This book emerged from a dissertation that I wrote as a doctoral student in Anthropology and Middle Eastern Studies at Harvard University in the 1990s. Over the two decades during which I worked on the dissertation and several revisions of the manuscript, I have been blessed with the kindness and thoughtfulness of many wonderful people to whom I owe a debt of gratitude. I hope that those from whose goodwill I benefited but whom I have not mentioned below will forgive the omission.

First, I am grateful to those who made it possible for me to spend a year in Tajikistan collecting primary data. This research was made possible at various phases through fellowships and grants from the Harvard Center for Middle Eastern Studies, the Harvard Department of Anthropology, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the Sir James Lougheed Award of Distinction (Alberta Heritage Scholarship Fund), the U.S. Department of Education (Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowship), the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada, the Aga Khan Foundation USA (through a grant from the U.S. Agency for International Development), the Harvard Forum for Central Asian Studies, and the Cora Du Bois Charitable Trust.
Collecting the ethnographic material presented in this book would have been impossible without the generous assistance and cooperation of the Aga Khan Foundation offices in Washington, D.C., Geneva, Dushanbe, and Khorog. I am especially grateful to Bob Shaw, Robert Middleton, Iqbal Noor Ali, Anne LaFond, Pierre Claquin, Najmi Kanji, and Hakim Feerasta for their encouragement and advice during my time in Tajikistan, and for allowing me to freely conduct my research. In Khorog, Mamadamin Mamadaminov and Yodgor Faisov helped arrange logistical support, and Peter, Nukhra, Dilawar, Mahmood, Natasha, Svetlana, Firuz, and many others at the Aga Khan Development Network offices were always most helpful. Banoz and Gulbargh used to bake little treats for me when I came back from the villages, and I shall not forget them for that. Special thanks are given to the following people for their assistance in conducting the surveys that guided this work: Khursheed Konunov, Kolya Konunov, Gulomsho Lutfaliev, the field staff for the Pharmaceutical Use Survey, Mansur Shakarmamadov and Farrukh Shakarmamadov for work on the Dental Survey, all the translators who worked on the long-answer surveys, the computer team at the Aga Khan Development Network for helping with data entry, and the many others, too numerous to mention here, who helped me. I am deeply grateful to the Badakhshani families who showed incredible kindness to me in Khorog and other villages. I cannot thank them by name because they are primary actors in this book. Not only did they look after me, but knowing that I was an anthropologist, they trusted me to convey their stories.

When I first arrived in Central Asia, I knew no one. Alisher Kassimov, Mubin Juraev, and Timur Hassanov helped me find my way. The families of Farrukh Asrarov, Lola Dodkhudoeva, Khayolbeg Dodikhudoev, Abdulsalom Mamadnazarov, and Ebrahim Konunov opened their homes to me and made me feel welcome. For this, I am deeply indebted. I am especially grateful to Farrukh Asrarov, Farhad Asrarov, Firdaus Asrarov, Farrukh Dodikhudoev, Khursheed Konunov, and Kolya Konunov for their unwavering friendship and help. They, along with Jeanette Kuder, Isabel Hemming, Sadru Akbarali, Gulomsho Lutfaliev, Mahmood Khaled, Pierre Claquin, Mansur Shakarmamadov, Farrukh Shakarmamadov, Saifollah in Porshnief, Scott Simmons, and the gang at Médecins Sans Frontières
(especially Cécile, Michel, and Vincent), made living in Tajikistan during trying times much more enjoyable.

At the Harvard Center for Middle Eastern Studies and the Department of Anthropology, I would like to give special thanks to Diana Abouali, Rasha Al Turki, Gulnora Aminova, Sahar Bazzaz, Michael Connell, Faisal Devji, Marilyn Goodrich, Rebecca Grow, the late Joan Gillespie, Bill Graham, Barbara Henson, Matthew McGuire, Munir Jiwa, Susan Miller, Eric Seivers, Chris Tennant, and Nargis Virani for all their help and support during my graduate studies and onward. I am especially indebted to John Schoeberlein, whose guidance and mentorship during my studies and research was constant and invaluable. I am also grateful to Ankur Asthana, Mercedes Becerra, Faisal Devji, Nadza Durakovic, Paul Farmer, Michael Fischer, Pamela Hunte, Ameer Keshavjee, Mohamed Keshavjee, Rafique Keshavjee, Tom Nicholson, Bob Shaw, Amin Tejpar, and Chris Tennant, all of whom either read parts of the original dissertation or one of the many versions of the manuscript and provided many useful comments and insights.

I am especially thankful to Paul Farmer, who has spent so much time teaching me to write more artfully, and who so generously offered to pen the foreword to this book. He read and commented on every page of multiple versions of the manuscript. His close friendship and mentorship over the last two decades—along with the intensity of his engagement on this project—has been a gift for which I am deeply grateful.

While finalizing the manuscript, I had the opportunity to present my findings at both the Harvard-Yale Anthropology Colloquium and Harvard’s Friday Morning Seminar in Medical Anthropology, where colleagues provided important feedback and input. I am also grateful to the three reviewers for the University of California Press, whose guidance helped me markedly improve the final version.

To my three doctoral advisors at Harvard, Nur Yalman, Byron Good, and Arthur Kleinman, I cannot be thankful enough. Nur Yalman’s support and encouragement began when I first considered entering the field of anthropology, and has been unwavering since. His wonderful ability to bring out the positive in every situation was a balm to me on many an occasion. Byron Good has been a demanding teacher, mentor, and friend for twenty years. He is one of the people in my life whom I know I can call
any time and be met with warmth and thoughtful advice. I have many fond memories both in and outside the classroom of Byron and Mary-Jo Good.

I owe a great personal and intellectual debt to Arthur Kleinman, a mentor and a friend over the last twenty years. It was Arthur who encouraged and helped me to become an anthropologist, and who pushed me to pursue the global health scholarship that I have enjoyed so much. I cannot list all the ways in which he has taught me how to learn, how to work, how to teach, and how to engage as an anthropologist and a scholar. He and Joan Kleinman invited Mercedes and me to stay at their home when I returned from my fieldwork; he visited me as I went through my medical training; and he has supported me in every step of my career to date. He was the driving force in creating a nurturing space for critical reflection and practice of medical anthropology. I am one of many who had the good fortune to benefit from that rich and enabling environment—the Harvard school of medical anthropology—and can only hope that this book reflects the rich intellectual community of which I have been so privileged to be part.

I would be remiss if I did not also thank the wonderful team at Partners In Health for their warmth, kindness, and generosity during my graduate work and thereafter. Ophelia Dahl, Paul Farmer, and Jim Yong Kim, with whom Mercedes and I became friends in 1994, created a space at Partners In Health where ideas of social justice could re-enter the consciousness of people working in global health and development. Mercedes and I were privileged to work among an amazing group of people—some of whom, like us, lived for a time in the Partners In Health houses in Cambridge and Lima—who challenged the way that global health had become socially constructed, and worked tirelessly to improve the way care was being delivered in poor communities. In addition to Jim, Paul, and Ophelia, I am especially grateful to Jaime Bayona, Joaquín Blaya, Gene Bukhman, Mary Kay Smith-Fawzi, Hamish Fraser, Jennifer Furin, Irina Gelmanova, Alex Golubkov, Tim Holtz, Rocío Hurtado, Anne Hyson, Darius Jazayeri, Christopher Johnson, Keith Joseph, Kathryn Kempton, Serena Koenig, Younsook Lim, Carole Mitnick, Joia Mukherjee, Ed Nardell, Kristin Nelson, Oksana Ponomarenko, Michael Rich, the late Rocío Sapag, K.J. Seung, Aaron Shakow, Sonya Shin, Askar Yedilbayev, and Paul Zintl. Their support, warmth, kindness, and friendship are one of my life's treasures.
By the time I started writing the manuscript, I was a staff physician at Brigham and Women’s Hospital in the Department of Medicine and, later, in the Division of Global Health Equity. I subsequently joined Harvard Medical School as a faculty member in the Department of Global Health and Social Medicine. I am grateful to the individuals at both these institutions who have mentored and encouraged me in my work on this book, including Anne Becker, Jaclyn Chai, Howard Hiatt, Steve Kadish, Joel Katz, Margaret Paternek, Jennifer Puccetti, and Susan Radlinski. Paul Farmer and Jim Yong Kim both served as chairs of the Department of Global Health and Social Medicine and the Brigham’s Division of Global Health Equity during the writing of the manuscript, and helped me carve out the necessary time despite my other responsibilities. Funding for writing the final parts of the manuscript came from the Frank Hatch Fellowship at Brigham and Women’s Hospital and the Zinberg Fellowship in Global Health Delivery at Harvard Medical School, for which I am very grateful.

Over the years, I received significant support for this project from my family—Fatima Keshavjee-Johnson; James, Roxana, and Odessa Johnson; and Corina, Genie, Guillermo, and Will Becerra—and from many close friends, including Aamir Khan, Adnan Mansour, Nora Osman, Islande Paul, Scott Plotkin, Candace Lun-Plotkin, Lubna Samad, Jacek Skarbinski, and Ali Velshi. Despite my misgivings, they had faith that I would actually finish this project. My dear friends Munira Padamsee and Tom White died before I finished the manuscript, but they were avid discussants about the topic of this book, and I would like to think that they would have enjoyed reading it.

While writing this book, I had the support of four dedicated coworkers, each hoping to be the one to send the final draft to the publisher. Sadly, my time working on other projects in Russia, Lesotho, and Geneva delayed its completion, but I will be forever in the debt of Catherine Oettinger, Vera Belitsky, Nadza Durakovic, and Ankur Asthana for their support and encouragement. Nadza and, ultimately, Ankur did the yeoman’s task of helping me put the final pieces together.

Two additional friends deserve special gratitude: Suzanne Gordon and Steve Hubbell. They motivated me to take what was a dense and complex dissertation and make it into what they always referred to as a readable
work. Steve is a brilliant writer and his cues made me think about how to make this story more accessible. Suzanne and I had long conversations at her kitchen table and in her living room, where she encouraged me to tell her stories of my time in Badakhshan. Together, Suzanne and Steve helped me think about the phenomenology of the post-Soviet transition at its most intimate levels. Their patience, friendship, advice, and input over a number of years have meant a lot to me as an individual and as a writer.

I am deeply grateful to Naomi Schneider, my editor at the University of California Press, who finally made this book a reality. She is a discerning editor and I am grateful for her friendship, guidance, and patience. It is thanks to her that the manuscript emerged in its final form.

Mercedes Becerra has been my closest friend, and her companionship for over two decades has been sustenance to me. We have been involved in an intense conversation about global health and development for more than twenty years. We were joined along the way by our son Zayn, who has been nothing but joy. He is still too little to learn about neoliberalism, but as soon as possible I am hoping he will read this book and understand why I worked to finish it, and why, as Mercedes says, health equity and neoliberalism cannot comfortably coexist. Lastly, I wish to thank my parents, Ameer and Sherbanu Keshavjee, for a lifetime of nurturing and kindness. It is to them that I dedicate this work.