

Exploring the Psychology of Russian Men with Russian  
Psychologists During My Fulbright Scholarship in the Former  
Soviet Union

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Running Head: Exploring the Psychology of Russian Men

## Abstract

This chapter describes a psychology of Russian men intervention implemented during my Fulbright teaching scholarship in the former Soviet Union. The personal, professional, and political contexts of my cross cultural experience are described. The cross cultural contextualization used to prepare for this experience is presented. My Fulbright placement and experiences are enumerated including my activities outside the university and the existential moments experienced in Russia. The psychology of Russian men intervention is described in detail. Five Russian psychologists were interviewed about their views of Russian men's lives using American gender role concepts including gender role conflict and the gender role journey. Questionnaires, interviews, and a three hour seminar were employed to make the assessment of the Russian men. What I learned from this experience is presented and recommendations are made to stimulate more programs and research to internationalize the psychology of men.

## Exploring the Psychology of Russian Men with Russian Psychologists During My Fulbright Scholarship in the Former Soviet Union

This chapter summarizes a dialogue with Russian psychologists about the psychology of men during my Fulbright experience in 1992. The human memory records significant events that change our consciousness and move us to deeper levels of spiritual and emotional growth. The cross cultural experience reported in this chapter did just that for me (O'Neil, 1993). I can remember my Russian cultural experience like it was just yesterday. The memories are very vivid even 18 years later.

The goal of this chapter is to describe the psychology of Russian men intervention and report on my cross cultural experiences in the former Soviet Union. The chapter is divided into the following parts. First, the personal, professional, and political contexts of my cross cultural experience are described. Second, the cross cultural contextualization that I employed to prepare for this experience is discussed. Third, my Fulbright placement and experiences are enumerated in detail. Fourth, my experiences outside the university including my personal and existential moments are discussed. The first four sections of the chapter provide an important vantage point to understand the psychology of men intervention described in the second part of the chapter. In the fifth section, the psychology of Russian men intervention is described and the evaluations of the intervention are reported. Finally, what I learned from this experience is presented and recommendations are made for future international interventions with men around the world. I hope this summary of my cross cultural experience stimulates others to implement programs and research to internationalize the psychology of men.

## Personal, Professional, and Political Background For My Cross Cultural Experience

In the late 1980's, my professional energy seemed to be somewhat dulled and diminished. I was not bored or disengaged from my work, but my academic and clinical competence seemed to have plateaued. I needed a midlife jolt that would prompt risk taking, move me outside my comfort zones, and renew me. I had been teaching multicultural and diversity issues my whole career, but had not experienced any cross cultural or international excursions. As a privileged white male, I had never been a minority, adapted to another culture, or managed acculturation stress. I knew my renewal could be stimulated by a cross cultural experience.

Based on the experience of former Fulbright counseling psychologists (Heppner, 1988, McWhirter, 1988a, 1988b, Nugent, 1998, & Skovholt, 1998), I applied for a Fulbright Teaching Scholarship to the Soviet Union as stimulus for my renewal and professional growth. I first applied for the Fulbright in 1990 but the turmoil in the Soviet Union at that time prohibited any exchanges between the two countries. I was encouraged to reapply. On a bright April morning in 1991, I received a telephone call from the Council for International Exchange of Scholars (CIES) that I had been awarded a Fulbright to teach at Moscow State Pedagogical University.

I was simultaneously excited and worried. Could I actually teach in the Soviet Union without knowing the Russian language and manage the complexity of living in a society that was literally coming apart? The decision to go or not was a crossroad in my life. There were many questions to be asked and answered. Could I muster the energy to take on this kind of challenge or would I decline the offer, letting my fears, doubts, and worries dictate my decision making? Given my waning mid life energy, could I actually

endure an exhausting cross cultural experience including acculturation stress? Was I going to break out of out of my comfort zone and mid life inertia or not? It was truth time! Either transform myself and mobilize my resources or continue my professional plateau and doldrums that were eating at me on the inside All my ruminations resulted in one critical, life altering question: If I declined the Fulbright, could I live with the realization that I chose to personally retreat, rather than grow because of my doubts and fears?

After much soul searching, I decided to face the challenge and push through to my next stage of personal and professional development. I accepted the Fulbright and began the preparation process. I immediately felt reenergized and renewed. I had studied Russian history as an undergraduate and therefore I knew something about the Soviet Union, but my knowledge was superficial and outdated. Moreover, the State Department who oversees the Fulbright Program had real concerns about sending American scholars to Russia in the early 1990's with the volatile developments occurring there. My colleagues at CIES began to send me instructions of how to prepare. There were ominous warnings about the dangers for Americans living in Moscow. The Fulbright administrators encouraged me to be fully prepared for whatever might happen as Russia changed from a Communist state to some unknown governmental structure.

On August 19, 1991, flying back from the APA Convention in San Francisco, I heard disturbing news in the airport. A coup d'etat was occurring in the Soviet Union. Mikhail Gorbachev was under house arrest and the hard line Communists were in power. The world was on the edge during those days with the worries about the Russian nuclear arsenal being under control by a new Communist regime. Historical flashbacks about the

last Russian Revolution in 1917 and the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 flooded my tired, post convention consciousness. My mood was somber from the news of the Coup and from the exhaustion of the convention.

I fell asleep on my red eye flight from San Francisco thinking that my two year quest to teach Counseling Psychology in the Soviet Union was in jeopardy given the historical events in Moscow. I felt that the State Department would probably cancel my Fulbright Lectureship to the Soviet Union with tanks in the streets of Moscow and Gorbachev out of power. I woke up somewhere in the Midwest thinking no one was sure what was going to happen next.

I watched CNN newscasts as the political events shaped our new world order. On the next day, thousands of Russians guarded Boris Yeltsin at the White House in Moscow. On Tuesday, August 20, Boris Yeltsin climbed up on a tank and in front of 150,000 Russians declared that freedom would not be given over to the Communist conspirators. On that day, Communism, as we knew it, died in the former Soviet Union. My Fulbright Senior Lectureship was set in this historical context. These historical events heightened my commitment to engage my cross cultural experience with vigor and energy.

#### Cross Cultural Contextualizing the Psychology of Russian Men Intervention

I lacked a fully developed international-contextual approach to studying Russian men in 1992 but I did hold the "...the assumption that each cultural perspective can make a legitimate contribution to our understanding of what masculinity mean within a culture (Blazina & Shin Miller, chapter 1). I agreed with Blazina and Shin Miller's challenge in chapter 1 that states theories emanating from any country may have limited ability to explain attitudes and psychological processes in any other country. Furthermore, like the

editors of this book, I did conceptualize my time in Russia as an opportunity to understand Russians at the personal, interpersonal, and familial levels as well as in the context of their historical, cultural, and political systems. The idea of “cultural masculinities” did guide my interviews with five Russian colleagues and the three hour workshop on the psychology of Russian men. I recognized that our global interconnectiveness does necessitate understanding masculinity in all countries to have a peaceful world order and solve the world’s immense problems.

I recognized that men hold most of the world’s power and control our national governments, world economics, religious doctrines, and international processes. To this extent, I knew that masculinity ideologies (Pleck, 1995, Levant et al, 1993; Mahalik et al., 2003) were responsible for how societies prosper as well as they contribute to war, genocide, famine and the human suffering around the world. I believed then, and even more now in 2010, that different international masculinities interact with each other for either global good or harm to human life. Furthermore, I believed that a primary goal of the psychology of men and men’s studies should be to expose men’s abuses of power that harm human life and support all interventions that promote human development, international reconciliation, and peace.

Preparing to teach Counseling Psychology concepts, in a cross cultural context was very challenging. The preparation process stretched me psychologically and forced me to think outside of my psychological training paradigms. There were few cross cultural paradigms available to guide my preparation process. Like Skovholt (1988) and the editors of this book (Blazina and Shen Miller, chapter 1), I had to review my professional assumptions and how they might (or might not) translate to Russia. I did not have a full

cross cultural and cross national context to guide my preparation (Gerstein, Heppner, AEgisdottir, Leung, & Norsworthy, 2009; Heppner, AEgisdottir, Leung, Duan, Helms, Gerstein, & Pederson, 2009). Without much guidance, I told myself that I was going to have to be self directed, creative, and tolerate much ambiguity in preparing for my time in Russia and actually living there.

In the Fall, 1991, I remember having some mild but persistent fears about going to Moscow. Not only was I going to embrace a society on the edge of collapse, I had to face my biases about Russians and the Russian culture. Political slogans from the McCarthy Era like "Better Dead than Red" and "Kill a Commie for Christ" were locked away in my childhood consciousness. Furthermore, I vividly remembered my second grade air raid drills during the 1950's. Alarms would sound and we would be ushered into the nearest hall with our faces against the wall for 3-4 minutes. The teachers told us it would be the Russians, "the enemy" that would be dropping the atomic bombs. As I related these grade school air raid drill stories to my Russian friends, they reacted in unison: "We never saw the American people as the enemy. It was the imperialistic capitalist system that was the true Socialist enemy".

I decided to enter therapy to sort out my biases, anxieties, and fears. There were definitely some masculinity issues related to performance and losses of control to work out if my cross cultural preparation was to be successful. I wanted to be effective during the Fulbright and not appear like aging, insecure and vulnerable American college professor. My therapist was a reputable analyst that described himself as a Freudian existentialist. I needed someone who knew more about therapy than myself and who could keep up with my own self analysis. In my therapy, I remember discussing with my

therapist a dream where I intensely felt that “this year would be my last Christmas”. This dream represented some deep fears about my personal safety, given the increasing violence occurring in Moscow at that time. The therapy helped me get my emotional bearings and plot a more positive preparation process. I read everything I could find on Russia, corresponded with countless colleagues, and listen to the Russian news every night on public television. I knew that I had to contextualize my upcoming cross culture experience (See Blazina and Shen-Miller in the first chapter), if it was to be effective. I understood that just transporting American Counseling Psychology concepts to Russia would be inappropriate, problematic, and set me up for failure.

It was one thing to think contextually about a cross cultural experience and another to actually carry it out. I asked myself what can be done to overcome inevitable cross cultural differences. First, I decided to contextualize my lectures by translating all my transparencies into Russian. Second, when I arrived I communicated to my Russian students and colleagues some very direct messages. First, I told them I questioned how much of American Psychology would be relevant to Russians. I indicated that I would share my knowledge, but more importantly that I came to learn from them about the Russian psychology and their rich culture, not just spout American concepts and truths.

Third, I made a special effort to communicate how important my personal relationships were with each of them. Also, I emphasized in a personal way that I was there to learn from each of them. I indicated that American Psychology and education had been isolated from Russian culture and society. I mentioned that one of central goals of the Fulbright Program was to report back on the status of education and psychology in Russia to my institution and profession. The message was that I wanted to know them

personally, professionally, and politically. This allowed some of the stereotypes (or realities) of “Western arrogance and superiority” to dissolve and for us to plan together the most mutually beneficial way to learn from each other in a cross cultural context.

The cross cultural interaction was a topic that I brought out from the beginning. I indicated that because the two countries has been enemies for so long and isolated from each other, that the cross cultural differences could be another important point of learning. I believed that identifying commonalities and differences could normalize many mutual misunderstandings that might occur. Furthermore, it brought most interactions down to the human level, where we could be more than just professionals together.

An example of my attempt to humanize the interpersonal relations came at my initial lecture to the entire faculty of the Department of Educational Psychology at Moscow State Pedagogical University. In my lecture, I indicated that I had tried to learn Russian but that I had failed. This humble disclosure dispelled any sense that I was superior to them. The disclosure also communicated that I needed their help for the cross cultural exchanges to be mutually beneficial. The personal exchanges were rich for me under these conditions and I believe that mutual respect evolved slowly. Consequently, we could get down to the mutual sharing which is the main purpose of the Fulbright Program and any intervention related to internationalizing the psychology of men.

#### My Fulbright Placement and Experiences In Moscow

My Fulbright placement was in the Department of Educational Psychology of Moscow State Pedagogical University. My primary sponsors were Dean and Professor V.A. Slastenin, Professor Valeria S. Muklina, Dr. Lubov Moshinskaya, Dr. Boris

Shapiro, and Dr. Michael Firsov. Additionally, Dr. Andre Shadurv, Dr. Igor Grinshpun and Svetlana Kassyanova were also involved with my teaching and research. Dr. Nifont Dolgoplov was my primary research collaborator and Dr. Ludmila Popova arranged numerous lectures for me all over Moscow. Dr. Alexi Povarnitsyn, a private practice psychologist, provided interpretation of lectures and research support.

My Russian colleagues and I had only limited information about each other's psychological disciplines. Very few academic exchanges of psychologists existed during the Cold War. Only fifteen psychologists have been awarded Fulbrights to the former Soviet Union since the exchange began in 1978. Only four of these psychologists were assigned to Moscow; all residing at Moscow State University. All the previous Fulbright scholars had been academic psychologists who did teaching or research (Reiss, 1992). None of them had been trained as a counseling psychologist or clinician. I was the first psychologist to be placed at Moscow State Pedagogical University and the first Fulbright scholar to specifically lecture about the discipline of Counseling Psychology and the psychology of men. Under these conditions, I felt like a pioneer with sharing new ideas about American psychology and specifically the psychology of men.

#### Teaching at Moscow State Pedagogical University

In my Fulbright proposal, I proposed to teach the course "Introduction to Counseling Psychology". The course was a survey of the major themes in a masters degree in counseling. Most of the course content had never been taught before in Russia. In my course, I employed the same psychoeducational teaching approach as with my American students. I used lectures, personal self disclosure, music videos, video movie clips and self assessments in my teaching. This style of teaching was an eye opener for both the

students and faculty attending, since it deviated from the traditional Russian mode of teaching.

Additionally, I was asked to prepare a 3 day, 18 hour workshop for the teachers of Chernobyl on victimization and counseling. Twenty five teachers had been sent to the University for training on how to counsel the traumatized victims of Chernobyl disaster that occurred on April 26, 1986. The primary thrust of the workshop was explaining the psychological response patterns of being victimized (McCann, Sakheim, Abrahamson, 1988; Courtois & O'Neil, 1988) and the core qualities of effective counselors. I had not prepared specific content for this workshop before arriving. Therefore, it was very challenging to decide how to discuss post traumatic stress disorder with teachers who had limited psychological backgrounds and were victims themselves. I was moved by the vulnerability and strength of these survivors as they asked profound questions about how to help both children and adults who were in physical and psychological pain.

#### *Research Initiatives in Russia*

Research by American psychologists in Russia had been very limited, so I collected as much data as possible during my nine week teaching lectureship. Three collaborative research projects were implemented with my Russian colleagues. The first study included administering three standardized questionnaires to Russian men (N=180) assessing their self reported gender role conflict (O'Neil, 2008; O'Neil, Helms, Gable, David, & Wrightsman, 1986), psychological violence (O'Neil & Egan, 1992), and personal strain (Osipow & Spokane, 1987). In the second study, college age women (N= 180) completed the Psychological Violence Scale (O'Neil, Owen, Egan, Murry, Holmes, 1991) and one other demographic questionnaire. For both of these empirical studies, comparable

American data were gathered to make cross cultural comparisons. The third research project is the specific topic of this chapter. The project included interviewing Russian psychologists' perceptions of Russian men's gender role conflict (O'Neil, 1981) and conducting a three hour workshop with them on the psychology of Russian men. These research projects were very helpful in developing positive and collaborative relationships with my colleagues in Moscow.

*Experiences Outside the University: Personal and Existential Moments*

Numerous lectures were given outside the university at the Russian Academy of Science, Russian Academy Pedagogical Science, and institutions in Moscow and St. Petersburg. I visited numerous schools, an orphanage, and Hospital No. 20 that had an inpatient crisis unit for suicidal men and women. I gave a lecture at one of the very few marriage and family therapy clinics in Moscow and observed (through a one way mirror) two therapy sessions of Anna Varga, a well known Moscow family therapist. When word got out that I was researching men's gender roles, I was invited by Valentina Konstantinova to lecture at the Moscow Centre for Gender Studies, Institute for Socio-Economic Population Studies (Russian Academy of Sciences). I was the first man to address this women's group on the topic of gender roles. My topic was "Men's Gender Role Conflict and Psychological Violence". During the lecture, I raised the question "Are men are victims of sexism?" This question caused quite a stir with the predominantly female audience. On March 19, I was invited to be a discussant for a symposium at Moscow State University (MSU) on the future of religion and spirituality in Russian schools. This was the last topic that I imagined to be discussed at MSU, only yards from the Kremlin Wall.

On April 21, 1992, I had the unusual opportunity of having a meeting at the old Communist Party Headquarters (then the seat of the Russian government) with Dr. Leonid Gozman who was a social psychologist at Moscow State University. I had met Leonid in Connecticut before coming to Russia when he was visiting the United States in the Fall of 1991. Leonid had been hired by the Yeltsin government to advise Igor Gaidar (Acting Premier of Russia) on how to package the economic reforms so that the Russian people would accept them. After being vigorously searched by armed guards, we discussed Leonid's work on advising the government and the status of Russian psychology. So there I was, in this highly guarded and once very secret government building, talking with one of the first post coup Russian psychologists who was advising the government on how to make the economic reforms work. For me this was the most unexpected and politically intriguing activity of my Fulbright experience. Walking in the building where worldwide Communism had shed its dark shadow, I was able to grasp how much change had occurred and also how much was still at stake. This was one of the most exciting exchanges that I had in Russia and one that I remember very vividly. I told Leonid that "if anyone had ever told me a year ago that I would be walking in the halls of the Russian government, with a Russian psychologist who was directly advising the government, I would have told them they were crazy. Leonid's response was: "If someone had told me a year ago that I would be advising Yeyor Guidar and the Russian government on how to make the reforms work, and walking here with you today as an American psychologist, I would have also told them they were crazy".

There were numerous existential moments that will never be forgotten. On the recommendations of my colleagues, I visited Orphanage 51 in Moscow. It was reported

there were over 50,000 orphans in Moscow alone. On entry to the orphanage, there was a sudden rush of children to my side. Their hopeless and vulnerable eyes reflected their need for human nurturance and contact. Attachment, vulnerability, and a lack of bonding took on a totally different meaning after that moving encounter. Also, on a cold March day, I stood at the gates of the sobering Piskariovskoye Cemetery in St. Petersburg. I gazed out at the 186 mass graves of the half million victims of the German 900 day siege of Leningrad during World War II. Two hundred thousand Russian people died in Leningrad in January and February of 1942 of cold and starvation. The eerie silence of the bright sunlight on the miles of mass graves left a mark on my consciousness. Knowing my mother-in-law lost family members because of starvation in Leningrad makes this image even more potent now. The next day I visited a peasant village 30 miles south of St. Petersburg. On the train ride back, I gazed out on the cold Russian tundra knowing that somewhere out there was where the German advance on Leningrad ended, but not before half million Russian died. These two events in St. Petersburg gave me chills then and even now. Finally, there was my robbery experience after eating at Pizza Hut in Moscow with a Russian colleague and his son. As we left the restaurant and walked by Lenin's Museum, I was surrounded by 20 gypsy girls and robbed of my wallet. It all happened in 15 seconds. One week I was lecturing on PTSD at the university and next week experiencing it as I walked the streets of Moscow.

I was also invited to 12 Russian homes for dinner or tea. There were times when I felt like a celebrity as I was introduced to family and friends in the neighborhood. Many of these families had never before had an American in their home. In the past, hosting an American was risky business and likely to prompt a visit from the KGB or at least a report

to the local party officials. Spending time with these Russian families was one of the most meaningful events of my trip and a special occasion for them also. Usually, young Russian boys and girls would arrive from adjacent flats (apartments) during our meal to curiously and nervously observe their first real American person. I was touched by these children and their families as they shared their family histories, their best food and vodka, and discussed how their country was evolving out of a totalitarian state to some unknown political entity.

The personal stories they told were the most moving and disturbing. Of all my activities in Russia, these stories altered my consciousness about oppression and will stay with me for a very long time. Almost everyone had a personal story about their struggle under Communism or the tragic history under Stalin or during World War II. Having studied Russian History as an undergraduate, I had a context for most of these stories. What I did not have was a heart and mind large enough to fully internalize the tragedies they reported. Estimates of 40 to 60 million people being eliminated under Stalin's genocide and purges were consistently reported. This means that between 25 to 50% of Russian families lost a family member during the Stalin Era. This suffering was compounded by 20 million Russians killed during World War II, vicious anti-Semitism, fears about the KGB, and distrust and paranoia about friends and even sometimes, family members .

*Summary of My Cultural Experience and Relevant to the Psychology of Russian Men  
Intervention*

All my preparation and Fulbright experiences discussed above have direct implications for the psychology of Russian men's intervention described below. The men's

intervention came near the end of my time in Moscow. Therefore, by then I had established some credibility as a cross cultural educator with many of my Russian “comrades”. What I had learned about Russians and the Russian culture helped me organize the intervention in effective ways. I had given many planned lectures all over Moscow to many different groups, but this intervention with the Russian men was created spontaneously. I sensed an interest in a dialogue on the psychology of men. The men really wanted to talk about their lives and their masculinity issues. I created the context and structure for their voices on the psychology of Russian men. By this time, my energy was diminishing with 32 lectures/contacts in 39 days. But I knew this open dialogue with Russian psychologists was historically unique, timely, and had never occurred in this oppressive Socialist society.

### The Psychology of Russian Men Intervention

#### *The Societal and Historical Context of the Psychology of Men Intervention*

The purpose of the intervention was to explore Russian men’s views of their gender roles. Specifically, I wanted to determine whether the psychology of men, as it was evolving in the United States, had any relevance to Russian psychologists and the clients they serve. The intervention occurred only 6 months after the failed 1991 coup d' e'tat and the end of Soviet Communism. At this time, there was much uncertainty, hope, fear, and change everywhere in Russia. The former Soviet Union had lost its name, flag, political ideology, leaders, much of its land, a stable currency, and in a profound sense, its national identity. From my perspective, this social, political, economic change produced a society “living on the edge”. One of my Russian colleagues described my time in Moscow as “James in Wonderland (O’Neil, 1993). The term “wonderland” conveyed my Russian

colleagues' deep fears about the chaos in their lives and the unknown future of their country. Russia was then, and still is today, a wonderland with so much rapid change and uncertainty. Like Alice in Wonderland, I was in awe of what I observed and moved by the courageous spirit of the Russian people.

Personal and intellectual openness emerged in Russia during this time, as freedom and individuality became living realities in many people's lives. Although the KGB was still in existence, the fear of personal reprisals for personal and political expression was significantly decreased. Many Russians wanted to talk about their lives both in the past and present. The time seemed perfect for a discussion about Russian men's lives.

What I proposed to my Russian colleagues was a dialogue on the state of Russian men's lives using American gender role concepts. During the 70 years of Communism, this kind of discussion on men's gender role issues would have been prohibited. All of us participating knew that we were breaking new ground with our dialogues on Russian men's lives. All of the men participating were professional educators, in their early to late thirties, living in Moscow. The five practicing psychologists had private practices in Moscow and consequently had special insights into Russian men's and women's lives.

#### Method of Intervention and Evaluation

The intervention strategy was systematic and employed numerous assessment processes. First, I gave an hour long lecture on the patterns of men's gender role conflict. Second, the men filled out a 20-item questionnaire on Russian men's lives and were interviewed about their responses. They also completed the Gender Role Conflict Scale (O'Neil et al., 1986). In the afternoon, the men participated in a 3-hour workshop where they discussed Russian men's gender roles and gender role conflict.

### *Interview Questionnaires and Interviews*

Each man completed a 20-item, free response questionnaire on Russian men's issues. Table 1 lists these questions. The overall topic areas included: a) the descriptors of Russian stereotypes of masculinity b) barriers to meeting masculine stereotypes and the consequences of not realizing them, c) the status of Russian men's and women's lives, d) Russian men's and women's gender role expectancies of each other, e) Whether the Communist-Socialist political system produced gender role conflict in Russian men's lives, f) Whether Russian men are victims of sexism, g) How gender roles and gender role conflict interact with Russian men's sexuality, h) Which patterns of gender role conflict (O'Neil, 1981) Russian men experience the most, i) Whether gender roles affect how Russian men and women communicate in marriage and families, j) questions about gender roles, sex differences, family roles, and stereotypes, k) How social and political change affects Russian men's problems with their masculinity, l) How much violence exists towards Russian women, m) which patterns of gender role conflict the participants personally experienced, n) whether men's studies has a place in Russian Higher Education. One week later, each colleague was personally interviewed based on their responses to the questions in Table 1. The interviews lasted approximately 40 minutes on the average. An interpreter assisted with these interviews for colleagues who had limited English. The questionnaires were translated into English by a Russian graduate student and studied to find common themes and issues.

### *Completion of the Gender Role Conflict Scale (GRCS)*

Each participant completed the Gender Role Conflict Scale, (O'Neil, Helms, Gable, David, & Wrightsman et al., 1986, O'Neil, 2008). The GRCS contains 37 items designed

to assess dimensions of gender role conflict which occurs when rigid, sexist, or restrictive gender roles, learned during gender role socialization, result in personal restriction, devaluation, or violation of self or others. Respondents indicate the degree to which they agree or disagree with each statement on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 6 (Strongly Agree), with higher scores indicating greater gender role conflict. The factors scores include a) success, power, competition; b) restrictive emotionality; c) restrictive and affectionate behavior between men; d) and conflict between work and family relations. The GRCS was translated into Russian and back translated into English to insure accuracy. First, a Russian graduate student who had studied English as a second language translated the GRCS into Russian. A second Russian graduate student who also had competency in both languages back translated the Russian version back into English. Where there were discrepancies or questions with the back translation, both students provided guidance on the best way to convey the true meaning of the GRCS items. The purpose of giving the GRCS was to help the men identify their own patterns of gender role conflict.

#### *The Psychology of Men Workshop*

The program was a round table discussion between the Russian men based on the interview questions. I gave a brief lecture on the six patterns of gender role conflict (O'Neil et al., 1986; O'Neil, Good, & Holmes, 1995; O'Neil, 2008) and the phases of the gender role journey (O'Neil, Egan, 1992; O'Neil, Egan, Owen, & Murry, 1993) as a context for the workshop. The workshop was audio taped and transcribed into English. The transcript was studied for common themes and insights.

#### *Follow-Up Questionnaire*

An 11-item follow-up questionnaire was completed one week later after the workshop. The questionnaire asked participants to rate the entire intervention using a Likert scale of Strongly agree (6) to Strongly disagree (1).

#### Results of the Psychology of Russian Men Intervention

##### *The Gender Role Conflict Scale Results*

Each man's GRCS was analyzed in terms of factor scores of SPC, RE, RABBM, and CBWFR. No statistical analyses were employed because of such a small sample size. Means were calculated for each factor score and the total GRC score to determine the degree of gender role conflict for each participant. These data were compared to normative data on white, adult American men. Using the scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (Strongly Agree), the Russian men's factor scores were the following: SPC = 4.08, RE = 3.4, RABBM = 3.1, and CBWFR = 4.5. Overall, these scores indicated a moderate amount of GRC for the Russian psychologists. Russian men reported more GRC with SPC, RE, and CBWFR and less RABBM than American adult men using the normative data from eight previous studies (Gender Role Conflict Research Program, 2010). The means for the American men were the following: SPC (3.4), RE (3.0), RABBM (3.3), CBWFR (3.7). Only RABBM was lower for the Russians men compared to white, adult, American men. Three of the four Russian men reported more GRC across the four patterns when compared to adult American men. These data were both similar and dissimilar to another data set gathered in Moscow at that time where statistical analyses were applied (O'Neil, Owen, Holmes, Dolgoplov, & Slastenin, 1994). In this study working Russian men's GRC was higher than White adult, American men on all patterns of gender role conflict with SPC and RABBM being highly significant. The means for

Russian men for each subscale of the GRCS were: SPC (3.8), RE (3.2), RABBM (3.4), and CBWFR (3.6). For the adult American men the GRCS means were: SPC (3.1), RE (2.8), RABBM (2.8), and CBWFR (3.2). The differences between the Russian and American men's gender role conflict are difficult to explain because of the lack of knowledge about the commonalities and divergencies of these two cultural defined masculinities.

#### *The Questionnaires Data From Russian Psychologists and Educators*

The questionnaire data and interviews represent a large amount of information to analyze and summarize. A complete summary of the questionnaires and interviews is beyond the scope of this chapter. Only the most important themes from the 20 questions (See Table 1) are reported here. The themes discussed below relate to Russian men's gender role stereotypes, factors that inhibit healthy masculinity, and the negative consequences of the stereotypes. Additionally, how changes in Russia have affected men and whether Russian men are victims of sexism are addressed. Furthermore, whether Western patterns of gender role conflict were relevant to Russian men are discussed in the context of relationships, including the problem of violence against women in Russia.

The men indicated that both positive and negative stereotypes of Russian masculinity and femininity existed in Russia. My Russian colleagues agreed that there were separate but overlapping stereotypes. One stereotype is historical-cultural-literary and the second is one that is true to life. The historical-cultural-literary stereotype is to be noble, perceptive, honest and "ready to perform a heroic deed". The true to life stereotype is knowing how to live by adaptation as well as promoting his success and his family's best interests. They agreed that gender role stereotypes were powerful forces in Russian

society. Overall, the stereotypes mentioned were very similar to American gender role stereotypes for men.

They indicated that numerous societal and family structures inhibited men from expressing the positive aspects of being a man. The societal and family structures most often mentioned were limited opportunities to increase one's income; limited options to choose, change, or expand one's career; and child rearing practices that promoted passivity, non-initiative, and irresponsibility in Russian boys and men. Most of the men indicated that only recently had they developed a clearer understanding of how societal structures had inhibited men's and women's growth and development.

They indicated that life under Soviet Communism was a primary barrier to healthy masculinity. As one participant indicated: "It was dangerous to be an individual". The primary barriers mentioned were restricted freedom and personal expression, limited career possibilities, no sex education, low salaries, and gender-role restricted family socialization processes. Most of the men indicated that the Communist Party prohibited personal discussion of men's issues including male sexual problems. One man indicated that this type of gender role socialization produced "...a type of man who loses his bearings by age 50".

The men reported that negative consequences occurred when Russian men both endorsed and deviated from the stereotypes of masculinity. These negative consequences included family violence, rape, alcohol and drug abuses, anxiety, depression, and the devaluation of the masculine stereotype. Most all of the men indicated that recent political and social changes had increased Russian men's problems with their masculinity. Two of the participants indicated that social/economic shocks had increased

the number of “male failures”. As one man indicated “You have got freedom but you do not use it; then you’re not a man!”

After defining sexism (the word was not found in the Russian language), all the men indicated that they thought Russian men had been victims of sexism in a variety of ways. The examples of sexism included: 1) discrimination in families where the mother’s roles are valued and the father’s roles are devalued, 2) excessive demands to meet masculine stereotypes in a society that restricted personal freedom and individuality, 3) men’s obligatory service in the Army. Furthermore, all the participants indicated that Russian men’s sexuality was a problematic and interacted with masculine gender roles. The problems included impotence, loss of sexual interest, anxiety, meeting the expectations of women, and “alcohol impotence”.

The men were presented with six patterns of gender role conflict that had been published in the United States (O’Neil, 1981). I asked them whether Russian men experienced any these patterns of gender role conflict. There was unanimous agreement that Russian men experienced most of the patterns of gender role conflict. They particularly mentioned restrictive emotionality, control and power problems, health care problems, and restrictive and affectionate behavior between men. There was unanimous agreement that gender role conflict caused communication problems with Russian women. The participants also indicated that male/female communication problems were related to men’s restrictive emotionality, lack of information on how to date and relate to women, and threats because of women’s emancipation. There was also agreement that political and social change had contributed to Russian men’s masculinity problems.

Besides the sexual problems, they indicated dilemmas about how to use freedom, difficulties facing risk and failure, and pressures to make money.

I asked how much violence against Russian women exists in Russia. Three of the participants indicated that violence toward women was widespread, one didn't know, and one indicated that psychological violence between partners was critical to understand Russian men's violence. At the end of the interview, I asked whether they thought that the psychology of men and Men's Studies had a future place in Russian Higher Education. All agreed that they thought Men's Studies had a place, but were unsure when it would happen. One interviewee thought the future of Russian Men's Studies depended on ongoing exchanges with Americans.

*Psychology of Men Workshop: Russian Men Discussing Western Gender Role Concepts*

The seminar brought together all of the interviewed men into one place to discuss Russian men's problems with their masculinity. It was a dynamic, free, and provocative discussion lasting more than three hours. I first gave an overview of American gender role concepts including definitions of sexism, gender role stereotypes, gender role conflict (O'Neil, 1981, 2008), and the phases of the gender role journey (O'Neil & Egan, 1992; O'Neil et al., 1993).

The first question raised by my Russian colleagues in the seminar was: What do we mean when we say "Russian men"? It was an important diversity question because there were over 100 different ethnic groups and languages in Russia. Furthermore, differences in social class and urban vs. rural men were identified as important. It was immediately apparent that diversity issues were critical to our discussion. The Russian psychologists were keenly aware of cultural differences with multiple masculinities. The group agreed

that generalities about Russian men should be made cautiously, because of the great diversity that exists in the country.

I used the gender role journey phases (O'Neil & Egan, 1992; O'Neil, Egan, Owen, & Murry, 1993), to ask the question "How do Russian men feel about their gender roles?" The phases of the gender role journey include: a) Acceptance of Traditional Gender Roles, b) Ambivalence About Gender Roles, c) Anger, d) Activism, e) Celebration and Integration of Gender Roles. The discussion centered on Russian men's ambivalence about their gender role (Phase 2 of the gender role journey). Like with American men, ambivalence was defined as being conflicted about learning stereotypic masculinity, avoiding femininity, and then becoming uncomfortable with both. Ambivalence results in not being sure how to reconcile paradoxical feelings about masculinity and femininity.

The men indicated that gender role ambivalence was typical in Russian men's lives. In trying to understand gender role ambivalence, the men discussed Russian masculine ideology as being primarily rooted in Russian folklore and fairy tales. At first, I was annoyed that the discussion had been reduced to folk lore and fairy tales. Then I realized that my American value system was operating again and that I had to discern what this really meant in a cross cultural sense. Folk lore and fairy tales learned in childhood were explained as essential to understand Russian men's masculine consciousness. There were numerous examples of how Russian fairy tales instill ambivalence about gender roles and affect consciousness about masculinity and femininity. For example, there was long debate about the masculinity of Ivan the Fool and whether he was passive, a self-made man, or a victim. Cinderella's gender role dynamics were also discussed and compared with the Ivan the Fool. This discussion, which appeared at first to be irrelevant, provided

me with a deeper understanding of how masculinity ideology had evolved in the Russian culture through fairy tales.

The men indicated that gender role ambivalence also existed when Russian women made contradictory demands on men to both embrace and reject the masculine gender role stereotypes. Furthermore, I asked how men are viewed who deviate from stereotypic masculinity. The consensus was that these men are thought to be feminine, devalued, stupid, and have “chicken minds” (meaning small brains). Most of the men agreed that when gender role ambivalence is worked through, great developmental growth could occur. As one man indicated “Some people break through to a new life. Some stay behind and become more rigid”.

I asked whether the Socialist/Communist system promoted sexism against men. Some of the men agreed that the Communist system was a large part of the problem. Others indicated that Russian men’s problems have a long history that predates the 1917 Communist Revolution. There was agreement that sexism against men has been part of overall Russian culture and family structure passed down through the centuries.

There was also a discussion of rape and how this relates to men’s problems. All the men indicated that rape is widespread and a result of dysfunctional relationships between men and women. The lack of sex education, misdirected anger, and men’s power/control problems were given as the main reason for rape in Russia.

On another issue, the men reported that there were only a few men’s advocate groups in Russia. One of these newly formed groups advocated for father’s rights with child custody cases and another focused on the rights of gays and lesbians. The men agreed that no Men’s Movement existed in Russia. One participant indicated that the public

would currently be against such a movement and consider it a “fag group”. This comment and others convinced me, that like here in America, homophobia is quite widespread. Near the end of the workshop, the group cautioned me on making too much of their comments. They reminded me that because of the diversity of Russian men, generalizations are difficult to make.

#### *Follow-up Evaluations of the Men’s Studies Intervention*

Overall, the men reported the psychology of men interviews and workshop were interesting, provocative, and opened up new horizons. The follow-up evaluations were very positive with all the men indicating that the workshop was personally valuable to them. Eighty percent of the men indicated that the workshop was professionally meaningful and brought up emotions about their masculinity and gender role conflicts. Eighty percent found the introductory lecture useful during the intervention. All of the men agreed that they were glad to participate and that the intervention was personally valuable to them. There was also evidence that the process affected the men personally. All of them reported that they had personal/professional concerns during the entire process. Nearly all the men indicated that this was the first time in their life that they had focused on their personal and professional masculinity issues.

#### Reflections on My Russian Experience: Recommendations to Internationalize the Psychology of Men

I left Moscow with a strong bond with the Russian people and a deep respect for their rich culture. What amazed me were the strength of their spirits and the depth of their souls. My Russian friends and colleagues moved me as they talked about their history and daily lives. As I reflect back on these interviews with my Russian colleagues,

I am filled with admiration on how they faced changing gender roles and adapted to a new society that is still evolving.

What did I learn from my Russian experience and what do I recommend for future cross-cultural work in the psychology of men? Eighteen years have passed since implementing this intervention and much has happened in Russia during this time. More current investigations of Russian men's experiences with their gender roles are critically needed. How would my Russian colleagues respond to the interview questions given the changes over the last two decades? Only future research and international exchanges can answer this question.

My first recommendation is for accelerated efforts by psychologists and other educators to do research on men from other parts of the world. I encourage readers to foster better networking and proactive approaches to disseminating information internationally about the psychology of men. When traveling abroad, we can build into our trips a couple of days of consultation, data gathering, or interviews focused on understanding men in other countries. Now with the Internet and other technologies, contact with international colleagues can more easily be accomplished.

Second, I learned that the psychology of men did have relevance in Russia, but only in the context of their social, political, religious, economic and cultural history. Using American gender role concepts exclusively without grasping the cultural history of another country over simplifies and clouds the real differences between two cultures. I learned that there are many similarities and differences in how Russian and American men view gender role socialization and conflict.

The differences helped me understand American men's gender role conflict more fully. This occurred when a provocative cross-cultural difference developed in our dialogue. I would ask myself "How would American men respond to this issue?" The best example is when my Russian colleagues discussed how Communism/Socialism had contributed to their gender role conflict. Listening to how Communism/Socialism had affected these men prompted the question: "How has destructive, patriarchal capitalism negatively affected American men's lives? This is a political question and one that is rarely discussed by psychologists. Destructive capitalism is when economic policies and financial exchanges between people result in unfair economic practices that produce "rip offs", discrimination, unequal opportunity, poverty, and economic injustices.

In the past few years (2000-2008), questioning the political and economic structure of our American society has been portrayed as un-American and unpatriotic. For me, this is grossly unacceptable and a potential threat to freedom of expression in a democratic society. Blind, patriotic nationalism is outdated and no longer relevant in a global community. The true patriot is one who is supportive of what works in a political system and critical of the oppressive parts of that same system. Avoiding the political and economic realities of men's lives limits our understanding of how men become conflicted with their gender roles. Just like my Russian colleagues who were aware of how Socialism and Communism contributed to their personal problems as men, we need to critically evaluate how destructive capitalism contributes to American men's problems. More discussion of these political and economic issues is needed to better understand American men's problems and men around the world who live under oppressive ideologies.

### Final Thoughts on Internationalizing the Psychology of Men

Most everyone now understands that because of the global economy and technologies, the planet's cultures and countries are intimately connected. Isolationism has become an outdated option for any country in the world. Today, I as I write this (September 11, 2009), we have a global financial crises, 45 wars being waged world wide, genocide and starvation in Africa and other parts of the world, a worldwide aids and epidemic flu pandemic, global fear of nuclear and chemical holocausts, and a host of other psychologically heavy problems that we would rather deny or ignore. Most of these problems have only multilateral solutions. Men of the world are primarily responsible for working through diplomacy to help humanity or to systematically kill people through war, famine, and terrorism. The psychology of men does have something to contribute to these social-political and humanitarian problems through our international networking.

Today, the United States is remembering World Trade bombings eight years ago and the 2800 victims that lost their lives. Victimized and traumatized Americans have not recovered or healed from this terrorist act. It will take years to understand why 9/11 happened and its true significance. Much has been written about the terrorists. But how much has been really understood about the terrorists' masculinity ideologies and Islamic belief systems that contributed to their decision to kill. There are few, if any, analyses of how Islamic beliefs and cultural values interacted with the masculine identities of the terrorists. The terrorists are considered to be courageous male martyrs and heroes in some parts of the world. Just the words "courageous male martyrs and heroes" directly connects them to the psychology of men and the importance of this book.

The psychology of men has much to offer individual men on every continent. It also has great potential to help countries work out their differences non violently through diplomacy and non-adversarial problems solving. A real man, in any culture, is one who protects and builds a human society based on values that sustain life and make the world better for future generations. This is why the psychology of men is so important on an international level and why each of you can be a critical part of internationalizing the psychology of men worldwide.

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Table 1: Questionnaire Items Used in the Psychology of Russian Men Interviews

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1. What is the Russian stereotype of masculinity in terms of personality characteristics? How are Russian men suppose to act to be considered men?
  2. What personal and societal barriers inhibit (block) Russian men from living out the stereotype of masculinity in their personal and professional lives?
  3. When men cannot meet the stereotypes of masculinity, how do they compensate or react to not fulfilling the masculine roles?
  4. Whose life is harder these days; Russian men or women?
  5. Do you think one sex is better than the other? If so, why do you think this?
  6. What do you think Russian women's gender role expectations are for Russian men (i.e. strong, being providers, protectors, ect). Be specific as possible.
  7. What do you think Russian men's gender role expectancies are for Russian women (i.e. homemakers, mothers, care takers, ECT?) Be as specific as possible.
  8. How does the previous Communist-Socialist political system produce gender role conflict in Russian men's lives? (See earlier definitions of gender role conflict).
  9. Do you think Russian men are victims of sexism? If so, how? (See earlier definition of sexism)
  10. What problems do Russian men have with their sexuality that relates to their gender roles or gender role conflict?
  11. In America, six patterns of gender role conflict have been defined that describe men's problems with their masculinity: restrictive emotionality, obsession with

- achievement and success, socialized control, power, and competition; health care problems; restrictive sexual and affectionate behavior; and homophobia. Which of these, if any, affect Russian men and why? (See previous definition of gender role conflict if necessary. between men and women? If so, which ones?)
12. Do men have any difficulties communicating with women because of their gender role, masculinity, or gender role conflict?
  13. What do you think Russian men's attitudes are about marriage and family life? How do gender roles affect these attitudes?
  14. Do you think there are any psychological sex differences between men and women? If so, which ones?
  15. What factors do you think affect Russian men's views of their gender roles? How do Russian men's gender roles develop over the lifespan?
  16. Are there different family roles for Russian men and women based on gender roles or gender role stereotypes? If yes, what are these different roles?
  17. How have the recent political and social changes increased men's gender role conflict and problems with their masculinity?
  18. How much violence toward women and children do Russian men commit? How much of this violence is related to their gender role conflict and socialization?
  19. What patterns of gender role conflict do you currently have in your own life? (This information will be confidential and not connected to your name).
  20. In the United States, Men's Studies has emerged as an academic discipline. Men's Studies analyzes men's socialization and lives as academic discipline. Do you believe that Men's Studies has a place in Russian Higher Education?

