and in earning opportunities. In focus groups conducted in 1996 and 1997 with citizens of Uzbekistan from various ethnicities, regions and social classes, it was within the context of discussion of work and income that the idea of “transition” came through most clearly: life was once normal, and will be normal again sometime, but meanwhile nothing is certain.¹ In these focus groups there was a pervasive sense that “the transition” is an aberration; this was expressed most succinctly in criticisms of those women who transgressed gender norms in order to earn an income in the “shuttle” trade.

Mukaramma Yusupova, an entrepreneur who was interviewed among Uzbekistan’s oral history respondents for this project, expressed themes that had echoes in focus groups transcripts: that the transition opened opportunities for both men and women, and that the transition had influence on gender roles, but that there was an underlying stability in gender perceptions and expectations. Yusupova, who was trained to work in and manage a sewing and embroidery factory in the late 1970s, stayed home with children, sewing privately to supplement her husband’s disability payments. After 1991, when it became possible to begin one’s own business, Yusupova built up her own sewing enterprise. In 1997, she employed 43 people, including her husband. Yusupova told her interviewer,

Nowadays, a woman’s work is needed both by society and by the family; I think it is necessary for her to work at some sort of organization. A women’s help both to the family economy and for raising the family is great . . .

. . . I am glad that, as a woman, I am working outside [*i.e.* outside of the home]. But at home, I am a woman. I have my in-laws, my husband, children. At home, I fulfill the woman’s duties myself. Outside, first of all, a woman is recognized as a person.²

While Yusupova seemed comfortable with her dual burden, others who referred to a perceived increase in women’s need to work outside the home did not share her attitude. Erkin Vohidov, a poet and government minister commented, “One of our writers wrote a piece called ‘The Iron Woman;’ they made a movie, and they staged it. What was written was exactly right: our women really have to be made out of iron.”³

Nozim Habibullaev, a scholar and the director of a museum that honors Timur, expressed uncertainty about women's roles in the transition period:

Now our women . . . those who've been emancipated also want to live normally, to walk behind their man, to sit at the hearth, to nurture . . . Certainly they continue to labor, to work . . . the basic goal ahead of them is nurturing, the maintenance of the hearth. All this is expressed in the family and at work; this is certainly difficult for them. But I think that in the future it will move along the proper course, and the woman will occupy the place that belongs to her.⁴

Part of the transition's instability could be found in disagreement over the "place that belongs to her." Is it in the work place, providing for the family, as Yusupova and Karakalpak women from a focus group in Moynak asserted? Or is it in the home, as many of the Tajik men from a Bukhara focus group seemed to wish? Or is it on the road, acquiring goods in the shuttle trade and selling them in the bazaars? Women's movements across distances and borders and their exposure in bazaar stalls and new commercial shops were an obvious marker of the changing economic system, and one that many focus group participants find disturbing. Sherali expressed this discomfort with the greatest force: "Formerly, during the time of the USSR, did we ever let our wives go [on the shuttle trade]? Men were able to make enough money to allow their wives to stay home and take care of the children. Today it is different; women are forced to travel with heavy bags, doing their business."⁵

In focus group transcripts from Uzbekistan, when participants were asked to list aspects of life that became more difficult over the past ten years, issues related to work were salient in their responses. Inadequate income, changes in sources of income, and an overwhelming concern with providing for one's family appeared at the top of participants' lists of difficulties. Within the groups' discussions of work, there was a contradiction: Uzbek men and Russian women viewed themselves as people who work, but often contrasted themselves with Uzbek women, among whom they seemed to view working outside the home as the exception, rather than the rule. By contrast, Uzbek women primarily spoke of themselves as people who work and who are deeply interested in earning money. At the same time, although Uzbek women stressed the importance of earning, they routinely referred to Uzbek men as the providers for the family, just as Uzbek men themselves did.

Most focus group members saw income insecurity as one of their main challenges. In the changing economic climate of post-Soviet Uzbekistan, concerns about finding or keeping a job, collecting wages and state subsidies on time and keeping up with inflation all led participants to mention their strategies for coping with income shortfalls. Choices in developing coping strategies, such as "entering the bazaar," changing jobs, migrating, moving and economizing, were shaped by class, gender and ethnicity.

In this study, data related to Uzbekistan from focus groups and oral histories that were carried out for the collaborative research project "Identity Formation and Social Issues in Estonia, Ukraine and Uzbekistan" will be used to examine gender,

ethnic and class dimensions of discourses about labor and income. The responses of men and women in Uzbekistan, Uzbeks, Tajiks, Karakalpaks and Russians, to their changing employment and income situations will be addressed in the first section, which examines coping strategies and income-producing alternatives as expressed in focus groups, and, in one case, silence about coping strategies. This will lead to a discussion of perceptions of the bazaar, examining which groups viewed "entering the bazaar" as opportunity, and which groups associated the bazaar with lost status. In particular, women's entrance into the bazaar can be seen as a continuation of traditional means for earning an income, but also as gender transgression when women become involved in the shuttle trade. Finally, the responses of participants to the question "Who suffers more, men or women?" will open discussion of the discrepancies between income realities and the idealized gender roles in Uzbekistan.

Many cross-cultural studies of gender and the family economy have begun with the assumption that patriarchy as developed in the global capitalist system has produced a common gender construct, in which men are "breadwinners" and women are economically dependent on men, and women consequently have less power in family and social relations than men. Marxism, in its Soviet formulation, posited that female subordination was not a gender issue but a class issue; in the 1920s the theorists of the Communist Party held that the "woman problem" would be resolved by the construction of socialism, the eradication of class antagonisms, and the participation of women in the paid labor force.⁶ However, this thesis could not eradicate women's double burden, nor did women's high rate of participation in the labor force bring about a correspondingly high representation in positions of power. As Joan Huber puts this,

One view [Marxist feminism] implicitly or explicitly held that women are subordinated only in class societies; gender is simply a subset of class stratification. The other [socialist feminism] held that sex was the first and basic class division. Marx was incomplete, not wrong. In fact, however, gender stratification seems much the same under both patriarchal socialism and patriarchal capitalism. In the people's democracies and the Western democracies alike, men do little baby tending and less housework.⁷

In Uzbekistan, where there is a transition away from a Soviet socialist economy toward one that involves some capitalism, the relationships among the economics of society, the economics of the family, and gender are complicated.⁸ To what extent did socialism transform the family economy? How have the end of full socialism and the increase in market relations shaped gender in Uzbekistan? To what extent has Islam shaped ideas of family economic relations and gender in Uzbekistan? Rae Lesser Blumberg, in discussing gender stratification through comparisons of Third World women, stresses economic factors in gender stratification but notes that this

is not monocausal . . . One cannot observe the rich diversity of gender role ideologies, cultural practices, socialization patterns, legal systems, and ways of being among different Third World peoples whose economic development levels are similar and assert that gender stratification is fully explained by economic variables alone.⁹

While the level of economic development in Uzbekistan varies between the urban and the rural, and by region, ideas about gender and family economy are fairly consistent across class among Uzbeks and Tajiks, and rather different among Russians. That is, cultural and ethnic differences shape gender ideals and the realities of family economics under the very same economic conditions.

Most Islamic societies look on women's movements outside the home with some degree of suspicion.¹⁰ While attending school, working outside the home and participating in social life have been standard practice for Uzbek and Tajik women since the 1920s, many Central Asians hold the attitude that unmarried girls should not live away from home, and women who travel long distances without male escort are a source of anxiety.¹¹

Among Uzbeks and Tajiks, the ideal of the husband as provider of food and shelter is strong.¹² Both Uzbek men and women often mention the social norm that Uzbek men go to the market and pay for and bring home the food items that constitute the largest expenses in the family budget and that are the heaviest and hardest to carry: meat, potatoes, rice and other staples. They often contrast this with an image of Russian women carrying heavy loads. (In point of fact, one often sees Uzbek women carrying heavy loads to and from the market as well, but it is the ideal image, the representation, which forms the basis of a discourse on gender.) Among oral history interviewees, Habibullaev and Vohidov both alluded to these social norms. Habibullaev: "We are a Muslim country . . . we have our own criteria for relations to women . . . even in basic situations, a woman wasn't permitted to lift heavy loads." Vohidov offered a criticism of Uzbek gender norms, saying that Uzbek men saw their role as working only outside the home, and not helping inside the gate of the house: "bringing home money, doing the shopping at the market, carrying things home, doing things to keep the house up—all this fell on men's shoulders . . . they never took up the broom, they never handled the spatula." The transition's hardships are made concrete in an undermining of Islamic gender norms. According to one focus group participant, Muhabbat, "Women now do trade, go out to the bazaars, carry heavier loads than men in order to sell potatoes and such things."¹³

Representing Profession, Occupation and Source of Income

In assessing the household as an institution, Immanuel Wallerstein and Joan Smith observed that households obtain income from many sources other than wage or salaried labor, and note that literature on the "second economy" has drawn "attention to the multitudinous economic activities that occur outside [the state-regulated] framework." Households obtain income through "wages, market sales (or profit), rent, transfer, and subsistence (or direct labor input)."¹⁴ While many people made part of their living in the second economy during the Soviet period, focus group data suggest that in the mid-1990s people in Uzbekistan were increasingly supplementing or entirely replacing

wage or salary income with other income sources. Market activity, which was not always tolerated in the Soviet period, grew during perestroika and flourished after independence in 1991. Many focus group participants described their freedom to take up additional work, and to earn as much as they could, as one of the leading benefits of the past ten years.¹⁵ But increased market activity was also related to need: the transition from a socialist economy to a modified economy meant insecurity in employment; due to inflation, wages did not keep up with the cost of living; and an antiquated financial system left workers unpaid, or their pay in arrears.

The 12 focus groups conducted in Uzbekistan for this project in 1996 were chosen with an interest in the perspectives of four different ethnic groups and a spectrum of social classes, from professionals to collective farm workers. The groups selected for the Uzbekistan study included: Uzbek men and women with higher education (mainly professionals) from Tashkent, Uzbek men and women with some or no secondary education from villages in Ferghana province (white-collar workers and collective farm workers) and the same from villages in Bukhara province (collective farmers and petty traders). There were also Russian men and women with some secondary education from Tashkent (the men were factory workers; the women were white-collar or professional), Tajik men and women with some secondary education from Bukhara (white- and blue-collar and professional)¹⁶ and Karakalpak men and women with some or no secondary education from the ecologically devastated town of Moynak, near the Aral Sea (cannery workers and unemployed).¹⁷

When participants in these focus groups introduced themselves, there were some variations in the ways that they represented themselves and their relationship to work and to producing income. Some participants spoke of their professions or training, others spoke of their current official occupations, and others spoke of their actual sources of income. In the group of Tashkent Uzbek women, all of the participants were working in the professions for which they were trained, and they spoke of their current work. Similarly, Ferghana Uzbek men and women, Bukhara Tajik men and women, Bukhara Uzbek men and women, Tashkent Russian men and Karakalpak men and women all either introduced themselves with their current official occupation or their current unemployed status—the latter the most prevalent among Karakalpak men. There were two noteworthy exceptions to this pattern: Tashkent Uzbek men spoke of their professions or of their occupational training, but only half mentioned their current work in their introductions. Tashkent Russian women differentiated between their training and their current work in their introductions.¹⁸ During the conversations, some participants revealed discrepancies between their stated occupations and their actual sources of income: Bukhara Uzbek women mentioned their positions while introducing themselves; but later, four of them, including two who claimed to be temporarily unemployed or on maternity leave, revealed that they actually made a living by raising produce and selling it at the market.

Coping: Class, Gender and Ethnicity

There are two related matters of interest in examining focus group participant comments on their own work. First, we see an actual record of the disruption in employment brought by the transition—and that in fact there are groups, such as Uzbek women with higher education, whose employment has been remarkably stable. Second, we find the group participants' representation of themselves as workers, and the varying degrees of importance that they give to working in their profession (fulfillment), earning money, stability and flexibility. In broad strokes, both ethnicity and class correlate with the ways that participants deal with vicissitudes in employment in independent Uzbekistan, but gender does not correlate. Both men and women discussed the same sorts of strategies for coping with reduced official incomes, but they articulated dissatisfaction over the discrepancy between the realities of their current earning situations and their idealized gender roles.¹⁹

Economic problems, including unemployment, wage arrears, and inflation, emerged in every focus group. However, in nearly every focus group, at least one or two participants saw the transition to a market economy as presenting opportunity. Others contended that the new opportunities were either unattractive or not available to all. For example, Bukhara Uzbek women, a group of eight village women who were recruited from a bazaar, spent more time than other groups extolling the virtues of trade.²⁰ Muhabbat, a pensioner who sold vegetables in the bazaar, averred that everyone who worked hard could live well: “the salaries are insufficient, they are small, they say. I have this idea, that is, if you work on the land, from the ground gold will grow . . . I have made a greenhouse; whatever it produces we take to the bazaar.” Fotima argued that not everyone could raise for the bazaar. For example, her land was ruined by salinization. Muhabbat replied, “Then you must do all things possible to get it; get land for your jewelry!” Muhabbat, who retired on a disability pension, complained that government subsidies were both inadequate and late. This was a common complaint in all focus groups. However, Muhabbat clearly was not dependent on her pension; her income, which originated in subsistence farming, far exceeded subsistence, both because of her investment of time and resources and because of her wheeling and dealing.

Participants in focus groups articulated three main strategies for coping with economic problems: moving, economizing, and finding new sources of income. Among these alternatives, moving to a new location was discussed only in Moynak, but other groups talked of labor migration and long-distance travel for trade. More women than men discussed economizing, but the topic frequently arose among those on who were on government salaries—“budget workers.” The discussions of additional income sources revolved around perceptions of income-making possibilities as socially and personally acceptable, or unacceptable.

Moynak is located at the southern edge of the Aral Sea, which has been drying up since the 1970s. By the early 1980s it no longer produced any fish for the Moynak fish

canneries. The Karakalpak men's group included a majority of unemployed individuals, apparently former cannery workers. In this group, personal statements about unemployment, tactics for survival, or alternative sources of income were almost non-existent.²¹ Participants couched all discussion of unemployment in societal terms, expressing concern for the youth who could find no jobs. By contrast, the Karakalpak women in Moynak, of whom all but one held factory or office positions, referred to their own unemployment as a temporary lay-off, not a permanent condition. Neither men nor women saw any viable alternatives to waiting for pay, which rarely came. When asked why they did not raise cattle to supplement their income, the men asserted their lack of means:

Karimbay: How could one take care of it? One needs money, one must buy feed every year. There is no feed anywhere, even in Moynak. Even if you find it, it is expensive.

Similarly, the Moynak women observed that Moynak's salinated soil and drought conditions made raising produce for subsistence or market impossible.

Daulena: This year, because there was not enough water, the crops have not grown. We planted tomatoes and squash, and they were growing really well, but because there was not enough water they all dried up.

It is possible that the Karakalpak men, five of eight of whom claimed to be unemployed, were simply being silent about actual sources of income from non-official work. However, given the general destitution and lack of opportunity in Moynak, this seems unlikely. Both men and women mentioned moving to other parts of Uzbekistan, rather than finding additional work, as a way of coping with Moynak's insoluble unemployment problem.

Moving in order to find work surfaced as an alternative only in the Moynak groups. In the two Russian groups (Tashkent Russian men and Tashkent Russian women), participants contemplated moving to Russia permanently. They thought of this not as a solution to unemployment—since many seemed to think that their own economic conditions were better than in Russia—but as a solution to their sense of displacement, and as a means to give their children a better future.

In other groups (Uzbek and Tajik), participants mentioned temporarily migrating, or traveling in order to carry out trade, but none discussed leaving their home area permanently. They rarely mentioned labor migration; one woman spoke of it as an option for the professional, not for the laborer.²² Aziza said that her husband, a scientific researcher, had worked in laboratories in England, Belgium and Germany: "For the past three or four years, we have been living partly on what my husband, who went abroad, earns and sends" (Tashkent Uzbek women). Interestingly, though not surprisingly, while Russians regarded the demise of the Soviet Union as having limited their options for travel, Uzbeks and Tajiks referred to their increase in opportunities to travel abroad for study or work as an improvement brought by independence.²³

Participants in most focus groups complained about wage and subsidy arrears and about inflation. For focus group participants who worked within organizations that were on the state budget (so-called “budget workers”), inflation severely eroded buying power. Women who were budget workers, and those dependent on state subsidies, focused on economizing as a coping strategy. They spoke of baking their own bread and making their own noodles rather than purchasing these items. They complained that they could only afford to purchase low-quality, locally made clothing for their children, rather than higher-quality, imported items (Tashkent, Ferghana and Bukhara Uzbek women, and Bukhara Tajik women). Several women mentioned the expense of weddings and other life cycle celebrations; Dildora thought that, even on a limited income, one must save for these occasions, while Aziza and Zebo argued that a family’s small income would be better spent providing children with adequate nutrition. Aziza told Dildora, “You don’t buy something for your child, or buy it cheap, spending five som instead of ten. You economize on your child’s nourishment!” She also used religious language to articulate spending priorities: “The Book [Quran] says that what is taken from the family and given to God will not be accepted as a sacrifice” (Bukhara Tajik women).²⁴

Why did women in these focus groups talk about economizing, while men did not? From comments made in focus groups, it seems that women have more direct control over ordinary spending than men have. Although Uzbek and Tajik men bring home food staples from the bazaar, women purchase clothing and school supplies, pay for school expenses and utilities and save for feasts. Muhabbat described her household economy thus: “My husband never asks about my salary, ‘How much do you earn, what do you do with it? . . . So I put his salary and mine together and use them.” In addition, economizing may be the only choice for some women; both women and men regarded women’s opportunities to earn additional income as more limited than men’s opportunities. Like others in her focus group, Gulchehra said, “There are no jobs for rural women . . . To earn money, they go to the fields, but that work isn’t paid well . . . In villages, those women who are capable are engaged in buying and selling” (Ferghana Uzbek women). Some men also asserted that women, for a variety of reasons, had more difficulty finding employment than men:

Misha-1: Men have more opportunities to make money.

Andrei: Manpower is in demand, therefore it’s easier for a man to find a job. (Tashkent Russian men)²⁵

Rahmon: A man can just go off anywhere to find a job. For a woman it is more difficult to find a job. (Tashkent Uzbek men)

Abdusattor: Men can always find some way to get along. But whatever a husband does can change his wife’s life. (Bukhara Uzbek men)

Thus, two factors shape this gendering of discussions about economizing; women talk more about economizing than men because they control more of the household expenditure and because there are some constraints on their opportunities to find alternative income.²⁶

While women and Karakalpaks spoke of economizing or moving as coping strategies, both men and women, and those of all ethnic groups in Uzbekistan, mentioned finding additional sources of income, either from a second job or from trade, as their main coping strategy (with the exception of Moynak Karakalpaks, for whom such opportunities seem to be non-existent). The poet Erkin Vohidov described Uzbeks as a people who always sought additional income in order to meet their social obligations: "Uzbeks never just went to work and back again. They had some sort of extra income. Either they stayed at home and made crafts, or perhaps they were farmers or perhaps they had a garden at home outside the kitchen."²⁷ Many focus group participants echoed Shoira's comment: "Today, those live well who do something else besides their job, who carry out entrepreneurial activity, commerce" (Bukhara Tajik women). Mukhtor and others mentioned adding to one's income by taking on a second job: "A budget worker is supposed to get his salary, but he doesn't get it. That is why he is forced to find additional work besides his main job. He must work as a night-watchman, for instance" (Bukhara Tajik men). A Russian woman, Yulia, spoke of her own experience: "For 22 years I had been working at the Design Institute, when they stopped paying salaries. I went to work at the hospital, taking three positions and getting two salaries" (Tashkent Russian women).

In nearly every focus group, participants spoke of alternatives to depending on salaries or subsidies, but the strategies that they viewed as acceptable varied by class and, to some extent, by ethnic group. Everyone (except Karakalpaks) spoke of "entering the bazaar," but the two Russian groups and many in the Uzbek and Tajik groups expressed extreme distaste for this alternative. The Uzbek and Tajik groups were particularly disgusted that teachers and professionals were entering the market. Maryam, a teacher herself, remarked, "there are lecturers and professors. I know a lot of them . . . my neighbors—all of them go out to the bazaar. Why, aren't they ashamed? To sit in the bazaar, with goods in their hands, when they have these titles? Certainly they are ashamed, but they could not provide for their families" (Tashkent Uzbek women). This perception of the impropriety and shame of professionals reduced to crass commerce found echoes in other groups as well.²⁸ Rather surprisingly, one of the groups dominated by teachers, Tashkent Uzbek men, made no mention of teachers entering the bazaar; in fact, they did not discuss their own strategies for coping with low salaries at all.

Silences are very difficult to interpret, and are only observable—that is, a designation of "silence" seems justified—in focus group comparisons when a topic is raised in a significant majority of groups, but not at all in others. Income shortfalls and coping strategies were so common a theme among the Uzbekistan focus groups that the absence of any reference to their own coping strategies in the Tashkent Uzbek men's group was conspicuous. While participants in all other groups spoke of work in connection to earning and making a living, the Tashkent Uzbek men's group, dominated by teachers, used mention of their professions as a trigger for broad social critique, complaining of decreasing interest in concern for education.

The ethos of the educator was so prevalent in their conversation, that if any of the participants actually was making a living by “selling in the market,” he might have felt constrained to avoid mentioning that. They did, however, express distaste for commerce, and were particularly chagrined that school children no longer showed interest in their studies, and instead spent their time in the bazaar helping their parents to earn a living.

However, even through many focus group members regarded the bazaar with opprobrium, as a place where speculators and thieves take advantage of a needy public, and even as a place that spreads disease,²⁹ there were those who urged participation in the commercial sphere. Boimurod, a factory worker, challenged the teachers of the Tashkent Uzbek men’s group to view the present as a time of opportunity:

They don’t arrest anyone, whether one is a trader, or you can open up a small workshop . . . Those who have gained are those who are not lazy, but hardworking people . . . Women are also among the entrepreneurs . . . there is no need to dislike the person who has become a millionaire. If one makes an effort, tries to meet a demand, doesn’t become inattentive, but works, it turns out well!³⁰

The rural Uzbek men and women who were recruited from a bazaar in Bukhara region viewed their freedom to take on extra work and to sell their own products in the market as an improvement over working on the collective farm or for a small state wage. They purchased land or built greenhouses to raise vegetables for the market; they sewed for the market; one worked in a wine factory, was paid in wine and took it to market. One man, Nozim, the father of six, mentioned that he had withdrawn two of his six children from school: “Because of necessity, I had to send two of my children to work after they finished the eighth grade” (Bukhara Uzbek men). The contrast between the Bukhara Uzbek men’s group and Tashkent Uzbek men is striking: in the latter there was strong condemnation of parents who let their children work in the bazaar rather than attending school, but Nozim’s remark about sending his children to work met with no surprise in a group of men who spoke openly of their financial problems and their coping strategies. In the groups dominated by Uzbek and Tajik white-collar workers, gaining income from the market was perceived as a severe loss in status, and there were calls for regulations to control “re-sellers” and “profiteers.” By contrast, the Bukhara Uzbek men, who came from rural communities, were glad that the new situation at least allowed them to earn money in a relatively unregulated fashion.

While most of the Uzbek and Tajik women (except Bukhara Uzbek women) viewed “going to the bazaar” as an unpleasant alternative, nonetheless they spoke positively of two kinds of entrepreneurial activity. Many of these women sewed or baked, either to fulfill private orders or for the bazaar, and they urged the others in their groups to take up these means to supplement income.³¹ During the Soviet period, many Uzbek women did not work in the formal economy, but, like Mukarrama Yusupova, the founder of the Moonflower sewing enterprise, sewed and embroidered traditional

clothing at home, for sale.³² Sewing in order to earn money apparently offends no one's sense of propriety: while women may sell their products in the bazaar, they may avoid this by making clothing on order, or by turning their products over to others; and, in any case, selling such clothing items is not associated with "carrying heavy loads" or traveling long distances. In the men's focus groups, "going to the bazaar" meant selling one's farm produce, and for those who made their living in a profession, this marked a loss in status. Women spoke more positively than men of entrepreneurship; some, like men, sold farm produce, but more of them were continuing and expanding an activity, sewing, that was an acceptable way for women to supplement the family income in the pre-Soviet and the Soviet period.³³

Russian women, like Uzbek and Tajik women, emphasized their need to add to their income, but, unlike Uzbek and Tajik women, they spoke extensively about changing jobs or professions, and little about engaging in entrepreneurship. Many of them had changed positions in recent years, and the reasons that they expressed for doing so concerned not only money but also interest and fulfillment. Nina articulated this most clearly. She had been trained as a physicist, but now, she said, "I am aspiring for perfection. Now I have an opportunity to speak another language. I found a job at the Turkish Embassy, and I want to learn English, I want to look good, I want to go to expensive shops, to earn money and to make life worth living." However, others complained that the need to change jobs and earn an income was driving women to do work that they found distasteful. Darya: "The director of studies of our school took a job at a Turkish company—cleaning the floors! . . . It's so humiliating! Awful! At first she was crying!" Nina: "While making money, she is losing something, something feminine." The Russian women expressed a strong aversion to trade, working in stores or shops, but Yulia called for a change in this attitude: "Why is it so hard for us? We have difficulty in changing our psychology. We are ashamed to stand behind the [sales] counter, although we are not ashamed to fall down while doing labor."³⁴

Each focus group was asked whether any particular nationality was suffering more than others from social problems of the past ten years. In this context, the Russian women made very pointed comparisons between their own roles as workers and providers, and their perception of Uzbek women's roles:

Yulia: Muslim women seldom work. The mode of their life is different, the wife is busy with the house and children while her husband is providing. This has always been . . . With Russians, in the Russian families it's different. As a rule, both husband and wife bring the money into their household, and on top of it they [women] have their duties.

Darya: Uzbek men know how to make money. Here in Uzbekistan they can make it more easily than Russian men.

Larissa: Recently they issued a decree saying that a pensioner—who has been working for her whole life—if she works, she gets only a half of her salary. Not a single Uzbek woman ever worked for 2–2.5 times the basic salary . . . Recently, they issued a decree, according to which anyone who has not worked for a long time but is still employed on paper, must be fired . . . Meanwhile they [Uzbek women] go on cruises.

In comparing their own situation with the situation of Uzbek women, whom they imagined as housewives who are provided for by husband and who take cruises, the Russian women emphasized their own identity as full-time members of the labor force and income earners who were feeling the full force of the transition's economic uncertainties. Tajik and Uzbek women did not discuss their own views of Russian women, but the images that they presented of themselves as income earners contrast with the Russian image of Uzbek women as a female leisure class. The distance between these two images may be explained in part by the fact that many Uzbek women, both in the past and in the present, earned income through private activities, rather than through participation in formal employment.³⁵

Ideals and Gender Roles

Focus group members were asked whether difficulties of the last ten years had affected men more, or women more, and they responded in terms that permit an assessment of their gender ideals, and, ultimately, a comparison between their ideals and their realities. The majority of men in all of the groups said that women were suffering more, with a minority saying that men and women suffered equally. None of the men responded that men were suffering more. In the women's groups, answers varied widely: Uzbek women in all three groups answered that men suffered more, or that men and women suffered equally, while a minority said that women suffered more. Few of the Tajik women responded, and they divided their answers between "women suffer more" and "both suffer equally." Tashkent Russian women generally agreed that women were now having a harder time although, earlier, men had it worse. In Moynak, the Karakalpak women had no doubt: women suffered more than men.

Russian men and Uzbek and Tajik men and women drew on a fixed image of men as providers and women as mothers whose primary concern is taking care of children. Men in these groups asserted that women were having greater difficulty in the transition period because, as those responsible for the house and the children, they had more worries:

Boimurod: The duty of bringing up a child lies on woman's shoulders, and so does looking after the family. A man brings home what he provides. If the wife tells him to, he brings home groceries. The husband comes and goes, but the wife has to dress the children and feed them. (Tashkent Uzbek men)

Yura-1: A man, he just brings the money . . . a woman is constantly mindful of how to spend money in the right way, how to equip her husband when he is going to work. (Tashkent Russian men)³⁶

In each group at least one man mentioned that women worked outside the house and at home, and thus had a double burden. In the Karakalpak group, men regarded it as

normal for women to work outside the home. Men in other groups also mentioned women working outside the home, but some regarded this as unusual, a response to a poor economic situation:

Sherali: Formerly, during the time of the USSR, did we ever let our wives go [on the shuttle trade]? Men were able to make enough money to allow their wives to stay home and take care of the children. Today it is different; women are forced to travel with heavy bags, doing their business. (Bukhara Tajik men)

Hairulla: It is hard for everybody . . . both for men and women. If a man is able to bring home money, fine; if not, a woman has to take care of that. (Bukhara Tajik men)

A few Uzbek and Tajik men contradicted prevailing assumptions in their group, arguing that women worked as much as men did, and that because of the double burden—work outside the home and caring for the household—they were having a harder time than men.

When asked whether men or women had suffered more, many of the women, except in the Karakalpak group, answered with the assertion that men were the providers for the family, and women suffered when men could not provide. The Karakalpak group stands apart:

Aiparsha: She bears the children. She works as much as the men. She earns money. The woman has a heavy burden. She carries all the difficulties.

Esemgul: Everything depends on the women. Women prepare the food, and it is also women who worry about the clothing. Therefore, the woman presides over the family. (Moynak Karakalpak women)

Karakalpak women clearly saw themselves as primary providers for their families. By contrast, women in all of the other groups tended to regard men as providers and women as helpers or supporters:

Yulia: For the time being women got used to the strokes of bad luck and bore all on their shoulders. But now they [men] adjusted their world-outlook and developed a bit different attitude toward life. Although women can better endure the hard and unpleasant situations, men have gotten to the crest of the wave now, they have taken to doing business.

Masha: [A man is involved in] intellectual work, while his wife gives him moral support. This is, basically, how it works. (Tashkent Russian women)

Women in the Tashkent Uzbek group stressed men's role as provider more than did the women of any other group. Umida's discussion of family earnings suggests the ways that ideals and actual use of family income interact. Both she and her husband operated with the assumption that he was the family's provider: "Men think much more about the family. The support of the family is his duty . . . If I earn one hundred som and he earns one som, still, his is more useful"³⁷ (Tashkent Uzbek women). While most of the men regarded women as the ones most concerned

with children's well-being, some of the women regarded men not only as the providers for the family, but also as more responsible for children than themselves:

Laylo: the family's well-being is mostly the man's responsibility. For instance, he needs to provide for the family. In children's upbringing, the man also has the leading role. That is why most of the burden is on men's shoulders. (Ferghana Uzbek women)

But Umida also observed, "If they [men] cannot earn a living, then it puts pressure on us."

Many women regarded their own work as a response to men's problems, and as a supplement, not an equal source, of family income:

Muhabbat: Women now do trade, go out to the bazaars, carry heavier loads than men in order to sell potatoes and such things.

Firuz: So why is it she goes [to market], if not that things are hard for men? It is harder for men; it is hard not knowing how to provide for the family. You go out in order to help them. (Bukhara Uzbek women)

Uzbek and Tajik women did not have much as the men to say about women in the shuttle trade, but, like the men, suggested that their own participation in trade was less than desirable, since it entailed carrying heavy loads.³⁸

Conclusion

For the women and men of the Karakalpak groups, there was little difference between general statements about gender roles and personal references to women's work and men's work. In the Uzbek and Tajik groups, women spoke extensively about working, earning and providing for families; like Mukarrama Yusupova, many believed that women should work outside the home, both for their own good and for society. However, in their generalized statements about gender, they idealized men as providers. While some insisted that women, and especially women who had no provider, needed to work, they conveyed the sense that women work in order to help men. Their descriptions of themselves as workers and providers conflicted with their normative views. In the Russian group, too, some of the women regarded men as providers; in their discussion, women's work was idealized as fulfillment, not as a mode of earning a living. Larissa complained of her low income, saying, "Take the problem of providing an income. My husband earns good money. But all three of us live on his salary. It's not that I want to secure a good income for myself. I only want my salary to correspond with my work" (Tashkent Russian women).

The majority of men in the Russian, Tajik and Uzbek groups articulated idealized gender relationships rather differently than women did. While Uzbek women regarded men as providers and responsible for the family, men in all of the groups

regarded women as responsible for the children, and themselves as responsible for bringing income to the family. While some of the men observed that women also worked outside the home and brought income to the family, many of the Uzbek and Tajik men expressed their discomfort with this reality. Women who participated in the shuttle trade in order to earn a living were subject to particular condemnation, precisely because they so clearly flouted an ideal family structure in which men carry the heavy loads and bring food to the family, and because they transgressed an Islamic norm limiting women's movement.

From the evidence that our focus groups offer concerning gender, labor and family income, we may conclude that many men and women regarded the transitional labor situation in Uzbekistan as abnormal, and a substantial change from the Soviet past. There was a mixture of appreciation for the freedom to earn more money and regret for the loss of earlier income stability. Along with the transformation of labor and earning, a shift in gender roles may be taking place. As Boimurod observed, "Women are also among the entrepreneurs and hold high positions. They are also gaining" (Tashkent Uzbek men). But among men the awareness that women were not only working outside the home but also traveling long distances in the shuttle trade raised particular concern. Nurbek said, "Since a woman does all the housekeeping, if she is away from home for four or five months earning money, what is he [her husband] going to do?" (Bukhara Tajik men). Among women, there was a similar sense of discomfort. Women are working, bringing income into the family, but their ideals about men's and women's roles in the family have not changed to support their current realities.

Postscript

Nearly ten years have passed since this research was carried out. My comments in this section are anecdotal, based not on formal research, but on my conversations and observations in Uzbekistan between 1999 and 2003. In that time, the narrative of "transition" itself has become less pervasive. In Uzbekistan, it is no longer common to excuse or explain current hardships with reference to "transition." Instead, hardships are more frequently blamed on bad economic policies, on the government, on the antagonistic policies of neighboring states (a discourse encouraged by state policy and state-owned media) and on lack of interest, investment and aid from outsiders. The idea that this is a passing stage, and that Uzbekistan must and will arrive at capitalism and democracy, is dying more quickly among ordinary people in Uzbekistan than it is among outside "experts."

In the years since independence, there has clearly been increasing social stratification in Uzbekistan, with growing wealth among some urbanites, and a growing impoverishment, especially in rural areas. Ideas about the market that provided hope to many in our focus groups are now also matters for greater skepticism. Many who invested in

entrepreneurial activities, such workshops, or importing goods, or cafes, or small stores, fell on hard times as government taxation policies expanded, ad hoc local “taxation” (not necessarily lawful—sometimes these are just shake-down schemes) increased, importing foreign goods was curtailed and tariffs were raised, and border crossings became restricted. Perhaps most important, levels of income in Uzbekistan have not grown among the vast majority of the population, and thus have not provided the surplus needed to sustain many new businesses.

On a more positive note, between 1996 and the late 1990s, the monetary and banking system of Uzbekistan stabilized, and complaints about late pay and unpaid pensions and subsidies subsided, although questions about how one can live on very low salaries remain.

Some coping strategies have changed. Each time I visit Uzbekistan, I meet more people who tell me of a family member who has worked or is working abroad. Labor migration from Uzbekistan includes contract workers who go to South Korea to work in factories, and those who go to Russia to work in construction, as well as plenty who go to the U.S. and Europe on tourist visas and stay to drive taxis or work in the second economy. Labor migration is still an option for the professional; many science workers strive for either temporary or long-term employment abroad.

The shuttle trade no longer is a topic of frequent discussion and critique. This may be a sign that society has come to accept petty trade and the travel it entails as normal activity for women as well as for men, or it may be a consequence of the reduction in this form of trade. International travel, even travel to neighboring countries, faces many restrictions, and petty trade in the bazaar is also not seen as lucrative in the way it was in the mid-1990s. More recently, urbanites have noticed an increase of women’s presence in *mardikorlik*, or day laboring. There are designated locations in cities where job seekers gather, hoping to be hired for the day in construction or other physical labor. While these *mardikor* bazaars existed even before independence, the number of job seekers has grown in recent years, and includes many women. While government statistics do not reveal Uzbekistan’s extensive unemployment and underemployment problems, the *mardikorlik* bazaars are evidence of another way of coping with inadequate income.

NOTES

1. This research project was conducted from 1996 to 1998 by the Center for Russian and Eastern European Studies at the University of Michigan, in partnership with scholars from Estonia, Ukraine and Uzbekistan, with support of grants from the Ford Foundation and the National Council of Eurasian and Eastern European Research. The partner organization in Uzbekistan was Expert Research, headed by sociologist Alisher Ilkhamov. I did not take part in the focus groups or oral history interviews for this project. My familiarity with the materials and issues discussed in this article, and my interpretation come from my own research in Uzbekistan between 1991 and 2003, from involvement in the planning and initiation of this project and from translating the Uzbek focus groups into English.

2. Oral history interview with Mukarrama Yusupova, director of the private firm Mohigul, by Suyun Muhammedov, Farg'ona, Uzbekistan, 19 February 1997. Translation by Marianne Kamp.
3. Oral history interview, part 2, with Erkin Vahidov, poet and chairman of the foreign relations committee of the Supreme Parliament of Uzbekistan, by Marat Hojimuhammedov, Tashkent, 10 April 1997. Translation by Theresa Truax.
4. Oral history interview with Nozim Habibullaev, historian and director of the Timurid Museum, by Marat Hojimuhammedov, Tashkent, 12 February 1997. Translation by James Reische.
5. Tajik translations are by Andrei Yastchenko. The "shuttle trade" refers to petty trade across borders; throughout much of the former Soviet Union, women are the major participants in this trade. See *National Geographic*, May 1997; also see Ruth Mandel and Caroline Humphrey, eds, *Markets and Moralities: Ethnographies of Postsocialism* (Oxford: Berg, 2002). In Uzbekistan, women collect money and orders from acquaintances, travel abroad and purchase clothing and household items; upon return to Uzbekistan they may simply deliver orders to acquaintance, or they may sell goods in the bazaars. Some shuttle trade also goes on within Uzbekistan's borders, with village women traveling to cities with produce and back home with imported items to sell in the local bazaar. Sources on the shuttle trade: numerous articles both describing and critiquing the trade in 1996 issues of *O'zbekiston Haqiqati*, and my own conversations between 1992 and 1996 with women who are involved in the trade. In the five years following this research, travel abroad has become both more accepted and economically more difficult, and, perhaps for both reasons, discussions of women and the shuttle trade seem to have decreased.
6. Maxine Molyneux, "Women in Socialist Societies: Problems of Theory and Practice," in Kate Young, Carol Wolkowitz and Roslyn McCullagh, eds, *Of Marriage and the Market: Women's Subordination Internationally and Its Lessons* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), pp. 55–90.
7. Joan Huber, "A Theory of Family, Economy and Gender," in Rae Lesser Blumberg, ed., *Gender, Family and Economy: the Triple Overlap* (London: Sage, 1991), p. 37.
8. In 1998, those who studied the transition assumed that former Soviet states were moving toward an economically capitalist structure. Uzbekistan's independent economy remains dominated by the state sector, movement toward privatization has been much slower than in other former Soviet states, and incentives for market orientation have fluctuated, so that by 2003 "the market" is no longer regarded as the answer that it seemed in 1996.
9. Rae Lesser Blumberg, "Income under Female versus Male Control: Hypotheses from a Theory of Gender Stratification and Data from the Third World," in Rae Lesser Blumberg, ed., *Gender, Family and Economy: the Triple Overlap* (London: Sage, 1991), p. 99.
10. Male oversight was taken to its greatest extreme by the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, which legally forbade women's movement outside the home except when the woman was accompanied by a male family member. In many Arab countries, laws forbid women's travel outside the country except with written permission from a male guardian. In some Arab and Islamic states a woman can work outside the home only with the consent of their husband, and, in some, only in gender-segregated environments. Mahnaz Afkhami, ed., *Faith & Freedom: Women's Human Rights in the Muslim World* (Syracuse University Press, 1995); Suad Joseph, ed., *Gender and Citizenship in the Middle East* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2000).
11. Concerns about women's freedom of movement are a constant motif in literature and discourse about Muslim women; see, for example, Annelies Moors, *Women, Property and Islam: Palestinian Experiences 1920–1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

12. Certain verses from the Quran can be cited as normative sources of practice in Islamic gender roles; men are designated as women's protectors and providers (4:34). Among Uzbeks and in many other Islamic cultures, a woman's earnings are viewed as her own property (4:32), and, unlike men's income, may be used for her own needs, rather than for family needs. See, for example, Diane Wolf, "Female Autonomy, the Family, and Industrialization in Java," in Rae Lesser Blumberg, ed., *Gender, Family and Economy: the Triple Overlap* (London: Sage, 1991), pp. 135–144; see also Blumberg on the family incomes of certain African Muslim groups, in "Income Control," p. 104.
13. Women have long been present in bazaars in Uzbekistan, both as buyers and as sellers. But in the 1990s many women who previously had other employment found that they needed a new way to earn a living, and turned to selling in the bazaar. Muhabbat was from the rural Bukhara Uzbek women focus group.
14. Immanuel Wallerstein and Joan Smith, "Households as an Institution in the World Economy," in Rae Lesser Blumberg, ed., *Gender, Family and Economy: the Triple Overlap* (London: Sage, 1991), pp. 225–226.
15. Scattered positive comments on freedom to earn additional income are found in transcripts from these focus groups: Bukhara Uzbek men, Tashkent Russian women, Bukhara Uzbek women, Tashkent Uzbek women, Tashkent Uzbek men, Tashkent Russian men, Bukhara Tajik women.
16. Among the three states studied in this project, Uzbekistan is unlike Estonia or Ukraine, in that the Russian minority is less than 10%. In all three countries, the titular nationality forms a solid majority of the population: in the mid 1990s, 64.2% of the Estonian population was made up of ethnic Estonians; in Ukraine, 73% are Ukrainian; and in Uzbekistan, 80% are Uzbek. However, Russians are 28.7% of the population of Estonia, and 22% of the population of Ukraine, but only 5.5% of the population of Uzbekistan, where Tajiks, declared and undeclared, are probably a more significant proportion of the population than Russians. Thus, while researchers in Estonia and Ukraine selected Estonians and Russians, and Ukrainians and Russians, respectively, for focus groups, the Uzbekistan study encompassed other ethnic minorities. *CIA World Fact Book*, 1996 estimates, <<http://222.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/>>.
17. Hereafter, groups will be referred to by city, ethnicity and gender, e.g. "Bukhara Uzbek women." In several focus groups, several participants had the same name. All names in focus groups have been changed to protect the anonymity of participants.
18. Differences in the ways that participants chose to introduce themselves are mostly explained by moderator influence.
19. There is no notable gender difference in the ways that men and women in the Uzbekistan focus groups think and speak. The phenomenon noted by Rein Voorman in the Estonian groups (also in this volume), that men spoke at abstract levels while women spoke at more concrete, personal levels, is not found in the Uzbekistan focus groups. Rather, the transcripts of these groups suggest, first, that levels of abstraction are related to moderator style, and, second, that speaking abstractly rather than concretely about work, income, inflation and employment may have some correlation with class. In the Uzbekistan data, Tashkent Uzbek men, who all had higher education, spoke consistently at the abstract, societal level, while participants in all other groups shifted between societal and personal comment. However, an examination of moderator questioning shows that the moderator for Tashkent Uzbek men posed every question on an abstract level, while moderators in all other groups asked for personal input, with questions such as "Have you experienced this?"
20. Most recruitment of focus group candidates in Uzbekistan took place through work or government organizations. However, obstruction by village leaders in the Bukhara area forced

EXPERT's recruiters to find an alternative source of participants for two Uzbek groups, and they turned to local bazaars. As it turns out, this accident has happy results for our data; a great many people in Uzbekistan are in fact making their living through petty trade, although they may be officially employed, and when recruited through their official place of work may represent that work as their real occupation. Their presence in our data highlights a nuance of the Uzbek perception of the meaning of "market": as Morgan Liu has observed, the term for "market economy" in Uzbek is *bozor iqtisodi* or "bazaar economy," and there is a slippage of meaning between the concept of market capitalism and the petty trade of the bazaar—which in practice and in concept are one and the same for most Uzbeks.

21. A caveat must be made here: the tape quality for the Karakalpak men's focus group was very bad, and the moderator of the group reconstructed the transcript based in part on the tape and in part on notes. The transcript is far shorter than those of other groups, and probably does not reflect all that the men said. Translations of Moynak Karakalpak men and women transcripts are by Kagan Arik.
22. For focus group participants in Zakarpattja region, Ukraine, open borders meant opportunities for laborers to find temporary work in Eastern European countries, in factories, construction, *etc.* By contrast, in Uzbekistan, working class and farm worker participants in focus groups appreciated the possibility of travel abroad in connection with making the Hajj and, more importantly, engaging in petty trade, but did not anticipate going abroad to work as laborers. See J. A. Dickinson, in this volume. Since the mid 1990s, ordinary labor migration has increased in Uzbekistan, with many workers going to Russia or South Korea on year-long contracts.
23. The opportunity to travel abroad, for study, work or pilgrimage, as one of the benefits of independence was mentioned by Ferghana Uzbek women, Bukhara Tajik men, Bukhara Uzbek women, Tashkent Uzbek men and Tashkent Uzbek women. By contrast, Tashkent Russian women bewailed the high cost of travel to Russia, and complained that they could not visit relatives or take their children to Russia's lakes and forests.
24. The moderator of the Bukhara women's groups raised the topic of "tois"—wedding feasts and other celebrations—in focus group discussions, noting that they seemed to be growing in expense and abundance. Some of the women viewed these developments as positive, while others saw them as evidence of social stratification. In ordinary conversation and in the press in Uzbekistan, there is a lively critique of extravagant spending on *tois*; many people who cannot afford to do so host large, expensive weddings, sometimes by going into debt. Fotima Ibroghimova, an elderly woman who is a religious teacher from Bukhara, spoke in her oral history interview of the increase in religious celebrations, noting, "this takes a lot of time, we cause women much bother, and then it keeps being said that this is increasing difficulties, and the waste of money is increasing. All of this is connected with the increase in rituals. So now we are spreading the understanding that whenever one observes a ritual, wasting money should not be permitted, and no harm should be done to the household." Oral history interview with Fotima Ibroghimova, by Manzila Kurbanova, Bukhara, Uzbekistan, 10 June 1997. Translation by Marianne Kamp.
25. Translations of Tashkent Russian men and women transcripts are by Karen Aguilar.
26. Ruth Hayden (*Turn your Money Life Around: The Money Book for Women* [Deerfield Beach, FL: HCI Publishers, 1992]) discusses this phenomenon among American men and women; she says that, faced with a limited budget, women are more likely to choose economizing as a method for controlling their budget, while men are more likely to consider taking additional work or changing jobs to increase income. "Women and Money," *Sound Money*, Public Radio International, 23 May 1998.

27. Vohidov interview, part 2, 10 April 1997.
28. Bukhara Tajik men, Bukhara Tajik women.
29. Tashkent Uzbek women spoke of young men who sold imported goods at the Hippodrome Bazaar as spreaders of disease. In other groups, such as Ferghana Uzbek men and Bukhara Tajik men, there were comments that “entrepreneur” was just a new term for speculator or profiteer.
30. Tashkent Uzbek men. Similar voices appear in Tashkent Uzbek women, Bukhara Tajik women, Bukhara Uzbek men, Bukhara Uzbek women and Ferghana Uzbek women.
31. Tashkent Uzbek women, Bukhara Tajik women, Bukhara Uzbek women.
32. The Uzbek and Tajik ritual economy creates constant demand for traditional clothing: embroidered skullcaps, women’s silk dresses and loose pants and men’s robes are gifts and standard garb at most life-cycle events. In the 1970s and 1980s, Uzbek women’s participation in the formal labor force was substantially lower than that of women in the European parts of the USSR—probably less than 50% of Uzbek women were officially employed, and that figure included those women who went on repeated three-year maternity leaves. *Zhenshchiny v SSSR 1989: Statisticheskie materialy* (Moscow: Finansy i statistika, 1989), pp. 17–18; *Zhenshchiny Sovetskogo Uzbekistana: kratkii statisticheskii sbornik* (Tashkent, 1987), pp. 11, 15. In her 1980s study of labor in Uzbekistan, Nancy Lubin cited surveys showing Uzbek women’s preference for work in the “private and household sector” rather than work in “social production.” Nancy Lubin, *Labor and Nationality in Soviet Central Asia: An Uneasy Compromise* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984). pp. 164–165.
33. In the early twentieth century, when many Uzbek and Tajik women lived in relative seclusion, sewing and embroidering at home provided income for many women. In the 1920s, organizers for the Women’s Division found establishing sewing and embroidery collectives as the most effective means for providing women with employment and income. See Marianne Kamp, “Unveiling Uzbek Women: Liberation, Representation and Discourse, 1906–1929,” Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1998, Chapter 1. Sewing is mentioned frequently in the women focus groups as well as in some oral history interviews: in addition to Yusupova, Bahramjon Ergashev, Deputy Hokim of Ferghana province, noted that his daughter-in-law, a teacher, spent all of her time after school sewing for women, for extra income. Interviewed by Suyun Muhammedov, Ferghana, Uzbekistan, 20 February 1998.
34. It should be noted that Russian women frequently work as salespeople in the bazaars in Tashkent, especially selling imported clothing. This one focus group should not be over-interpreted to suggest that Russians in Uzbekistan are not interested in entrepreneurial activity.
35. In an oral history interview, Nina Kiriukhina, a gynecologist from the Ferghana regional hospital, stated that 60% of her patients were housewives and opined that “the number of women who do not work is increasing.” She then modified this statement by noting that some of her women patients referred to themselves as housewives even though they engaged in private business activities. Interview, part 1, 20 February 1997, with Suyun Muhammedov. Translated by Rachel Farber.
36. Similar statements, some with religious emphasis, appear in Bukhara Tajik men, Bukhara Uzbek men, Ferghana Uzbek men and Moynak Karakalpak men.
37. The som is Uzbekistan’s unit of currency.
38. It is probably impossible to know whether more men or more women are involved in the shuttle trade, but women’s activity in this area stirred comment and criticism in the Uzbek press in 1995 and 1996.