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MEN IN CRISIS IN RUSSIA

The Role of Domestic Marginalization

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A key feature of economic transition in Russia has been the demoralization of men at the lower end of the labor market. Rather than focusing on the labor market directly, this article looks at how men's position within the household influences their ability to deal with their employment difficulties. Men's main role within the household is as primary breadwinners, and there are few other tasks in the urban Russian household that are seen as masculine. Using longitudinal qualitative data, the authors argue that men who are unable to perform as breadwinners have their labor market problems compounded by a damaging domestic marginalization.

Keywords: *Russia; masculinity; breadwinner; household; economic transition*

Men are kind of confused after all these reforms and crises. Things get to them more than they do to a woman. She's more stable in the face of any crisis.

—Marina, unemployed single mother, Samara

It is not necessary to look very far to encounter bleak assessments of the ability of Russian men to cope with the privations of economic reform. Whether in everyday conversation or in interviews, Russian women frequently express their despair or exasperation with men's reactions to hardship (Ashwin 2002; Kiblitckaya 2000b). Academic commentators have also noted the difficulty that many men appear to be experiencing in coping with economic change (Burawoy et al. 2000; Kiblitckaya 2000a; Rotkirch 2000). Such concern is not without foundation:

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Russian men have been dying earlier, drinking more, and committing suicide in greater numbers since the end of the Soviet period.¹ Unemployment, falling real wages, and a dramatic increase in inequality are all obvious culprits. Rather than focusing on the labor market directly, however, this article looks at how men's role within the household influences their ability to deal with problems they encounter within the labor market. To this end, it focuses on the experience of poor and unemployed men, using data drawn from a longitudinal qualitative research project on gender differences in employment behavior during the economic transition in Russia.

This focus on the household was in part suggested by our respondents' own analysis of their problems coping with unemployment or poverty. For example, asked about the relative impact of unemployment on men and women, these two men were convinced that it was harder for men. Their argument centered on the position of men within the household:

Now it's hard for both. Now you won't last long on one pay packet. . . . Probably in purely psychological terms, it's harder for men. A woman, you see, she's all the same sort of at home, she's got more work to do in the home than a man. But a man's only got heavy work, or a hobby if he takes one up afterwards. Knitting, sewing or something. (Mikhail, Syktyvkar)

A man takes it harder. Because he ought to bring in the money, you see. It means both moral and financial difficulties. A woman is, generally speaking, a housewife, and if she's a housewife, all well and good, but if it's a man, then he's a househusband [*domokhozyain*]. If a man supports her, then why not? But for him, it's harder in purely psychological terms if he can't feed the family and on top of that he has to sit at home. (Pavel, Syktyvkar)

These comments could be interpreted as attempts to assert men's superior claim to work in a time of unemployment. But both the men concerned had wives in full-time employment, and, as the first respondent noted, "you won't last long on one pay packet." More interesting is what the quotations say about men's position in the household. A woman is seen as being "at home" in the home; she is, even if she works, "all the same sort of at home," a "housewife." Men, by contrast, are not seen as having a role or a place in the home. This is highlighted by the comment that if a man is at home, "then he's a *domokhozyain*." The word *domokhozyain* sounds strange in this context. Househusband is an inadequate translation because in English, this refers to a position that is gaining social acceptability, whereas the respondent uses the word to draw attention to the self-evident inappropriateness of a man being confined to what is a woman's place. It is this sense of double exclusion—from work and from the home—which is the central focus of this article. Our aim is not to compare men's and women's experience of reform, nor to minimize the difficulties of women. Rather, we are concerned to investigate the marginality of poor and unemployed men in the Russian household and the implications of this in terms of their ability to cope with unemployment or poverty. Our main argument is that men's status in the household is defined by their role as primary breadwinners and

that when this role is lost, it is very difficult for them to define a new position in the domestic sphere.

The article also explores the more complicated issue of the constraints poor men face in negotiating their place within the household. Our study proceeds from a nondeterminist understanding of gender as “something evoked, created and sustained day-by-day” (Thompson and Walker 1989, 865), but it also shows that the pressures to “do gender” (West and Zimmerman 1987) in the accepted way are enormous. As West and Zimmerman pointed out, while in one sense, “it is individuals who ‘do’ gender—it is a situated doing, carried out in the virtual or real presence of others who are presumed to be oriented to its production” (1987, 126). In working-class Russia, individuals doing gender are acting not so much on a presumption of the normative orientations of others as an ironclad guarantee.

DATA AND METHOD

This article is based on data from a longitudinal qualitative research project designed to examine gender differences in employment behavior. The research traced the labor market activity of specially selected groups of men and women through a consecutive series of semistructured in-depth interviews. One hundred twenty men and 120 women were selected and interviewed at six-month intervals for a period of two years. The research was carried out in four cities: Moscow, Ul'yanovsk, Samara, and Syktyvkar. This article is based on an analysis of the first three rounds of interviews with men from Samara and Syktyvkar. It focuses on those respondents (17 in all) who by the third stage of research had lost the status of main breadwinner.

The Samara sample was drawn from the registered unemployed, and the Syktyvkar sample from the registered poor. In Samara, the research team visited federal employment centers and selected respondents from those attending to register or reregister as unemployed, while in Syktyvkar, a list of the registered poor in the city was obtained and used to draw the sample. Respondents were selected to ensure that all educational and working age groups were represented. The interviews were conducted by teams of Russian sociologists,² and full transcripts were prepared (in Russian). Since Russian flats are small, it was not always possible to conduct interviews in private. Interviewers took advantage of the presence of other household members to elicit additional information but also attempted to conduct at least part of the interview away from the ears of others. The two main blocks of questions concerned labor market behavior (including work history, job search efforts, and job satisfaction) and issues relating to the household (including breadwinning arrangements, the domestic division of labor, and the domestic impact of changes in the labor market situation of household members). The interviews used for this article were coded by Sarah Ashwin using ATLAS.ti 4.1 for Windows in a two-part process involving initial a priori categorization by subject matter, followed by more detailed inductive coding within the initial categories. In

addition, a record of each respondent's trajectory was prepared to facilitate the analysis of outcomes in terms of employment and well-being. The latter was judged on the basis of respondents' own assessment of their situation and the observation of the interviewers. Respondents are referred to with pseudonyms.

In addition to this, the article also refers to findings from the 1998 Institute of Comparative Labour Relations Research household survey. This was carried out in Samara, Syktyvkar, Kemerovo, and Lyubersky. Random samples were drawn in each city, and the working-age adults and working pensioners in 4,000 households (6,000 individuals) were surveyed. For more details, see Clarke (1999, 6-7); the data are available on request at <http://www.warwick.ac.uk/russia>.

Before presenting our results, we explain why the role of main breadwinner is so important to men's status in the Russian household through an analysis of the Soviet legacy. We then employ our data to consider the fate of those who lose this role. Only a small minority attempt or manage to define a new place for themselves within the domestic sphere, and by focusing on these atypical cases, we are able to reveal the barriers preventing such transformations. Finally, we highlight the dramatic consequences for those who find themselves redundant at both work and home.

THE PRECONDITIONS OF MEN'S DOMESTIC MARGINALITY

In 1988, the Soviet Union had the highest female labor force participation rate of any industrial society. More than 85 percent of working-age women were engaged in full-time work or study, and women constituted 51 percent of all workers and employees (Lapidus 1988, 88). How did breadwinning end up constituting men's main link to the household in a country where the dual-earner family was the norm?

The Soviet state promoted and institutionalized a distinctive gender order in which the roles of men and women were defined according to the perceived needs of the communist state.³ Work was central to the Soviet project and was defined by the 1918 constitution as "a duty of all citizens of the republic" (Akhapkin 1970, 156). Work not only was seen as an economic duty of men and women but also was considered crucial to their social and political integration. Women, however, were also deemed to have a demographic duty to the state, and correspondingly, their prescribed role was that of worker-mothers. At the same time, they were expected to be household managers, since early Bolshevik dreams of the transfer of domestic functions from the private to the public sphere were never realized except to a limited extent in the realm of child care. None of the Bolsheviks, not even Aleksandra Kollantai, challenged the idea of domestic work as inalienably feminine (Ashwin 2000, 11-12). This acceptance of supposedly natural sexual difference on the part of the new communist elite informed both the terms on which women were integrated into the labor force—as second-class workers (Filtzer 1992)—and what was expected of them as wives and mothers.

Men, meanwhile, had an at once more limited and higher status role to play. They were to serve as leaders, managers, soldiers, and workers. In the early post-revolutionary period, the new Bolshevik authorities perceived the traditional patriarch as a bulwark of the old regime, a little tsar whose influence needed to be restricted. Initially, the state struggle with the patriarch was conducted through a combination of legislation and coercion that served to undermine male prerogative within the family (Kukhterin 2000). After the compromise with the new Soviet family in the 1930s, this campaign was relaxed, but the private power of men continued to be regarded with suspicion. This distrust found its expression in a notable silence about men's domestic role: While mothers were glorified, Soviet men were not allowed to compete with the father figures who led the party. Men's self-realization was thus to be confined to the public sphere, where their dominance continued to be seen as legitimate and natural.

Men's estrangement from domestic and caring work meant that they were only weakly integrated into the Soviet family. As Anna Rotkirch put it, "the frailty of men's presence and position in the family has been a constant ingredient in the everyday knowledge of Soviet people" (2000, 111). Soviet social reproduction was matrifocal with everyday family life relying "heavily on cross-generational help and caregiving relations, taking place mostly between women. This further lessened the functional necessity of the husband and also helped to estrange him as a parent" (Rotkirch 2000, 112). Thus, while the public position of men depended on their standing at work, the respect they were accorded within the household depended chiefly on their role as primary breadwinners. The latter role retained its importance as a component of masculine identities in the Soviet era since men tended to earn more than women (Kiblitckaya 2000a). Although the term *kormilets* (breadwinner) came to mean only primary earner, it lost none of its potency as a definition of men's main familial duty. Meanwhile, the centrality of work in men's lives was further compounded by the absence of an autonomous civil society and the lack of opportunities for public sociability beyond the workplace in Soviet Russia. As Sergei Kukhterin put it, for men unable to realize themselves in the world of work, "there was little on offer" (2000, 85).

Has anything changed now that the state no longer rigidly prescribes gender roles from above? So far, the main elements of the Soviet gender order are being reproduced in postcommunist Russia despite the collapse of the state that underwrote them. The dual-earner family in which the man is the chief breadwinner and the woman takes primary responsibility for household management remains the norm in Russia.⁴ Women have not, contrary to expectations, voluntarily left the labor force in large numbers and still compose more than 47 percent of the economically active population (Goskomstat 2000c, 65). Meanwhile, according to the Russian Labor Force Survey, men constitute a marginal majority of the unemployed (Goskomstat 2000a, 180), and this has consistently been the case since the first Labor Force Survey was carried out in 1992.

Soviet norms regarding work and family still command wide acceptance. Both men and women consider that men should perform the role of main breadwinner.

Seventy-two percent of women in our entire sample of 240 thought that men should take primary (but not sole) responsibility for providing for the family, as did 79 percent of men. The corollary of this is that women are expected to take primary responsibility for the home. Sixty-five percent of women in our study, and 47 percent of men, thought that women should bear primary responsibility for running the household.

The idea that women should run the household is deeply ingrained, and attempts to question why women should shoulder most of the domestic burden when both partners work often result in confusion, as can be seen in the following exchange:

- Interviewer: Who should take primary responsibility for providing for the family?
 Pavel (Syktyvkar): Both [the man and the woman].
 Interviewer: Who should take primary responsibility for running the household?
 Pavel: The wife.
 Interviewer: So a husband and wife should earn the same, but she alone should take responsibility for running the household?
 Pavel: Of course, who on earth else?
 Interviewer: And why?
 Pavel: She's a more responsible person than a man. . . . A woman is by her nature more responsible for the family.
 Interviewer: Why?
 Pavel: Well how should I know? . . . That's how it's supposed to be.
 Interviewer: Says who?
 Pavel: That's how things have been set up.
 Interviewer: By whom? In the *Domostroi*³ do you mean?
 Pavel: Yes, yes [laughs].

As has been noted, 43 percent of the men in the total sample said that responsibility for running the household should be joint, but it should be stressed that those who opted for this formulation nearly always had in mind a strict division of labor in which their role was confined to carrying out "masculine" tasks. In modern flats and urban houses, the only work that men see as unequivocally their own is carrying out repairs and, in some cases, taking out the rubbish. As one respondent acknowledged,

A man is a man, and where there's dishes to be washed up and cooking and clearing up to be done—that's a woman's job. And then in the town, of course, it's for a woman to clear up, wash and cook—that's all up to the woman. In the town, you haven't even got the upkeep of the house and garden, or any animal husbandry. But, look, in the countryside—there you've got the upkeep of the house and garden and perhaps animals, there you won't get by without a man. There in the countryside of course the man plays the primary role in the household and the woman—she's a helper. (Boris, Syktyvkar)

This respondent explains that in rural Russia, men still do have a role to play in the household. This is also the case in urban "private" houses, which usually lack modern conveniences such as running water. In both cases, there is a significant amount

of “men’s work” to be done: Water must be fetched and the boiler lit and tended to, while in rural areas, added to these duties are tasks connected with domestic food production. Yet the vast majority of the Russian population lives in modern urban accommodations,⁶ and as the respondent all but admits, given the currently accepted domestic division of labor, men are virtually redundant within this type of dwelling. It is therefore not surprising that studies of the domestic division of labor in Russia have repeatedly shown that women do the vast majority of housework.⁷ In addition, women take the leading role in household management and tend to run the household budget (Clarke 2002). This again underlines the point that, as in the Soviet era, men’s only claim to be head of the family is their role as main breadwinner.

Although he may be the chief financier of family life, a man is often completely disengaged from the day-to-day operation of his household. As one respondent, to whom we will return, explained,

I brought home the money and gave it to my wife. Of course, if [we were buying] something big, then yes: we discussed it in advance, kind of saved up. And where the rest went—I didn’t poke my nose into that business. I took my dinner money and that was all. Perhaps that was bad really. Now I regret it. You need to kind of take an interest, it brings you closer together, makes the family more solid, than when she discusses everything with her mother and I’m just the person who puts the money on the bedside table. That is, there wasn’t any solidarity. (Ivan, Samara)

This quotation highlights very clearly that not only does a man’s standing within the household depend on his role as breadwinner, but the latter is often the only role he plays in the family.

In a context of economic collapse, this leaves men rather exposed. Unemployment, falling real wages, and wage delays have all undermined the ability of men to perform as providers. Indeed, some of the most demoralized men in our study perceived the masculine breadwinner norm to be breaking down altogether. As one such respondent put it,

Overall, I feel sorry for women—men don’t love them properly. They can’t provide them with anything. A woman is forced to be constantly waiting for something from a man, and then there’s the snotty children running around, always wanting to eat. And what about him? He can’t find work, and if he finds it, he doesn’t get paid. (Nikolai, Syktyvkar)

The vulnerability of men in this situation is paradoxically increased by the strong attachment of Russian women to the labor market. Women who are confident in their own earning ability can come to view nonearning men as superfluous. In contemporary Russia, “men need a good income in order to retain their position in the family” (Lytkina 2001, 64).

TABLE 1: Hours Spent on Housework in Working-Age Couples (N = 1,275 couples)

	<i>Average Weekly Hours of Housework</i>	
	<i>Husband</i>	<i>Wife</i>
Both employed (<i>n</i> = 866)	8.7	23.9
Only husband employed (<i>n</i> = 245)	8.7	35.9
Only wife employed (<i>n</i> = 128)	15.4	22.1
Neither employed (<i>n</i> = 36)	12.8	34.0
Mean	9.5	26.3

SOURCE: Institute of Comparative Labour Relations Research Household Survey (1998).

WHEN THE MONEY STOPS COMING IN . . .

How do men respond when their position as main breadwinner is challenged, either through declining earnings or job loss? The analysis of the following sections concentrates on the 17 men in the Samara and Syktyvkar samples whose low-paid employment or unemployment by Stage 2 or 3 of the research meant that they were unable to play the role of main breadwinners in their households.⁸ Of these, 13 were suffering extreme demoralization expressed either in depression or drunkenness by Stage 3 of the research. Four were exhibiting neither of these symptoms and appeared to be coping well. Significantly, 3 of these men had managed to carve out a new role for themselves within the household. In contrast, none of those in the demoralized group had done this.

This appears to show that the household is an important sphere in which men could potentially gain a sense of efficacy and identity. The cases of those men who managed to carve out an alternative source of meaning and area of competency in the household reveal that this can, in particular circumstances, compensate men for the loss of status of main breadwinner. But in general, men do not turn to the household when they lose their status as breadwinners. Data from the 1998 Institute of Comparative Labour Relations Research survey show that unemployed and economically inactive men marginally increase the hours they spend doing housework, but their spouses continue to bear the primary domestic load (see Table 1).

Even in the most extreme cases, where unemployed or economically inactive men are supported by their wives, they do not in general compensate for this by taking primary responsibility for the housework. Such men do on average only about 7 hours a week more housework than their employed counterparts. Unemployed or economically inactive women, meanwhile, do on average 12 hours more housework than their employed counterparts, who themselves already devote on average almost three times as many hours to housework as men in households where both partners work. This is in line with research in countries such as the United Kingdom, which suggests that following unemployment, men's contribution to housework increases only marginally (Binns and Mars 1984; Morris 1988, 1990; Pahl 1984; Waddington et al. 1998).

THE BARRIERS TO MEN'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE HOUSEHOLD

This section will consider the obstacles to men's taking on what are traditionally seen as women's duties, while the following section will look at what is revealed by the successful attempts to assume a position within the domestic arena.

The first case to be considered is that of a former pilot who has attempted, in his own words, to take up the role of "housewife." This experiment, however, can be judged a failure since the respondent, Stanislav, was exhibiting increasing problems with alcohol by Stage 3 of the research, while his wife was suffering from severe stress. Despite the poverty of his family, Stanislav, who had been granted early retirement, did not want to look for work since this would involve doing work of far lower status than that to which he had become accustomed.⁹ Instead, he considered himself to have swapped roles with his wife, who was supporting the family through her work as a junior research chemist at a regional research institute. During the second interview, his wife declared herself to be satisfied with this situation since it meant her husband could keep an eye on their two adolescent sons, but by the third stage of the research, it was clear that she was not only finding this role reversal highly stressful but also experiencing it as far less complete than did her husband. The following exchange neatly captures the couple's different perceptions of their situation:

Husband: At home, I do practically all the female tasks: I'm the only one who washes the dishes; I do practically all the cooking; I do the floor.

Wife: Yes, he helps do the women's work . . .

Husband: What do you mean "helps"? I do it all! I only don't do the washing. Here I'm not a specialist. (Stanislav and Valentina, Syktyvkar)

By the time of the third interview, Valentina had developed a stress-related skin complaint and was supposed to be spending time in the hospital to recover. Despite having a "housewife" at home, however, she did not feel able to leave him to run the household in her absence and kept returning from the hospital:

Valentina: All the same, I feel uneasy. For example, today I got here and Stanislav's not here; he just got back from his mother's. What's more, after a drink or two, and it's already after eight.

Interviewer: Do you often come home?

Valentina: Not every day, but I try, all the same; you want to clear up the house and keep an eye on them.

Interviewer: Is that with permission, or secretly?

Valentina: Of course, I don't ask the doctors . . . I ask permission from the nurses; you see all women understand that men need to have an eye kept on them.

Valentina's unwillingness to delegate to her husband could be seen as purely related to his unreliability and problems with drink. Her husband's somewhat helpless comment about not being a "specialist" in washing clothes also lends support to

Valentina's perception that she is ultimately in charge of the household. But although questions of responsibility and competence are part of the story, the disagreement between Valentina and Stanislav goes beyond this. While Stanislav consistently defined himself as a "housewife" in interviews, his wife argued that he only "helped" with "women's work." She also emphasized that her continued control was in line with wider social norms when she asserted that "all women understand that men need to have an eye kept on them." In other parts of the interview, she commented on the tragic irony that she, a pilot's wife, was now the main earner in her family.

Local norms dictate that men should be primary breadwinners and only provide "help" to the woman who runs the household (Ashwin 2002). Disruption of this pattern can be disconcerting for those involved. Evidence from the women in our Samara sample whose husbands had taken a primary role in the household and left them with the responsibility for breadwinning provides further confirmation of this interpretation. Alla, for example, explaining that her husband was gradually taking on all the domestic responsibilities now that he was not working, complained,

It's even somehow unpleasant for me. I ask him, What are you doing, preparing to be a housewife or something? If I got up earlier, I could of course manage to do it all myself. I think a woman should do the domestic work, though with the help of her husband.

Natalya shared this sense of dissatisfaction: "How to put it? . . . It would be desirable for my husband to be the breadwinner. Of course. It's the normal psychology of women, that's what I think."

Many women consciously or unconsciously discourage men's participation in the domestic sphere, but the degree of discomfort experienced by men forced to perform what they see as women's work should also not be underestimated. The association between domesticity and femininity in Russian popular consciousness is very strong, and disruptions to prevailing norms can be disturbing for those involved. This can be strikingly illustrated by reference to the only man in our sample who has adopted a thoroughly feminine role. He is a widower with a young son, and he has taken it upon himself to maintain to the letter his late wife's standards in the household. He is one of the four respondents we judged to have successfully developed a domestic role, and he is far from demoralized. But although he enjoys and takes comfort in his closeness to his son, he does not find his new position easy:

Judge for yourself; you see, at home in the evening when there's a mother and a father, then how does the father usually reply to any question or request? "Go to mummy." Not because he's a bad father: He's got his responsibilities and tasks, and mummy, hers. She's closer to the children, to their upbringing. And here, where there isn't a mother, I do everything myself, and it's very hard, well, for a man—it's just really [hard]. Sometimes, I give you my word, you don't understand who you are—a woman or a man. (Igor, Syktyvkar)

Indeed, not only does Igor sometimes have doubts about his gender identity; the Russian sociologist who interviews him also finds his unusual situation hard to process at times. Because interviews with this respondent typically involved long descriptions of women's work, the interviewer confided that she found herself "thinking he's going to start talking about himself in the feminine."¹⁰ In a climate in which gender difference is relentlessly naturalized, performing a nontraditional role can present major challenges to the gender identity of the individual concerned. In this case, the respondent was able to justify this only because of the lack of a woman in his household.

There are thus major problems involved in men's attempting to deal with the loss of the status of breadwinner by doing more work in the home. First, women do not see men taking responsibility for the home as adequate compensation for their abdication of the role of main breadwinner. Not only is men's domestic competence in question, but implicitly, the ability of the woman to fulfill her duties is also thrown into doubt—as Alla's troubled comments reveal. That is, a role reversal offers little compensation and can even add insult to injury by compounding the destabilization of accepted gender relations within marriage. This tallies with research in other contexts such as the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia, which shows that role reversal is seen by women to compromise domestic standards and, more important, represents a threat to female power (Lamb et al. 1987; Morris 1990, 34; Russell 1987). Research has also shown that women's attempts to retain control of the domestic realm can be dispiriting for men who do attempt this transformation (Morris 1990, 33). This highlights the fact that playing such a role is unlikely to be a satisfying solution for men concerned: The experience of doing women's work is only likely to compound their sense of being "unmanned" by their loss of work or earnings, especially if their efforts are undermined or downplayed by their wives. Certainly, this seemed to apply in the case of the former pilot, as his drinking intensified over time. In short, the pressures discouraging men from playing a leading role in the household are very strong and emanate from both men and women.

ALTERNATIVES TO WORK-CENTRIC FORMS OF MASCULINE SELF-DEFINITION

Are there any socially legitimate "masculine" activities with which unemployed or economically inactive men not living in rural areas can replace paid work? Two of the three respondents who had managed to carve out a new role for themselves within the household can be said to have devised masculine alternatives to paid work. One, a former engineer, preferred economic inactivity to compromising his professional standards and, like the former pilot considered above, was dependent on his wife. He lived in a house that was, according to him, more than 100 years old and required major repairs. This provided him with a welcome alternative to paid work and also a means of justifying his decision not to work to his wife. As he

explained, "Your home—that's absolutely fundamental! My wife and I decided, what if we hired someone? But if we hired someone we worked it out—I won't earn that kind of money! There's simply no alternative" (Valery, Samara). Valery was very happy with his new occupation and was unfailingly cheerful during interviews. Nonetheless, it was clear that his decision was causing some marital strain by the third stage of our research. Valery had nearly finished his repairs and was being faced with the prospect of having nothing to do:

My wife—she understands everything, but I think that there's just a while before it starts. Because, it's understandable, it gets to her. She gets up in the morning, hurries to work, and I don't have to. Her friend comes round with her daughter and asks about it—and she's not comfortable about the fact that, yeh, all's not quite right. She feels uneasy. But at the moment, she's quiet. There is friction. Yes, I'll get a job.

Whether he will look for work is another question, but the example again highlights the strong pressure on men to perform as breadwinners. Even though this respondent had found a useful means of contributing to the household, he still felt that his wife disapproved of his withdrawal from the labor market.

The second example is provided by a former head designer in a construction institute. At the first stage of our study, he was unemployed, while his wife, an endocrinologist, was still practicing as a doctor even though she was past retirement age and on her pension. By the second interview, the respondent had also reached retirement age and was receiving a pension approximately equal to his wife's wages and pension combined. He had found a rewarding alternative to work in grandparenthood. As he explained,

Alexei (Samara): I already haven't worked for about one and a half years, you see. At first I missed it; well, my rhythm sort of changed. But now I'm used to it; it even seems that I haven't got any time. I get up, clear up a little bit, then by the time I've been out with my grandson, it's already lunchtime. And so with going here and there, the day is filled with something.

Interviewer: And has anything changed in your family?

Alexei: The only change is that I've got another granddaughter. . . . Before I went to get milk once a week, and now it's two or three times. I've started spending more time with my grandson. Now it's got warm, he and I go out for about three to three and a half hours nearly every day.

Since Alexei's response to economic activity did not appear to cause any tension in his family, this can be judged as the most successful attempt to sustain masculine identity in the absence of paid work considered here. But it should be stressed that his wife's acceptance of his new way of life is almost certainly conditioned by the respondent's status as a pensioner. Retirement (although not necessarily early retirement) is a socially legitimate form of economic inactivity and, in this case, one that provides a reasonable income. Meanwhile, although it is usually women who become professional grandparents after retirement (Rotkirch 2000, 121-23), being an active grandfather does not represent a major deviation from locally accepted

norms of masculinity, especially since the older child with whom he is spending so much time is a boy.

These examples reveal two things. On one hand, they show that the household can be a site of rewarding activity that compensates men for the loss of employment and breadwinner status. But on the other hand, they also reveal how hard it is for men to define a place and occupation within the household that do not violate local norms of masculinity. Both the respondents discussed above found themselves in particular circumstances in which it was possible for them to find a satisfying alternative to paid work. But few men have such choices available to them.

THE DOMESTIC MARGINALIZATION OF MEN AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

In the absence of such alternatives, men who lose the status of main breadwinner can feel excluded and redundant within their own homes. Often men react to this with a defiant retreat to the sofa, as in the case of the following unemployed man who was being supported by his wife:

Yuri (Samara): [My wife] runs the household.
 Interviewer: Who cooks?
 Yuri: My wife, of course.
 Interviewer: Who does the shopping?
 Yuri: My wife. . . .
 Interviewer: Don't you participate at all in domestic matters?
 Yuri: Not at all, I don't even clean the floor.
 Interviewer: What do you do all day?
 Yuri: Sleep on that sofa over there.

While nonparticipation in housework may do something to salvage the pride of unemployed men, it does nothing for their sense of efficacy or for their relationships. Above all, this depressed reaction gives physical expression to men's disconnection from domestic affairs.

When men have no domestic role other than breadwinner, not only are they vulnerable to symbolic redundancy but they also risk physical exclusion from the household. Three of the 17 men considered here had been left by their wives after the financial balance of the relationship changed. As their reflections reveal, they attributed this to their failure to live up to the role of breadwinner:

As soon as that *perestroika* [began], money became tight; I already couldn't support her. . . . And then I already couldn't give her money as I did before, [and] she, clearly, had second thoughts. (Sergei, Samara)

A man should earn more, right? Well that's also my policy. Our recent disagreements—I've broken up with my wife—started up because when I got 190 [roubles] at the factory, she got 82, but then everything changed and she began to get one and a half times more and began to reproach me, while my mother-in-law urged her on, and the result

was those differences between us. Because of the fact that I started to earn less than her at the factory. Continual reproaches. So we split up. (Ivan, Samara)

For the first time in 53 years, this winter I found out what hunger is, just real hunger. It just worked out that the benefits that I got from the employment service were reduced to the minimum. . . . My wife [pronounced very slowly and unwillingly], well the thing is, I didn't want to talk about this topic, [but] I must acknowledge that she couldn't stand it, and now we're not divorced, but she's living with her mother, so that right now I'm living on my own. (Vladimir, Samara)

Of course, not all men who fail to perform as main breadwinners are left in this way. Wives' reactions are influenced by a range of factors such as the quality of the relationship prior to the change in circumstances, the husband's response to his new situation, and the availability of alternative sources of emotional, practical, and possibly financial support. Also, none of the wives in these cases had young children at the time of their separations. Nonetheless, the cases starkly highlight the potential consequences of men's weak integration into the household. As the case of Ivan shows, simply being "the person who puts the money on the bedside table" leaves a man very exposed when his financial contribution comes to be seen as insufficient. Ivan's and Vladimir's stories also serve to illustrate Rotkirch's (2000) argument cited above about relative weakness of conjugal ties in Russia, as compared with the ties between women. Men are particularly vulnerable to exclusion when women have close female kin on hand, as the latter can easily come to eclipse a breadwinner who is judged to be failing.

Whether a man simply loses his status in the household or is actually excluded, the result is likely to be depression and, in many cases, alcoholism. Obviously, men who are left by their wives are at the greatest risk, as the cases of the three respondents cited above reveal. Even though all these respondents had found work by the second or third stage of our study (in every case, work that represented a compromise in terms of professional level and pay), all of them were experiencing psychological problems by the third stage of the study. The most dramatic case, Vladimir, was exhibiting signs of mental illness, and he behaved in an unpredictable and intimidating fashion during the interview. Meanwhile, Sergei was working at a factory on appalling terms and in appalling conditions, and Ivan had accepted a job as a watchman for 500 roubles a month without a proper contract. Both of them were distressed and demoralized, as their comments reveal:

Sergei (Samara): I'm going under. I'm going under. You see, I can't even speak—my tongue's trembling. Last night I thought that my heart was just going to give out.

Interviewer: You're having health problems?

Sergei: Both with my health and from a moral point of view. Work's getting to me. Things are getting worse and worse. I've started to drink. The strong stuff. I've stopped feeding myself. I didn't sleep at all last night.

Interviewer: Things are that bad at work?

Sergei: I drink at work and after work. The main thing is that in this situation I've been driven [to a point where] I've lost everything. I have to ease the stress somehow.

Interviewer: In general, what do you think of this work?

Ivan (Samara): Not much. I'm getting more stupid with every day there; I'm becoming more and more degraded.

Such despair is not surprising, and since these men have been marginalized at work and from the household, there is little hope of recuperation. In this situation, vodka provides the most accessible "solution," albeit a temporary and treacherous one. In some cases, alcohol simply acts as an anesthetic, while when drinking takes place in groups, it offers what Karen Pyke called a "compensatory" form of masculine self-definition (1996, 538). Such compensatory forms of masculinity are characterized by the risks they pose to men's health and also serve to intensify the social exclusion of those who engage in them. Alcoholism, in particular, makes a resolution of the situation through new employment or the negotiation of a new domestic role far less likely. The hope for those whose exclusion takes the more symbolic form of a retreat to the sofa is greater, but the risk of permanent demoralization is still high.

CONCLUSION

Loss of the status of chief breadwinner not only threatens the identity of unemployed and poor men but can also lead to a double marginalization from both work and household. Obviously, one route out of this is to secure employment that restores a man's status as main breadwinner, and a substantial proportion of our respondents were able to do this by the second or third stage of research. The article considered the prospects of 17 men who were unable, or unwilling, to take this route. It found that while defining a new position within the domestic arena could save men from demoralization, it was very difficult for them to do this. Attempting to take responsibility for "feminine" tasks within the home can be perceived as a threat rather than a compensation to women, while it also tends to compromise rather than enhance men's self-esteem and sense of competency. Finding a "masculine" role within the household did provide some men with a sense of efficacy and meaning, but in the typical urban Russian household, there are few conventionally masculine tasks to perform. The article did not explicitly consider the opportunities open to poor men beyond the workplace and household, but as mentioned earlier, both civil society and amenities are underdeveloped in Russia. We did not encounter examples of men finding meaning and social standing through leisure activities or volunteer work. We argue that the paucity of opportunities to develop self-esteem or competency outside the sphere of waged employment, and in particular within the household, provides part of the explanation for the extreme demoralization of men at the lower end of the labor market that has been such a prominent feature of the Russian transition.

Although we argue that the problems afflicting Russian men cannot merely be seen as a crisis of gender identity, the pressure to do gender appropriately shapes the

form of men's demoralization by constraining the choices that men feel are open to them. A good example of this is the case of Valery, who devoted himself to domestic repairs in preference to seeking paid work. This respondent confessed himself to be very content within the home environment, although ironically, he did so within the context of an assertion of traditional values. Criticizing the Soviet policy of full employment for women, he opined,

Ideally a woman should stay at home. It's because of our poverty—they just set things up like that and they stayed like that for all those 70 years. If I were a woman, I wouldn't ever leave the house—I am by my nature a home bird.

Seeing as he was a man, however, he could only legitimize his position as a "home bird" through strenuous masculine activity. Being a home-centered man is, as we have seen, not an option for the vast majority of Russian working-class men.

Because women's identity is tied up with the household, many women find any attempted role reversal, in the words of Alla, "somehow unpleasant." Russian women claim to want men to be more involved in the domestic sphere (Ashwin 2002; Kiblitckaya 2000b). But as has been seen, women tend to accept primary responsibility for running the household. They generally want men to "help" (Ashwin 2002), which implies that they define the tasks and the standards that are required. The subordinate role of assistant is unlikely to appeal to men, however, and certainly does nothing to shore up their masculine identities. Thus, many women, although they frequently lament and suffer as a result of men's disengagement from the household, inadvertently contribute to its cause.

The combination of the work-centric character of Soviet society and the domestic power of Russian women means that Russian men are weakly integrated into the household. But men's marginality within the household is also a feature of other developed societies. Here too, the crisis of the male breadwinner can be seen as stemming as much from the lack of alternative means of self-definition outside work as from a lack of well-paid work for men. There is no easy solution to this problem. The weakness of the feminist movement in Russia means that essentialist ideas regarding gender are particularly prevalent and tenacious, but even in societies where feminism has a stronger cultural influence, the pressure to act as a primary or sole breadwinner can be very powerful. Since Russia is far from the only country undergoing painful economic restructuring, men's position at the margins of urban households can justly be said to be a global concern.

NOTES

1. Men's life expectancy declined from 64 in 1989 to 58 in 1994 (Goskomstat 1998, 12) and reached 59.8 by 1999 (Goskomstat 2000b, 71). Meanwhile, women's life expectancy remained more constant, declining from 74 in 1989 to 72.2 in 1999. The number of alcohol-related deaths more than tripled between 1990 and 1995, with men approximately four times more likely to die from alcohol-related causes than were women (Goskomstat 1996, 88). Meanwhile, the suicide rate for men increased by

approximately two-thirds in the same period; the suicide rate for women showed only a marginal increase (Goskomstat 1996, 17).

2. Most of the team members were women. Tanya Lytkina is a member of the Syktyvkar team, responsible for interviewing a third of the respondents in this group, while Sarah Ashwin participated in some of the Syktyvkar interviews.

3. The "gender order" can be defined as the historically constructed pattern of power relations between men and women and definitions of masculinity and femininity in a given society (Connell 1987, 98-99). For a more detailed exploration of the content and contradictions of the Soviet gender order, see Ashwin (2000).

4. In the Institute of Comparative Labour Relations Research household survey, both husband and wife were employed in 72 percent of households headed by couples of working age; in 18 percent, the husband worked while the wife did not; in 8 percent, the wife worked but the husband did not; and in the remaining 3 percent, neither partner was employed.

5. The *Domostroi* was a sixteenth-century manual on household regulation whose dictates were implicitly endorsed by both church and state. The text proclaimed the main virtues of a good wife to be docility and obedience and recommended the beating of those who erred.

6. In 1999, only 22 percent of the Russian population lived in private houses, while 78 percent lived in flats, communal flats, or hostels (Goskomstat 2000c, 308). A survey in Syktyvkar found that nearly 95 percent of private houses did not have modern conveniences (Burawoy et al. 1999, 39).

7. The 1998 Institute of Comparative Labour Relations Research household survey found that in more than 90 percent of households, women were responsible for tasks such as cooking, cleaning, and washing. In more than 80 percent of households, they were responsible for shopping, while men were responsible for carrying out repairs in more than 90 percent of households.

8. Nine of the unemployed sample from Samara had found jobs by Stage 2 or 3 of the research, which reinstated them as main breadwinners in their families, while 10 of the poor respondents from Syktyvkar regained or, despite their poverty, had never lost, this status. These respondents were excluded from the analysis, as were those men who had never married or cohabited and those who had dropped out by the second or third stage.

9. Working while receiving a pension is common in Russia—especially since retirement ages are low. The respondent concerned was born in 1952, and his basic pension is very low: less than \$20 a month.

10. Russian adjectives follow the gender of their noun, while Russian verbs in the past tense have different endings according to the gender of their subject.

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