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FINANCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN EASTERN EUROPE
The First Ten Years

Hans van Zon
THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF INDEPENDENT UKRAINE

Critical Management Research in Eastern Europe

Managing the Transition

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Socioeconomic Conditions and Discursive Construction of Women's Identities in Post-Soviet Countries¹

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Introduction

What happens when certain identities are no longer legitimized or validated by society? The goal of the present chapter is to understand the impact of radical historical and socioeconomic changes on discursive construction of identity, in particular, on subjectivities available in a specific society at a specific point in time. The current situation in post-Soviet countries provides a unique opportunity to explore this issue by examining lives caught in a rapidly shifting social reality. I will focus my analysis on the concept of womanhood as it is constituted, transformed and redefined in post-Soviet discourses. I will begin by comparing the political and economic situation of women in Soviet and in post-Soviet times, linking the socioeconomic conditions to discursive positions assigned to women by the preeminent ideologies before and after 1991, since at all times notions of acceptable femininities are closely tied to economic conditions and the distribution of wealth (Burr, 1998; Gal, 1978).

In search for new representations of womanhood, I will analyse two types of post-Soviet narratives: public and private. The public narratives consist of interviews and articles published in post-Soviet magazines between 1991 and 1999. While focused on women, these texts are created for and by the media, and at best can claim joint authorship; thus, they are mainly representative of attempts made to position women in specific roles. In order to consider women's own positionings, I will examine the private narratives, women's life stories, collected in the summer of 1997 in Kiev, Ukraine and St Petersburg, Russia. I will look at how these women reminisce, talk about and negotiate in everyday life the multiple meanings of being a post-Soviet

woman. The comparative analysis of the two types of narratives will allow me to investigate how various discursive positions and subjectivities prescribed through the media are being adopted, negotiated, contested and resisted by contemporary Russian and Ukrainian women struggling to occupy a place in societies undergoing drastic changes and transformations. Based on the evidence presented in the chapter, I will argue that looking at both sociopolitical and socioeconomic conditions is critical for understanding the range of subjectivities available to women prior to and following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Research methodology

Recently, reconstruction of gender identity in the former Soviet Union, and, in particular, the concept of post-Soviet womanhood, was subjected to a number of theoretical discussions and empirical investigations (Edmondson, 1992; Marsh, 1996a; Pilkington, 1996; Posadskaya, 1994a). Pilkington (1996) employed various methodologies popular in the fields of social psychology and sociology, such as analysis of the media texts, questionnaires, surveys and interviews with participants. The current project extends this methodological variety by adopting a narrative or life history approach. Narratives and, in particular, stories that people tell about their lives, have recently become the focus of the evolving field of narrative study, which posits narrative as the central means by which people give meaning to their lives across time (Gergen and Gergen, 1993; Josselson and Lieblich, 1993; Rosenwald and Ochberg, 1992; Sarbin, 1986). Life stories are seen in this framework as coherent systems in their own right; they may be contested, negotiated and reconstructed, reflecting changes in speakers' values, understandings and situations. Bringing human subjectivity to the forefront, the study of life stories clarifies how individuals make sense of their lives and what tacit cultural rules, implicit assumptions and belief systems allow this sense making to take place (Linde, 1993; Ochberg, 1994). Until recently, however, Russian discourse and, in particular, narratives have been overlooked as an object of analysis (see, however, Ries, 1997), being overshadowed by the study of post-Soviet politics, sociology and economy. Thus, the present study, while building on the previous scholarship, presents a new development for the field of post-Soviet studies, as well as for cross-cultural feminist investigation of women's lives and for sociolinguistic study of ways in which discourses constitute human subjectivities, allowing people to narrate and re-narrate themselves.

Magazines and, in particular, women's magazines have also come to the fore recently in research conducted at the intersection between feminist cultural studies and discourse analysis (Hayashi, 1997; Hermes, 1995; Talbot, 1995). Scholars argue that the study of the meanings and positions offered to the readers of women's magazines allows us to define specific cultural discourses and uncover master narratives which often serve to legitimate and naturalize currently existing social practices and gender relations. Thus, the arguments about subjectivities currently available to Russian women come from the interviews with prominent women and men, as well as articles on women's identities and male-female relationships in a number of post-Soviet magazines published between 1991 and 1999 and available both in Russia and Ukraine (where the Russian press still dominates the market). In the present study, the magazines analysed consist of random issues of several Russian women's magazines (*Lisa*, *Natalie*, *Good Housekeeping*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Zhenskii mir* (Women's World), *Ona* (She), *Gorozhanka* (Urban Female), *Rabotnitsa* (Female factory worker) and *Krestianka* (Rural female)), one men's publication (*Egoist*) and a few 'gender-neutral' magazines and newspapers (such as *Argumenty i fakty*/Arguments and facts). Content analysis of the data has entailed a hermeneutic task of locating patterns through exploration of recurring arguments, habitual remarks, juxtapositions and oppositions, and the use of metaphors.

Many authors also suggest that any study of subjectivities prescribed by the media is limited without consideration of the readers' opinions, whereby new narratives, meanings and positions are either contested or jointly constructed. In line with this argument, first hand data were also collected for the project. The data come from semi-structured life story interviews, conducted in Kiev, Ukraine and St Petersburg, Russia, in the summer of 1997, as a part of a larger study of meaning-making systems of former Soviet citizens. In order to diversify the choice of informants, several factors were considered as important for women's positioning: age, class, ethnicity, socioeconomic background, degree of professional success and embeddedness in existing social networks. Thus, the ages of the five informants range from 35 to 83; ethnically one woman is Jewish, one Ukrainian and three are Russian. With regard to the socioeconomic position one is a retiree, living on social welfare, one a homemaker wife of an upper-class 'new Russian' businessman, one a clerical worker in a Russian-American mission, one is an unemployed librarian and one is a former scientist turned patent consultant. The tape-recorded interviews with the informants were

conducted in Russian, all were one to two hours long. The data were analysed through an interpretative method that entailed multiple readings and listenings of the interview texts, a search for patterns through exploration of recurring arguments, and a comparison of the arguments to the ones identified in the media narratives. All excerpts from the interviews included in the chapter are translated from Russian into English by the author.

Gender politics in the USSR and in the post-Soviet states

While consequent waves of the feminist movement swept over the Western world, the Soviet Union regarded these upheavals with contempt and amusement – in the ‘greatest country in the world’ the ‘woman question’ (*zhenskii vopros*) had been solved and women enjoyed an unprecedented equality with men in their legal, political, social, economic and cultural status. The collapse of the monolithic Soviet state in 1991 led, among other things, to the slow dissolution of the myth of Soviet women’s emancipation and equality. On the surface, ‘women *did* have equality in law, and there *were* women in all the professions, some of which like, the judiciary, still remain virtually closed to women in Britain’ (Clark, 1994). At a closer look, however, gender equality under socialism turned out to be one of the most refined social mystifications of the era (Voronina, 1994a, p. 37). Women in the USSR were marginalized and exploited in a variety of ways:

- Gender asymmetry was very visible in both vertical and horizontal *division of labour*: women were segregated into feminized areas of low-paid low-prestige jobs, often with poor working conditions and no possibility of advancement; the average pay for female labour was 30 per cent less than for the male (Voronina, 1994a). The so-called equality also resulted in the infamous ‘second shift’: women were forced to carry the double burden of work and domestic chores. It has been estimated that the average workload for working Soviet women was about 76 hours per week (Mezentseva, 1994).
- This asymmetry was even more acute in *social and political affairs*: the public sphere belonged almost exclusively to men and the private to women who were continuously absent from decision-making bodies: ‘on the one hand, it is considered that they do not have any special political and social interests distinct from those of men; on the other hand, men are fully convinced that politics is not a matter for women’ (Voronina, 1994a, pp. 39–40).

- In the sphere of *ideology*, traditional patriarchal attitudes were reinforced through all social mechanisms including mass media by portraying men as the main owners of the public sphere and women as reigning in the private sphere. Severe social problems – women’s appalling working conditions, increasing divorce rate, single parenthood, male alcoholism, wife-beating, child abuse, rape, sexual harassment, increasing violence and impossibility to display an alternative sexual orientation – were dismissed as private or personal issues and considered taboo subjects by the press.

In her perceptive analysis of Russian women’s history, Marsh points out that the conservative values of Soviet and post-Soviet leaders go way back to the patriarchal attitudes to women in tsarist Russia: ‘whatever the political system in Russia, it has always had predominantly negative consequences for women’ (Marsh 1996b: p. 4). While outwardly praising the outstanding achievements of independent and equal Soviet women, the Communist leaders were bent on keeping them in secondary positions, using women’s labour-power as a means to solve the problem of economic growth. Moreover, not unlike the US during and after World War II, the USSR alternatively introduced the ideology of gender equality and the ideology of women’s ‘natural mission’ depending on what suited the country at the time. Officially, however, the ideologists of the Soviet state promoted one and only one gender identity for women: that of a glorified socialist worker, mother and wife, who, supported by the state, enjoys combining the three roles. Any existing discrimination was ‘carefully concealed by the absence (or fabrication) of statistics’ (Posadskaya, 1994c, p. 10).

Currently, in the post-Soviet times, the socioeconomic situation of women not only did not improve but became significantly worse. Numerous studies demonstrated that women have been particularly disadvantaged by the political, social, and economic changes, which accompanied the end of the Communist rule.

Difficulties of the economic transition to the free market resulted in the *masculinization of paid labour*, the *displacement of women* and the *feminization of poverty*. For those currently employed, these trends translate into increases in job segregation and discrimination in terms of wages, career promotion and participation in industrial management. For the unemployed they lead to a continuous lack of job opportunities and training programmes. Most importantly, the transition to the free market resulted in unprecedented unemployment rates with almost 80 per cent of the unemployed being women (Marsh, 1996b;

Posadskaya, 1994d). In 1996 most of the working women were concentrated in a limited number of trades and in comparatively junior positions with the average pay one-third lower than that of men (even though the educational level of working women is higher). Correspondingly, women's pensions were only 70 per cent of men's (Marsh, 1996b). The new trends in employment are very visible to the study participants, one of whom pointed out that men are displacing women in all kinds of paid labour:

The situation changed ... yesterday we were driving and everywhere in the streets, everywhere there were only men doing road construction ... before there were only women ... here the situation changed drastically, I don't know why ... probably because it is difficult to find a job ... probably because it pays well ... that's why men chased all the women out of these jobs. (L, 47, a clerical worker in a Russian-American mission, from an interview with the author)

New legislations, social entitlements and preferential terms, supposedly geared towards women's 'liberation' and 'protection', in fact legitimize the trend to shift women from paid labour to unpaid domestic labour, making female employees an extremely unattractive proposition for employers. As a result, new economic structures, such as joint enterprises, cooperatives and private firms, employ women mostly in a very narrow range of jobs: secretaries, consultants, low-paid service staff and office personnel (Posadskaya, 1994d). Many women have no other choice but to accept any job offer: about 20 per cent of Russian women are single mothers, who are forced to take low-paying positions to support themselves and their children, and who, in view of the scarcity of child-care, are often at the mercy of relatives and friends with regard to baby-sitting. Feminization of poverty is also evident in the case of the elderly women living on their own. The process of housing privatization not only led to continuous violation and infringement of their property rights but also to a new type of crime: blackmail and murder of elderly women by either relatives or mafia gangs interested in taking over their apartments.

In the *public sphere*, women are not just marginalized but 'squeezed out of legislative and executive power' (Posadskaya, 1994b, p. 4). The negative stereotype of an 'iron lady', 'not elected by anyone but appointed by the Party and state apparatus, obedient to the will of the top bosses, always ready to vote "in favor" and carry out directives

"from above" (Khotkina, 1994, p. 105) is alive and well and works against the few existing female politicians. In the recent years, public attacks on politically and socially engaged women became verbal as well as physical: the infamous ultranationalist Duma Deputy Vladimir Zhirinovskii had attacked at least two female correspondents and one female deputy during Duma sessions, justifying his behaviour by the victims' 'lack of femininity' (*Russian Life*, March 1998, p. 9; *Russian Life*, May 1998, p. 13).

Finally, with regard to ideology, the post-Soviet states are characterized by the '*patriarchal renaissance*', or, in Attwood's (1996) terms, 'the aggressive re-masculinization' of society. On the one hand, this trend is evident in massive exploitation of sexuality through commercialization and objectification of the female body by the media, the appearance of new social practices such as beauty pageants, erotic shows, mail-order brides' catalogues, and dramatically increased hard-currency prostitution. On the other hand, the return to patriarchal values is evident in the intensified calls for women to return to their 'natural womanly mission' and traditional gender roles.

Thus, democratization in the post-Soviet states, in particular, in Russia and Ukraine, is, as suggested by Marsh (1996b, p. 5) 'a "gendered concept", granting men and women equal rights in the formal sense, but suggesting that their duties were to be very different: women's would be firmly rooted in the moral, spiritual and thus private sphere'. It is by now evident that political, socioeconomic and ideological transformations in the post-Soviet society resulted in a dramatic reconceptualization of women's identities, whereby their previous 'emancipated' subjectivities are severely disparaged, and the new ones – wife, mother, homemaker, on the one hand, and prostitute/object of male desire, on the other – strongly encouraged.

Reconceptualization of womanhood in the post-Soviet times

It is interesting to note that transformation of the image of a Soviet woman was initiated in the Soviet times, in Gorbachev's (1987) infamous appeal to women to return to their purely womanly mission:

We are proud of what the Soviet government has given women: the same right to work as men, equal pay for equal work, and social security. Women have been given every opportunity to get an edu-

cation, to have a career, and to participate in social and political activities ... But during our difficult and heroic history, we failed to pay attention to women's specific rights and needs arising from their role as mother and home-maker, and their indispensable educational function as regards children. Engaged in scientific research, working on construction sites, in production and the services, and involved in creative activities, women no longer have enough time to perform their everyday duties at home – housework, the upbringing of children and the creation of a good family atmosphere. We have discovered that many of our problems – in children's and young people's behaviour, in our morals, culture and in production are partially caused by the weakening of family ties and slack attitude to family responsibilities. This is a paradoxical result in our sincere and politically justified desire to make women equal with men in everything. Now, in the course of perestroika, we have begun to overcome this shortcoming. That is why we are now holding heated debates in the press, in public organizations, at work and at home, about the question of what we should do to make it possible for women to return to their *purely womanly mission*. (Gorbachev, 1987, p. 117; my italics)

The climate of *perestroika* and *glasnost* made it possible to question the Soviet ideals and to challenge the accuracy of previous portrayals of women's life in the USSR. Thus, a number of publications attempted a discussion of previously obscured and denied aspects of the 'woman question': difficult and often dangerous working conditions, the double burden of work and home, high rates of divorce and resulting single parenthood (or rather motherhood), lack of contraception, the horrifying conditions in abortion clinics and maternity hospitals, high infant mortality rate, male alcoholism, domestic violence, child abuse, high incidence of rape and gang rape, sexual coercion and sexual harassment (in particular, in the workplace), female sexuality and lesbian sexual orientation. The press also attended to more sensational cultural and ethnic aspects of the woman question, such as the self-immolation by Muslim women or an extremely difficult situation of Vietnamese female *gastarbeiters* (foreign workers). However, while these and many other issues were hotly discussed and examined, and the problems revealed, defined and deplored, the acknowledgment of the still-existing and unresolved woman question did not result in improvement in any of the areas. Moreover, soon the discussion took a rather unexpected turn, and 'turned into a debate on the nature of the

Soviet woman and what she should be in order to be a "real" woman, not a "Soviet" woman' (Voronina, 1994b, p. 135). Premised on Gorbachev's appeal and on earlier concerns that female emancipation in the USSR led to appearance of 'unfeminine' women, this 'discursive explosion around what constitutes femininity' (McRobbie, 1994, p. 158) opened up a space for the creation of new positions and subjectivities for post-Soviet women, often fashioned explicitly in opposition to images, discourses and ideologies of the past. The past is a powerful resource mobilized by various parties in an attempt to legitimize a version of the present aligned to current political and social agendas (see also Kelemen's chapter). Through the media, in particular, the state invaded all spheres of women's lives propagating particular images of femininity and sexuality, promoting preferred gender narratives and patterns of behaviour in the public and private spheres (Bruno, 1996). The predominant images of a socialist worker and a collective farm worker were replaced by those of a happy homemaker, a beauty queen and a hard-currency prostitute.

A textual analysis of numerous portraits, profiles and interviews with successful and well-known individuals that appeared in the last decade in popular post-Soviet magazines demonstrated that in the nineties men and women were portrayed – and portrayed themselves – very differently in the media. Men were typically positioned as the breadwinners and citizens of the world and women – no matter what else they may be doing with their lives – as inhabitants of the home sphere, 'providing the background against which men can define themselves and develop their identities as men and as members of the new Russian nation' (Bruno, 1996, p. 43). A short incursion into the Western literature on the role and position of men and women in management and organizational discourses suggests a relatively similar picture. Western discourses have been shown to constitute the 'ideal employee' (and especially the ideal manager) as a disembodied and 'rational' figure, a figure that fits closely with cultural images of masculinity rather than femininity (for example, Acker, 1990, 1992; Gherardi, 1995; Martin, 1989). Femininity, on the other hand, has tended to be associated with embodiment, emotions and sexuality; as such it is constituted as subordinate to 'male' rationality, and possibly as out of place in 'rational' organizations (Fournier and Kelemen, 2001).

The analysis of these media texts allowed me to identify five interdependent trends in the representation of female subjectivities in post-Soviet discourses, all of which both legitimate and obscure recent political and socioeconomic changes:

1. women as secondary citizens;
2. women as homemakers;
3. women as career businesswomen;
4. women as sexual objects and victims of violence; and
5. non-encouragement of lesbian and feminist identities

The juxtaposition of the texts illustrating these trends and the narratives elicited from the participants of the study allows me to suggest that not all of the trends are uncritically internalized by the women in question; an attempt to impose new ideologies of gender, intrinsically linked to the new market conditions, is in many cases met with criticism and resistance.

Women as secondary citizens

The first and the most important trend is to present *women as secondary citizens* and lesser human beings through a variety of means, including contrastive use of the terms 'women' and 'people'. This contrast can be illustrated half-jokingly by a popular saying 'A woman is a human's best friend' (*Zhenshchina drug cheloveka*) and by a quote from a Soviet poem: 'What does a person need? A woman at his side ...' (cited in Lipovskaya, 1994, p. 123). It is significantly less funny when such a contrast appears in public declarations of distinguished members of intelligentsia, such as Valentin Rasputin, one of the leading Russian writers, who stated that 'women should give sustenance to the people' (cited in Klimenkova, 1994, p. 24) or a well-known parliament depute Sergei Baburin, who in his recent interview said:

That's exactly what I am trying to say, that our parliament employs serious and loving people, who work with love for the Motherland and for their beloved women. (From an interview given to *Lubov'* (Love), a weekly supplement to the newspaper *Argumenty i Fakty* (Arguments and Facts), no. 15, August 1997. Here and further on all texts are presented in the author's translation).

The idea of a woman being a wife, mother and a willing servant to the newly empowered Russian male is about the only issue that unites politicians across a wide spectrum of positions, from Baburin to Gorbachev to Yeltsin to Khasbulatov, who declared that the market is finally creating conditions under which the Russian man can feel like the head of the family. In view of this widely spread ideological campaign, which takes roots in the Communist past, it is not surprising

that many women have internalized the ideology of oppression, as seen in a synopsis of an interview with a wife of another young Russian politician, Yevgeniy Loginov, in a women's magazine *Gorozhanka* (Urban Female):

Men, busy with politics, have their own goals and agendas. And their wives, like all women in the world, are raising children, giving themselves wholly to serving the family. Tatyana, the wife of a State Deputy Yevgeniy Loginov, thinks that family harmony is the most important. (*Gorozhanka*, December 1996)

Persuaded of their secondary status, some women learned to see and present themselves discursively as an appendage to men and/or family and not as independent individuals. Thus, the wife of the country's leading ophthalmologist, Sviatoslav Fedorov, in an interview given to the Russian edition of *Good Housekeeping* (August-September 1995) stated that she sees her husband as a diamond and herself as a setting (*on – moi brilliant, ia – ego oprava*). A similar view is expressed by the young and popular TV hostess Yelena Bal'burova: 'It is well known that a husband is a head and a wife is a neck. It is good when one really manages to be a "neck"' (*Gorozhanka*, 1997, 5, p. 7). Similarly, one of the study participants, an English major in college, refused to reflect on the changes taking place in the country saying: 'You think globally, I don't ... I am on a homemaker's level ...' (I, 35, a homemaker, wife of a successful businessman)

Women as homemakers

Consequently, the second important and closely related trend is to present *women as homemakers*, firmly entrenching them in the 'private' sphere by naturalizing their 'womanly' roles as mothers, wives and homemakers and by undermining their professional competence. The former image of women and men as partners in building socialism, so ironically presented in a popular film *Moscow Doesn't Believe in Tears* (1980), is rapidly being replaced by that of the traditional family where men are the breadwinners and women devote themselves to child care and domesticity. This idyllic tableau of a new post-Soviet reality is painted by a young surgeon Andrei Akopian, interviewed as a bachelor-of-the-month by a women's magazine *Krestianka* (Rural Female):

From my point of view, a man should support his woman financially, whether they are officially married or not. The question is

whether he is able to ... When the economy is weak, the woman suffers. And she doesn't need that much: her own house, a predictable husband, a child whose future she could be sure about. So that taking care of them would be a joy. From this point of view the future of the Russian family depends on the economic situation. (*Krestianka*, February 1998, 2, p. 81–2)

The attack on women's rights, initiated by Gorbachev in 1987, only intensified with time, fortified by the pressures of the new masculinized market. It turned out that in the Soviet times both women and the workplace suffered from women working outside the home. An article in *Pravda* suggested that 'women working outside the home means disintegration of the family and a low birth-rate', while an interview in *Kuranty* presents a view that 'women who work outside the home cannot really be called mothers and wives' (Klimenkova, 1994). One recent article in women's magazine *Rabotnitsa* (Female factory worker) went as far as to describe career women who return home dog tired and/or over-excited as sick and in need of psychological counseling (*Rabotnitsa*, 1997, 10, pp. 18–19). The media also attempts to naturalize and essentialize sex differences, as exemplified by a recent article in a women's magazine *Ona* (She), by a certain Petukhov, Ph D in biology. The article starts out with numeric claims that women's brains are generally of a smaller size than male ones and then proceeds to link this 'fact' to differences in reasoning styles, as well as memory power (using the Russian expression *devichia pamiat'*, girls' memory, which refers to forgetfulness). Most importantly, the author also uses neurobiology to explain and justify gender differences in parenting roles and responsibilities, opposing biologically conditioned motherhood to socially conditioned fatherhood:

Differences between men and women also exist in their attitudes toward children. To a great regret, not all men know that motherly love is different from the fatherly love not only on the emotional level, but also on the deeper, neurobiological one. For a mother it is an ancient instinct, while father's feelings for his progeny are conditioned by the social, moral, and ethic factors, as well as his upbringing and culture. (Petukhov, *Ona*, March 1998, p. 20)

These ideas are echoed in many advice columns, such as the one in a popular women's weekly *Lisa* whereby women are urged to remember that men – unlike women – cannot think about work and home simul-

taneously, and, thus, should be allowed to relax and watch TV upon their return home, while their loving wives take care of dinner and other household chores (*Lisa*, January 1998, 3, p. 14). An important role model for post-Soviet women is Yeltsin's wife, Naina, who, continuing the traditions of previous invisible first ladies, and challenging Raisa Gorbachev's unseemly attempts to be a public figure, declared in her interview to the newspaper *My* (We) in August 1992:

I am not the first lady, I am simply the wife of the Russian president ... Everything is just as it was before for us. I've remained a housewife ... I choose his ties, I take care of his shirts and suits ... But there is an unbreakable rule in our family: I must never ask my husband about anything that relates to his work. (as cited by Attwood, 1996, p. 258).

In accordance with the new image, interviews with actresses, TV hostesses, women writers and singers as well as with successful businesswomen and politicians are illustrated by pictures of them with their children (and/or household appliances) (see for example, an interview with a Duma deputy Ella Pamfilova, in *Ogonek*, May 1998, accompanied by the picture of Pamfilova in her kitchen beautifully decorated with traditional Russian porcelain, wood and pottery). Unfailingly, interviews with prominent women include questions about their housekeeping abilities, while interviews with their male counterparts involve statements about their wives 'female', that is, domestic abilities:

My wife has amazing housekeeping abilities: in twenty five years of our being together we never had a housekeeper. (From an interview with Iosif Kobzon, one of the leading singers of the country in the last 40 years, *Natalie*, August 1997, p. 7).

He [Mikhail Boiarsky, a well-known movie and theatre actor] was against me working, in women he values above all domesticity, an ability to cook well ... Mikhail Sergeevich likes meat, likes to eat well. Well, a lot, like all men. So I try to give him a lot – tasty and plentiful. Also, I try to diversify what I cook. (From an interview with Larisa Luppian, an actress and Boiarsky's wife *Good Housekeeping*, June 1996, pp. 131–3).

In her analysis of women's portrayals in post-Soviet media, Voronina points out that 'the notion that a woman's culinary abilities are an

integral part of her existence and the best proof of her 'real nature' is so deeply embedded in our national consciousness that it is virtually impossible to find anything in the media about women that does not mention the kitchen or the family' (1994b, p. 136). Not only the 'female abilities' are emphasized in these interviews, but also women's professional interests are presented as secondary. This is especially evident in interviews with women who work in the same field with their husbands, be it theatre, movies, television or music: the wife's career is usually presented as less important, while her main role is to 'cater to the great man' in order to keep the family together. It is for performing this latter role well that the woman is usually praised. Previously cited Larisa Luppian, an actress and a wife of a popular movie actor Mikhail Boiarsky, confides:

During our long marriage, I forgave Misha a lot, mainly, his rudeness. He is very demanding, considers himself the head of the family, who is allowed everything, while a wife is allowed nothing ... I was afraid to remain alone. My mother was alone since about the age of thirty. Maybe that's why in my family life I am used to being patient in order not to remain alone, because loneliness, probably, is more terrifying for a woman than anything else. (*Good Housekeeping*, June 1996, pp. 131–3)

Her views on marriage, housekeeping and responsibilities are shared by many, including Natalia Yegudina, a dancer and a wife of the director of the Bolshoi Theater of Siberia Valeriy Yegudin:

- Do you cook yourself?
- Yes, I like it very much.
- And your husband doesn't help?
- No, he really doesn't have any time. Theater, conservatory, public responsibilities.
- Finally, there is something to reproach him for.
- It never occurred to me to reproach him for that. He has other goals. And the house is my responsibility. Sometimes the older daughter helps. Everything is fine. (*Gorzhanka*, 1997, 5, p. 26)

The traditional views of gender roles are also reproduced in current social practices whereby girls are encouraged to help at home, while boys are brought up to demand. Natalia Cherkasova, the successful head of the Moscow Cosmetology Club and a happy wife of a government official, states her policy on children upbringing in the following way:

I always try to have order in the house. Because I have sons. And you know that boys try to find a spouse based on their mother's image. So I want my sons to know that a good wife always has dinner ready on time, she doesn't accumulate dirty dishes nor unironed pants. (*Ona*, March 1998, p. 32)

Rather than focusing on possible ways to reduce women's workloads at home by redistributing household responsibilities, the predominant discourses legitimize the sexual division of labour presenting it as the key to family harmony and happiness. The Russian language even has a special term for women's happiness, the infamous '*zhenskoe schastie*' (women's happiness), predicated on having and caring for one's husband and children.

The cult of motherhood has always been an important part of Russian society: a childless woman was considered to be 'less of a woman' and was perceived 'more negatively than a woman who has children but has not managed to find herself a husband' (Lipovskaya, 1994, p. 128). In the recent years, attempts at women's 'domestication' led to increased emphasis on the role of motherhood in women's lives. 'Children and cats are the key to reaching harmony', pronounces a popular actress and a single mother Natalia Varlei from the pages of *Good Housekeeping* (June 1996). Nevertheless, despite an abundance of culturally promoted images of happy mothers, this role is no longer aspired to by women unable to support themselves:

What I am afraid of is to have children, now, in our country, because before perestroika, I knew that if I don't get married by the age of 30, I will just have a child. Now in my most daring dreams I can't afford that, because the moment I have a child, I will lose a job, any job. And won't be able to raise my child, because I won't have a job, I'll be a beggar ... This is the biggest current problem, this is what we lost. Socialist system had its advantages. (E, 37, former librarian, unemployed)

Blatantly ignoring the socioeconomic reality, the media and the politicians, however, continue encouraging women to finally become happy through giving up their independence and workforce slavery, enforced by communism, and by assuming their 'natural' care-giving roles of wives and mothers. Choice has become the key concept in current discourses about femininity. In the past, women had no choice at all: the socioeconomic and political situation forced them into full-time

labour, juggling the demands of the 'double burden'. Currently, however they may have a choice: some may 'choose' a career, while others may 'choose' to stay home with children and become home-makers, an opportunity previously denied by the Soviet regime.

From this position, the encouragement for part-time work or for staying at home 'appears not as a retrograde step threatening female emancipation, but as a blessed release from the rigors of the Stalinist past' (Bridger, 1992, p. 191). What is obscured in the declaration of choice, however, is the fact that choices require stable families with sufficient incomes and adequate day care, neither of which is guaranteed in the socioeconomic reality dominated by the feminization of poverty and unemployment. The latter aspect is clearly visible in the participants' narratives where women accept full and complete responsibility for the family and children's well-being in the situation created by the new market:

In ninety one I lost my job, I worked in a geography department ... I worked and my position was eliminated, despite my two little children, so ... at this moment, there were big changes in my family, because ... the situation was difficult, and my husband started drinking, and drinking hard ... as usual, in our country, male population, they ... um ... give up first, well, women think of family, children, that's why I lost my job and found another one in a different field. (L, 47, a clerical worker in a Russian-American mission)

Women as career business women

In view of the reigning patriarchal attitudes, it is not surprising that even when the media portrays *successful career or businesswomen*, their portrayals are vested with meanings quite different from the ones in the West. According to the predominant ideologies of gender, even a successful career should not detract women – and men – from perceiving women's social roles and public positions as secondary to those of men, and their main destination as being wives and mothers. Often it is women themselves who voice these opinions. Thus, when asked about her outstanding business success, the founder and head of the Moscow Cosmetology Club, Natalia Cherkasova, responded by saying:

This world is created for men. She is by His side. If you take this as a given, many things will become easy and uncomplicated. Why should you try and prove to Him that you are better, that you are unique and

born for something special. He is born for something special. And you simply live in His world. (*Ona*, March 1998, 3, p. 32)

Her opinion is shared by Tatiana Koltsova, head of Red Stars, top Russian modeling agency:

Journalists keep asking me about emancipation, and I tell them that Russian women will never have emancipation in global terms ... For we have been educated to be a wife and a mother. These values are still valued by Russian women. And I think this is good. When Russian women marry (*vykhodiat zamuzh*), they are literally going 'behind their husband'. It is the husband who is the head of the family. So, I think we are pretty far from emancipation. For I have seen what an emancipated woman in America is ... They pay separately for their dinner, for their apartment. For us, this is something weird ... I don't regard the mere fact that a woman is head of a business as meaning that she is emancipated. (*Russian Life*, March 1998, p. 15)

Most importantly, the interviews with these successful women obscure the fact that such success is very rare considering both current market conditions and the difficulty experienced by the majority of the post-Soviet people who have to change their life trajectories mid-life and/or mid-career (or face working at places that can no longer afford to pay salaries). There is no previous tradition in Russia of taking a different path during one's lifetime: typically, specialization started very early, most often with one's choice of a technical school, college or the first job, and often people remained in a same factory or enterprise until retirement. As discussed earlier, the necessity to change careers in the new economic conditions particularly affected women who face the problem of 'the mismatch between the skills they have and the jobs on offer' (Bridger and Kay, 1996, p. 22). Often, they have to accept positions below their educational level and with little societal prestige, and if they get involved in some form of a business, they get blamed for taking advantage of people in an unstable market situation. One of the study participants, herself a businessman's wife, feels that she has to defend her friend's choice to become a 'shuttle' (*chelnok*), an owner of a kiosk, who buys stuff such as soda, beer or chocolates elsewhere wholesale and then sells it in her kiosk for a higher price:

I know, I have friends who had a kiosk, I know what it involves ... how they carry the stuff, on their backs, they don't have a car, so they

buy these cases or whatever of coke in cans, or beer, to earn some kopecks ... and where should they go? ... this friend of mine worked with me, at this [research institution] ... how should she live? ... she has three children and a husband who works in a factory ... what should they do? ... they are not being paid salary ... you should blame the government, not the kiosks ... people are earning their bread. (I, 35, a homemaker, wife of a successful businessman)

Women as sexual objects and victims of violence

The fourth key trend of the era is rather new to the society and involves presenting *women as sexual objects and victims of violence*. As pointed out previously, political, cultural and socioeconomic changes in post-Soviet society brought in a reassessment of values in many domains, and, in particular, with regard to the visual image of women. The 'old familiar woman-comrade, dressed in the buttoned-up uniform, modest business suit or sexless gown of the milkmaid, house-painter or collective-farm girl ... [has changed] her representation from positive to negative, from plus to minus' (Lipovskaya, 1994, p. 123). Advertisements for everything from guns to computers are populated by seductive half-naked or barely clothed females. In the past ten years these images flooded movie and TV screens, commercials, billboards, newspapers, magazines, cartoons and, as a result, public imagination. Even job offers blatantly display objectification and ageism, as well as gender-discrimination: many professional vacancy descriptions directly specify that they prefer male candidates, while minimal skills office position ads 'unabashedly stipulate youth and beauty as the chief requisites for applicants. A typical want ad for a secretarial position specifies: "Not older than 25; striking appearance, long legs compulsory"', (Azhgikhina and Goscilo, 1996, p. 114). While all informants agree that young attractive females have an easier time finding jobs than the older ones, all underscore the limited range and the hidden agendas of such positions: often the ads also specify that the woman should be 'without hang-ups' (*bez kompleksov*), that is willing to perform sexual as well as clerical functions (Ries, 1997).

Not surprisingly, ageism and gender-discrimination, especially with regard to the job market, are among the issues most often raised in the interviews with the informants:

The first question they asked me at the job interview was how old I am and if I was married ... and they were interested in my age to see

how young I am, how much I can handle in terms of work and whether I am young enough to be the boss's mistress ... and whether I am married, they wanted to know, to see if I have children who would distract me. (E, 37, former librarian, unemployed)

And, you know, my age is, how should I say it, close to retirement, forty seven, so that with each year the hope of finding a new job is practically disappearing. (L, 47, a clerical worker in a Russian-American mission)

Exploitation of women's bodies is equally visible in the new social practices such as beauty contests, porn shows and exhibitions, mail-order bride businesses and hard-currency prostitution which has been on the rise since the late eighties. Sex equated with the female body is now discovered and used as a marketable commodity and an object of a displaced male violence. The years after perestroika witnessed the legalization and rapid spread of pornography on the screen and in the media: erotic and pornographic publications are on sale everywhere, and video salons are flooded with erotic and porn films. These Western and home-made publications and films link sex and violence, creating a contrast between male aggression and female passivity, blaming women for their own fate and often suggesting that women enjoy their subordination and suffering, often represented as rape and sexual coercion. In the majority of the cases, this debasement of women not only goes unpunished, but is often-times presented as a logical development in the process of democratization and Westernization of the post-Soviet society.

However, to accept that Russia at last is having a 'sexual revolution', modeled on its Western counterpart, would be an oversimplification. As pointed out by Shreeves (1992, p. 139), the concern for the liberation of women's sexuality is essentially male-defined: women's sexuality is to be liberated in terms of the male viewer-definer-judge. The tendency to equate women with other necessary or luxurious objects is evident in media interviews with Russian men, including a well-known, formerly dissident, writer Erofeev, who offers high praise to the new social practices:

Beauty contests strike a blow at the traditional 'Soviet' image of a woman ... a Communist Stakhanovite in overalls whose principal virtue was her modesty. In today's image there is an emphasis on the erotic element, on physical beauty, on initiative, cleverness, elegance and efficiency. (Erofeev, 1990: 17)

A vivid example of objectifying and misogynistic Russian male discourse is an interview with a successful businessman Viktor Bulankin, director of a fashion-show theatre 'Siberia', in a men's magazine *Egoist*, which invited Bulankin to state his opinions on the subject of 'cars and women'. This interview, entitled 'He chose Audi', not only equates the two but gives preference to the car, the only permanent and special object in Bulankin's life, while women, referred to by a derogatory term '*devochki*' (chicks, girls, babes), are portrayed as disposable and secondary at best:

But most importantly – a car is also erotic! How many chicks were kissed in the car! And not only kissed, there are some other aspects there. I consider it to be particularly cool to have some kind of relations in a car ... In terms of intimate relations, the car also gives a chance to make a mistake ... it is rather difficult [for a chick] to get out of the car while it's moving. Also, there is such a useful little thing as a seat belt. Some people fixate a victim of their love fantasies with handcuffs ... And here it is normal, the girl has a seat belt on, the car is moving at maximal speed. (*Egoist*, 1997, 1, p. 4).

Even more moderate men support a double standard when it comes to gender relations. When asked about husbands cheating on their wives, a 'bachelor-of-the-month' young surgeon Andrei Akopian responded:

A woman shouldn't focus on cheating. She wants an intelligent, handsome, well-to-do, sexy [man], who would belong just to her. That just doesn't happen. A smart woman wouldn't be scared off by an affair. (*Krestianka*, February 1998, 2, p. 82)

The view that a woman is to blame for everything, including her husband's cheating, is propagated by many women's magazines including *Gorzhanka*, where the following advice was offered in an advice rubric to a woman whose husband was having an affair:

Try to analyse your relationship with your husband and to see its flaws, what *forced* him to look for warmth and love elsewhere ... You probably take care of housework and the children. You walk around in an old washed out housedress (no money for anything decent) and constantly bump into your husband lying on the couch. A typical and unavoidable situation, but *the key is how you treat your responsibilities* ... Smile, be attentive and tender, call him by his first

name ... *if you will treat him and the couch on which he is lying as the centre of the universe, he will come back to you.* (*Gorzhanka*, May 1998, p. 15; my italics)

Voicing chauvinistic opinions, like the ones above, in public is quite acceptable in Russia, according to Iliia Bezouglyi, the editor-in-chief of the Russian edition of *Men's Health*. Like many other Russians nowadays, he feels free to say what is on his mind and, in doing so, to make fun of American concepts of sexual harassment and political correctness:

People in the States, they watch their mouth much more, they behave themselves, political correctness, all that. Over here, a man is still a man, and it's much easier to be a man here. You can be a total male chauvinist pig here and feel perfectly fine. It's very accepted – by women too. (*Russian Life*, May 1998, p. 12)

In an attempt to resist and challenge these displays of patriarchal masculinity, many post-Soviet women, including the study participants, engage in the ever-popular discourse of male bashing, their only means to deconstruct the image of an all-powerful male, so dear to the establishment:

[Men] understand that there are less of them, so that they are valuable ... and that there are lines to get them and they are very proud of it ... any scanky guy, riding a subway, unshaved with his dirty cheeks and a runny nose looks at women choosing ... well, which one am I going to choose today? ... how many women will get in line after me? (E, 37, former librarian, unemployed)

However, many, especially younger, women appear to have internalized the woman-as-a-sexual-object discourse: the monetary awards and social privileges of selling one's looks entice constantly increasing numbers of women into beauty contests, Miss Bust or Miss Legs competitions, pornographic modelling and prostitution, at times euphemistically referred to as 'hostessing' and 'performance' at casinos and nightclubs. Moreover, several recent polls reveal that prostitution is regarded as the most prestigious profession by young women. This fact is not surprising as an image of a prostitute, especially hard-currency one, has been promoted and glorified by the media in the last ten years. Presented as a variation on a Cinderella theme, an all-times favourite cultural script in Russia, a series of Soviet and post-Soviet

films such as *Intergirl*, *Upper Class*, *Showboy*, *To Die for Love* and others present an idealized and romanticized image of a prostitute, most often a hard-currency call girl, who gets to marry a well-to-do foreigner and to live abroad. And while films like *Pretty Woman* are also made in the US, it is only in Russia that the majority of the young female spectators identify with the female protagonists and crave all that seems to be available to them: 'dollars, cars, fashionable clothes, good food, cosmetics, relationships, the attention and admiration of men. And the most important thing – the chance of catching a foreign husband' (Stishova, 1996, p. 193).

Non-encouragement of lesbian and feminist identities

Finally, in addition to working mothers and female politicians, there are some other subjectivities that Russian women are not encouraged to adopt *lesbian and feminist identities* among them. Since 1917 'feminism' has been a pejorative term in the country, as liberated Soviet women were supposed to be the opposite of the oppressed Western ones. Feminism was officially denounced by the Soviets 'as an example of bourgeois self-indulgence which served to divide the working class' (Buckley, 1992, p. 215). No feminist publications, either translated or local, were allowed in the country, and all attempts at home-grown feminism were suppressed and persecuted as ideologically alien, anti-Soviet and anti-family. Most importantly, feminist questions were usually opposed to 'real problems', shared by men and women in the Soviet society. As a result, Soviet women were very suspicious of Western feminists, the contacts between Western and Soviet women's organizations were few and far between, and fraught with misunderstandings. As one of the few Russian feminists succinctly summarized: 'Soviet women [were] convinced that Western women have no problems and therefore they participate in the women's movement, while Western women [were] bewildered that Soviet women have so many problems, but no movement' (Lissyutkina, 1993, p. 274). Comparing the goals of women in the two societies, a well-known writer Tatiana Tolstaia suggested that while the American feminists were fighting for the right to work in coal mines, Russian women were fighting *not* to do so (Gray, 1989).

As a result of glasnost and perestroika, and the ensuing de-Sovietization, the eighties and, especially, the nineties witnessed an appearance of several women-only and feminist groups, such as Sajudis in Lithuania or Lotus (League for Emancipation from Sexual Stereotypes) in Moscow. The goals of these groups do not always mirror

their Western counterparts or even coincide: while Sajudis women attempt to recapture traditional family values denied to them by the Soviet regime, many radical groups in Moscow and St Petersburg attempt to challenge traditional patriarchal values, to inform the public about the feminist movement and to transform gender roles in the post-Soviet society. Since 1990, the new feminist scholars created several Centres for Gender Studies, in order to investigate women's situation in post-Soviet society, to offer academic women's studies courses, to disseminate feminist literature and to open up alternative discourses based on the concepts of *fakticheskoe neravenstvo* (factual inequality), *muzhekratiia* (male dominated bureaucracy), and *podchinennoe polozenie* (subjugated position) (Buckley, 1992). They have also organized several national and international conferences and events, among them Independent Women's Forums in Dubna. More often than not, however, their efforts are met with the typical mistrust that any -ism elicits from people, who under so many years of the Soviet rule grew suspicious of any kind of organized activity, movement or ideology, especially one proclaiming 'equal rights'. An example of such a misreading is a polemic provoked by the publication of the 'women's issue' of the journal *Inostrannaia Literatura* (Foreign Literature) which, among other pieces, published an extract from Naomi Wolf's *Beauty Myth* (1991). The categorical tone and polemic style of Wolf's article, representative of Western feminist criticism, evoked for the Soviet readers the directives set forth by the Communist Party publications, and, thus, provoked unmitigated resistance (Azhgikhina and Goscilo, 1996).

The post-Soviet media provide little if any unbiased information about the feminist movement, in the recent years they mounted multiple anti-feminist attacks, whereby the authors paint a shallow and sensationalist portrait of feminism (often equating it with lesbianism and men-hating) and argue that for Russian women to become feminists means 'to "lose their femininity" and cease to be attractive to men' (Marsh, 1996b, p. 6). As a result, 'even otherwise enlightened Russians [conceive] of feminists as vengeful, mustached hags or harridans thirsting for the wholesale metaphorical (if not literal) castration of men, intent on crushing or replacing them so as to gratify their lust for power, compensate for their self-doubts, or enact their lesbian inclinations' (Goscilo, 1996, p. 11). Having internalized gendered ideologies of oppression, Russian women resist the concept of constructed identity and often propagate the same inequities that marginalize them and represent social constructs – femininity, motherhood, domesticity – as biological ones. For them, feminism smacks of Soviet emancipa-

tion, the main reason behind the double burden, while new femininities represent liberation: the right not to work (previously nonexistent) and the possibility to finally embrace Western consumerism, an important aspect of 'things that were formerly forbidden and, therefore, must be wonderful' (Azhgikhina and Goscolo, 1996).

Often, Russian women's subservient position and self-sacrifice are turned into a matter of national pride in comparison with the 'cold attitudes' of Western women, as seen below in the interviews with a popular TV hostess Natalia Darialova and a successful businesswoman Taisiia Suvorova, the editor-in-chief of *On-Ona* (He-She) magazine. Suvorova suggests that many foreigners are attracted by Russian women because they don't get any warmth, compassion and attention from their own, 'the readiness to get up and guess the desire of one's husband' (*Russian Life*, March 1998, p. 13):

Nothing similar happens in America or Europe ... Maybe it is because the Russian woman has been faced with the necessity to preserve herself ... to remain attractive in spite of everything, not dare to say to her husband in spite of terrible fatigue the phrase which is on the lips of many Western women: 'Tomorrow, tomorrow, not today'. I don't know of any woman in my country who would allow herself such a phrase. Our woman goes for everything for the sake of preserving relations with the one she chose. Me saying to my husband – give me a break, leave me alone?! We need constantly to do some heroic deed, I don't even call it sacrifice or immolation ... Who else is capable of this? (*Russian Life*, March 1998: 12–13)

Darialova, interviewed upon her return from the US, called the upper-class New York women 'steel she-wolves':

They are very well groomed, very well dressed, but their faces are so angry and focused that they simply scare you. Even though American women achieved a lot in their fight for equality with men, some strive to be like men too much. For example, they don't allow men to help them with their coats or to open doors for them. It is a mistake. Men and women are created different by nature, and our social roles are different. (*Rabotnitsa*, June 1997, p. 22)

The notion of 'sexual harassment', ever-present in Western discourse, is not warmly received on the Russian soil either. A recent article in the Russian edition of *Cosmopolitan*, entitled 'Sexual harassment the

Russian way' (*Domogatel'stvo po-russki*), ridicules an American feminist who misinterpreted and overdramatized a Russian man's invitation for her to come up to his hotel room:

Honestly, I don't understand their laws! So, a guy called a woman, invited [her] to come over. Our [woman] would have elegantly told him to go to hell (or not so elegantly, depending on her upbringing) or ... Why not, if a guy is cute? But to imagine a lady who woke up her friends in the middle of the night in order to spend all night writing a stupid complaint, is rather difficult! ... I would venture a guess that our women treat men's interest in them rather positively! (*Cosmopolitan*, April 1998, pp. 85–86)

The female author of the article emphasizes her point by telling an apocryphal story of another American feminist who came to Russia as an angry emancipee, rejecting all male attempts at gallantry, and then met a macho Russian man who turned her into a happy feminine woman, who couldn't make a decision without his advice or put a coat on without his help.

Nevertheless, despite the ideologies and attitudes propagated by the media, and without associations with any feminist movement, the women in the study were able to draw on their own discursive resources to pinpoint and analyse the problems of gender-discrimination, marginalization and feminization of poverty in the post-Soviet society:

Here the discrimination against women is terrible ... with regard to women, this country probably has the most barbaric attitude among other European countries, so that a woman ... well, even during socialist times there was this two fold attitude toward women ... on the one hand, the woman was required to be a leading worker, to work non-stop, forgetting about her family ... on the other hand, she was required to constantly have children and be married ... so that if a girl didn't get married by the age of 25, everyone would start pointing at her saying that she is abnormal, that she is not married ... so women are only given low-paid jobs ... they can't get ahead in business, because she is constantly pushed to the background, it is emphasized that she is not a complete human being ... even to see how men treat women, and women-parliament-deputies: they are looked down upon ... we understand that we will need many, many years before a woman can take an appropriate place here ... (E, 37, former librarian, unemployed)

The larger critical theme that unifies Russian and Ukrainian women's narratives is not simply a criticism of the quality and pace of modern change, rather it is an ongoing contestation of gendered social practices of post-Soviet society and a reflection on their own positions in it:

[These changes] turned out to be rather sad, because I didn't manage to fit in into this life, I don't fit in academically, and psychologically I don't fully fit in either, it must be my age too ... (K, 49, scientist turned patent consultant)

All of the participants in the study remarked on the difficulty of fitting in, tying together the concepts of gender, identity, financial status and employment:

No, I didn't find a space for myself in our society. I tried, very hard, wasted a lot of time and energy and health to change my profession somehow, to find some niche in our new business. I understood that I won't be a businesswoman ... I also knew very well that I could be an office worker, a secretary, I had the necessary background. I went to a special school, studied languages, but then I understood that no one values my efforts, my work ... I understand that the society is pushing me out ... (E, 37, former librarian, unemployed)

So, I am thinking now, it is time to go back to work [the informant had a child and stayed home with him for a while], but I have a gap ... not only some things are forgotten, but now everything is computerized ... go somewhere, offer myself, you see, I have some acquaintances, connections ... well, not really connections ... but I wouldn't be able to beg someone, please help me find a job ... it is embarrassing, I am thirty five ... open the newspaper, the jobs are offered to twenty five year olds, cute, with legs all the way to the neck, you see ... (I, 35, a homemaker, a wife of a successful businessman)

The gendered futures of their children don't seem any more promising than their own:

[I want my daughter] to be able to get education, have a child, raise him, live a regular life ... here it's impossible... here [young people] can't study, can't find jobs ... for girls it's prostitution ... [for men] racketeering or something like that, black market business ... (L, 47, a clerical worker in a Russian-American mission)

This generation of women, clearly at the crossroads, is forced to employ contradictory discourses to make sense of what is happening in their society and to them personally. While unable to support the new hegemonic constructions of gender, these women cannot afford to remain on the margins of the society, thus, they continue to negotiate their own positioning, carefully balancing their act between assimilation and resistance. But then, it is nothing new for them: their lives have always been a 'balancing act' or, as Gray (1989) stated in the title of her study of Soviet women, they have been forever 'walking the tightrope'.

Conclusion

Based on the evidence presented in the chapter and on the previous work carried out by Western and post-Soviet feminist scholars (Edmondson, 1992; Marsh, 1996a; Pilkington, 1996; Posadskaya, 1994a), I have argued that an understanding of sociopolitical and socioeconomic conditions is critical for capturing the range of subjectivities available to women prior to and following the collapse of the Soviet Union. I demonstrated that the changes taking place in post-Soviet countries led to marginalization and objectification of women under the ideology of the 'purely womanly mission', which, in turn, was influenced by the demands and pressures of the free market. An analysis of the media discourses demonstrates that while many subjectivities pertinent to the Soviet era are currently questioned and dismantled, new identities – such as a happy homemaker, a hard-currency prostitute, a beauty queen, a shuttle, successful businesswoman or a wife of a New Russian businessman – are constructed and adopted, and moreover 'invested with merit and meaning' (Ries, 1997, p. 175). This analysis also demonstrated that historic and political changes in the country led to the current reconsideration and renarrativization of gender equality and women's role in the Soviet Union by the media together with other aspects of Soviet history. Most importantly, the study documented a shift as well as implicit continuity between pre-1990 and post-1990 subjectivities available to Russian and Ukrainian women. The shift is linked to radical historical, political and especially socioeconomic changes in the former Soviet Union, while the continuity was explained by the predominant patriarchal ideologies reinforced by the masculinization of the market place. The analysis of life story interviews with Russian and Ukrainian women suggests that although targets of the new ideological campaign for 'return to the eternal

womanly mission', post-Soviet women, do not uncritically assume new identities and positions, their attitude is both that of assimilation and of resistance, just like they always assimilated to and resisted official discourses of the Communist ideology.

Note

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6 Control: Accounting for the Lost Innocence

Monika Kostera

Making sense of control

Control is one of the key terms in management; it is the foundation for accounting. With the intensive dissemination of Western management models and ideas after 1989, it is also one of the most commonly used words in management education and consulting. Most of the existing courses and textbooks in Poland can be classified as mainstream messages, where the reflexivity about the sense words carry is minimal, and the consideration of moral and emotional effects that ideas have on the Polish cultural context is not overwhelming. As I became interested in the word 'control' the meaning it carries, its emotional side and the context it is embedded in, I decided to collect stories people tell about 'control'.

The narrative approach in organization studies

Having said this, I owe the reader an explanation of how I see the role of stories within contemporary science and organization studies. Jean-François Lyotard (1979/1984) wrote about narrative knowledge as opposed to the logo-scientific knowledge. The former is a pre- and post-modern concept, the latter a modern invention. In organization studies, the narrative approach in organization studies is increasingly gaining popularity (for example, Czarniawska, 1997). The interest concerns both the academic text as a genre (Kociatkiewicz and Kostera, 1999) and the themes typically being studied by the management scientists (such as organization (Philips, 1995); institutional identity (Czarniawska, 1997); and gender (Czarniawska and Calás, 1998)).

In 'Narration or science? Collapsing the division in organization studies' Barbara Czarniawska-Joerges (1995) explores the links between