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Cultural Discourse Analysis of Russian Alcohol Consumption

Elena V. Nuciforo

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CULTURAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF RUSSIAN ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION

A Dissertation Presented

by

ELENA V. NUCIFORO

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

May 2014

Department of Communication

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CULTURAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF RUSSIAN ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION

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DEDICATION

Памяти Ирины Николаевны Зубовой, моей бабушки
To the memory of Irina Nikolaevna Zubova, my grandmother

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the people who made this study possible and who supported me emotionally and intellectually while I was working on this research. First and foremost, I am grateful to my advisor, Dr. Donal Carbaugh, who has been with me from the very beginning with his advice, encouragement, patience, and the wisdom of a true mentor. I am much indebted to Dr. Natalia Yazykova, who was my first mentor at Buryat State University and who sparked my interest in studying intercultural communication. I am thankful to the professors and graduate students at the University of Massachusetts who helped me mature as a scholar and contributed to some of the ideas that guided this study. Doctor Benjamin Bailey and Doctor David Buchanan served as invaluable committee members. I especially appreciate that Dr. Buchanan gave me an opportunity to work on several public health projects in Russia with the Institute for Global Health. I will be forever grateful to my respondents in Russia who agreed to participate in the interviews and provided me with some incredible insights for this study. My gratitude goes out to my parents – Liudmila and Vladimir – who are always there for me when I need them. My sister Irina is my best friend, a soul mate, a patient and understanding listener. She has always told me that I will succeed no matter what. My husband Andrea has been by my side with his love and advice. He has provided me with incredible support and encouraged me to shoot for the stars. My sons Eric and Maxim were born while I was working on this dissertation and motivated me to work hard and use my time wisely.

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I dedicate this study to the memory of my grandmother Irina Nikolaevna Zubova, who did not live to see me finish this dissertation, but who is largely responsible for what I have accomplished in life so far.

ABSTRACT

CULTURAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF RUSSIAN ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION

MAY 2014

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The study uses cultural discourse analysis to explore alcohol consumption that is valued as normal and enjoyable, and to examine how alcohol consumption is viewed as a problem in both folk and official discourses in Russia.

An event called “posidet” (to sit) is deeply embedded in Russian cultural discourse in the form of a communication ritual with enjoyable alcohol consumption. The ritual has a structured sequence, commonly upheld norms, and a multilayered “sacred object” that provides access to cultural meanings of Russian personhood, relations, actions, emotions, and location in the nature of things. A ritualistic corrective sequence in case someone refuses a drink results in a clash between the face of the immediate group and the face of the individual refusing to drink. The success of communal motives over individual ones ensures achieving “understanding,” the ultimate goal of the “sitting” event.

Russian folk discourse defines problem drinking through two key terms and their clusters: “to drink” (regular consumption driven by dependency) and “to get drunk” (one-time heavy intoxication). Russian government discourse addresses problem drinking mainly through a term cluster that presumes a drinking individual’s imminent move toward alcoholism, with

irreversible harm done to health, personhood, relationships, career, and Russia as a country. A comparative analysis demonstrates that the official discourse largely ignores the practice conveyed by the folk term cluster “to get drunk,” and portrays most of the problematic consumption through a term cluster close in its meaning to the folk practice “to drink.”

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction: Russians and Drinking

Russians and drinking have a close cultural tie, a notorious connection that has only become stronger with time. Historical records going back to as early as 986 indicate that Grand Prince Vladimir decided to adopt Christianity as the religion for Russia because, unlike Islam, it allowed alcohol consumption. He allegedly explained his choice by saying that “drinking is the joy of the Russians” (Segal, 1987; Transchel, 2006; White, 1996). For centuries, foreign travelers to Russia have come home with mind-boggling accounts of the amount, extent, and scale of Russian drinking (Johnson, 1915). Russians pride themselves on their ability to consume large quantities of hard liquor at one sitting, and consider alcohol to be a major attribute in celebrating special occasions, bonding, facilitating intimate conversations, and being Russians together (Pesmen, 1995; Koester, 2003). Drinking is proclaimed to be a national trait, a part of the Russian behavioral stereotype that Russians themselves promote (Hellberg-Hirn, 1998).

At the same time, Russian society has long suffered from the detrimental effects of alcohol on the population’s health and the risky behavior that often follows inebriation. Epidemiological reports and statistical data abound in alarming numbers about the early age of drinkers, low life expectancy, violence, suicides, accidental drowning, traffic accidents, various diseases and other indicators of low quality of life in Russia caused by alcohol (Gondolf & Shestakov, 1997; Field, 2000; Nicholson et al, 2005; World Bank, 2005; World Bank, 2006; Federal Service on Consumers’ Rights Protection and Human Well-being Surveillance, 2009; Roshina, 2012). Alcoholism among Russians causes devastation for people with alcohol dependency, their families, their communities, and the country in general (Klimova, 2007).

Throughout centuries of the Russian drinking experience, the Russian (and Soviet) government made numerous attempts to reduce alcohol consumption in the country. Unfortunately, nothing could stop or “civilize” national drinking customs – neither social changes nor restrictive measures nor extensive public health campaigns (White, 1996). It seems that something very important for the Russian people has been connected to alcohol consumption traditions (Segal, 1987).

This study was conceived and carried out in an effort to understand the cultural essence of drinking that is valued as normal and enjoyable by Russian people, and to find out how alcohol consumption is viewed as a problem in both folk and official discourses. Another goal was to learn about Russian culture through the communication resources associated with alcohol consumption and their deep cultural meanings. A more practical objective was to develop a set of recommendations for culture-grounded public health communication efforts that would help to overcome alcohol-related problems in Russia.

These goals were attained through the theoretical framework of cultural discourse analysis (CuDA), which provides philosophical assumptions, theoretical perspectives and a methodology for comprehensive study of cultural communication. CuDA has the research tools necessary to explore cultural discourses and social realities as they are constituted and maintained through cultural means and forms of communication. In this dissertation, I focus on such means and forms of communication as communication ritual, ritualistic corrective sequence, communication norms, and cultural terms. Interpretation of communication means and forms provides access to deep cultural meanings shared by representatives of the same culture. The meanings revealed in cultural premises are about people’s personhood, relationships with others, actions, emotions, and location in the nature of things (Carbaugh, 2005; Carbaugh, 2007).

The dissertation begins with an extensive review of relevant literatures that lay the groundwork for this study and explain its relevance. I look at cultural aspects of alcohol consumption, explore available research on Russian drinking practices, identify key aspects of Russian culture and communication, and give an overview of studies devoted to the role of culture in public health and development communication. I then turn to the theoretical perspective, where I first explicate such foundational concepts as culture, discourse, and communication. Next, I present the key theoretical concepts used in this study: cultural terms, communication ritual, ritualistic corrective sequence, motives as strategies for action, and communication norms. The theoretical overview ends with a description of the five modes of cultural discourse analysis: theoretical, descriptive, interpretive, comparative, and critical. The theoretical perspective is followed by research questions for the study and preview of the dissertation chapters. The methodology chapter describes in detail the process of data collection and analysis.

In the data-based chapters, I first look at the “sitting,” a communication ritual that involves normal and enjoyable alcohol consumption. Then I explore what happens if a “sitting” participant refuses to accept a drink. This brings the study to exploring the ritualistic corrective sequence and motives that are used to strategize the action of the “sitting” group and the participant who does not drink. In chapter 5, I use the findings of the previous two chapters to identify cultural premises of “sitting” as a drinking practice considered normal and enjoyable by Russian people.

Chapter 6 explores two term clusters for problem drinking in Russian folk discourse: “to drink” and “to get drunk.” Chapters 7 and 8 focus on the official discourse of the Russian government in its documents and public service announcements to describe and interpret the government’s term cluster for problem drinking. Chapter 9 compares the folk and government’s

term clusters for problem drinking based on each cluster's meta-cultural commentary on people's identity, relations, actions, emotions, and location in the nature of things.

The concluding chapter summarizes the dissertation findings. It then discusses these findings based on the key theoretical propositions that guided the research. The chapter also reviews the implications of the study for Russian communication, social interaction, and public health communication. I finally discuss future studies that could be developed based on my exploration of Russian alcohol consumption as communication.

1.2 Review of Relevant Literatures

1.2.1 Introduction

An extensive literature review sets the stage for a cultural analysis of the Russian drinking as communication. First, such a literature review identifies studies of alcohol consumption as a cultural practice. This builds a foundation for understanding drinking and its consequences as specific ways of social interaction in different cultural groups. Second, studies of alcohol consumption in Russia provide an insight into the patterns of drinking behavior and values at stake when Russian people drink, talk about normal and problem drinking, and react to government-sponsored anti-alcohol measures. Third, it was essential to review existing studies of Russian communication practices to understand key aspects of Russian culture and communication. Finally, the review explores the role of culture in public health communication.

1.2.2 Cultural Aspect of Drinking

Alcohol consumption is a unique example of a complex phenomenon that has been studied by a range of disciplines that have exposed its psychological, physiological, public health, sociocultural, economic, and political impacts on individuals and societies (Babor, 2010; Boyle et al., 2013). A search for studies devoted to sociocultural aspects of alcohol consumption reveals that, unlike most other disciplines, anthropology looks at drinking as “essentially a social act, performed in a recognized social aspect” (Douglas, 1987, p. 4). Anthropology rarely focuses on drinking as a pathology or addiction that controls people’s lives. Instead, it considers drinking to be a historically and culturally grounded practice and a part of “acceptable, predictable, encouraged, mainstream, majority and normative behavior” (Wilson, 2005, p. 9).

Anthropological studies provide deep insights into how cultural meanings are created and re-affirmed in specific sociocultural settings of alcohol consumption (Heath, 1991).

In the 1960s, MacAndrew and Edgerton (2003) reviewed and analyzed a range of anthropological studies to prove that people’s behavior under the influence of alcohol is not simply the result of an intoxicated brain sending wrong impulses to a human body. The authors were able to present enough anthropological evidence from studies done in different societies to demonstrate that a “drunken comportment” differs from one cultural group to another and usually reflects acquired patterns of behavior that exist and are cultivated in each society. Such behavior is based on the society’s particular understanding of the nature of drunkenness and expectations regarding people’s performance under the influence of alcohol.

One of the latest trends in anthropological research on alcohol consumption is to explore the possibility of a greater role for places, spaces, and practices of drinking in the construction of social and political identities (Wilson, 2005). The authors who contributed to

Wilson's collection of anthropological studies of drinking sought to analyze consumption of alcohol beyond mere descriptions of performances in exotic cultures. They looked at drinking practices as "active elements in individual and group identifications, and the sites where drinking takes place, the locales of regular and celebrated drinking, and places where meanings are made, shared, disputed and reproduced, where identities take place, flourish and change" (Wilson, 2005, p. 10).

In their explorations of drinking, anthropological researchers do not explicitly turn to communication practices to see how drinking is constructed as a communicative behavior. However, there is a sense within the discipline that something is missing in the way drinking is studied. For example, Douglas (1987) pointed out a need for new methods to compare community structure to understand why and how some communities bring drinking under control through community rituals and solidarity, and other communities coerce their members to drink through competitiveness. This may be a problem not so much of new methods for understanding a community structure, but a need for a new or different approach and methods to learn about the communication strategies and practices that constitute alcohol consumption and what meaning they have for the way a particular society operates. Wilson mentioned that drinking talk communicates a variety of messages and can contribute to a more comprehensive approach to the study of the role drinking plays in the expression of identity (Wilson, 2005). However, it would be more productive to study alcohol consumption beyond the messages communicated through drinking, and explore drinking as a communication practice that constitutes cultural discourses. Such studies may provide access to deep symbolic meanings that sustain and regulate drinking practices in different cultures.

Frake (1964) used ethnography of communication to learn about drinking in Subanun culture. Frake's study proved that it was not enough to know vocabulary and grammar to "ask for a drink" in Subanun. One needed to know how and when to approach others in a drinking situation, what message form one's utterance should take, and how to navigate verbal exchanges with others depending on their social status and role relations among the participants. Subanun drinking was studied as a communication practice that defined and reaffirmed power relationships and decision making roles in the community. Frake's report demonstrated the great potential of ethnography of communication to explore alcohol consumption as a meaningful cultural communication practice.

This overview of studies devoted to identifying cultural aspects of alcohol consumption reveals that anthropology has been at the forefront in providing rich reports about the cultural setup of drinking practices in societies all over the world. Drinking and its effects on human behavior are cultural and depend on norms and expectations cultivated in cultural groups. At the same time, communication practices that constitute and define drinking have not been studied extensively. Frake's research proved that an ethnographic exploration of communication practices as part of drinking can be a productive way to learn not only about alcohol consumption patterns and their cultural meaning, but also about a society's power relations.

1.2.3 Studies of Russian Drinking

Most studies about alcohol consumption in Russia analyze the frequency and amount of alcohol intake among Russian people and examine data on mortality and morbidity connected to alcohol consumption (Leon et al., 1997; Field, 2000; Nicholson et al, 2005; Zaridze et al,

2009). Dr. Alexander Nemtsov¹ is a leading and perhaps the sole expert on the scale and “structure” of the alcohol consumption problem in modern Russia. According to Nemtsov, the “structure” of alcohol-related problems in Russia is based on four factors: overwhelming consumption of drinks with strong alcohol content (such as vodka); “Northern type” drinking, when a large quantity of alcohol is consumed in a short period of time; poor health care; and the population’s irresponsible and negligent attitude toward their own health (Nemtsov, 2009). Dr. Nemtsov has been extensively quoted in policy documents and statements issued in recent years by organizations associated with the Russian government (Public Council of the Russian Federation, 2009) and the Russian School of Economics (Center for Economic and Financial Research, 2010). In these and other publications, problems with alcohol among the Russian population are partially² explained by a dangerous culture of alcohol consumption and general acceptance of alcohol abuse among Russian people. However, brief references to “habits,” “sociocultural factors,” and “myths” of Russian drinking were not supported by references to credible studies.

Some historical studies, for example research done by Segal (1987, 1990), demonstrated how Russian drinking could be explained as a national “pathology.” The whole society is portrayed by Segal as having succumbed to the evils of alcohol and headed toward an inescapable demise. The only way to deal with the problem of drinking in this case would be to forcefully take alcohol away from the people, who do not seem to be able to comprehend what is happening to them.

¹ Dr. Nemtsov is the head of the Department of Informatics and Systematic Research (Отделение информатики и системных исследований) at the Moscow Research Institute of Psychiatry (Московский научно-исследовательский институт психиатрии).

² “Partially” in this context means a very minimal reference. Most of the discussion in the policy documents is devoted to the necessity of improving enforcement measures and increasing restrictions for alcohol licensing, alcohol advertisements, selling of alcohol to minors, hours of when alcohol is available for purchase, etc.

To understand the sociocultural aspects of Russian alcohol consumption without viewing it as excessively pathological, I looked at historical, sociological, anthropological, and other qualitative research that explored sociocultural processes underlying drinking practices in Russia. The review excluded publications requested or ordered by any governmental or political institution or agency. All the studies reviewed below were carried out by researchers who used authentic Russian data.

A historical study of Russian drinking by Transchel (2006) explored how ideas of drunkenness and ways to overcome it were conceptualized and publicly defined by people of different professions and political affiliations in their quest for power and social control in pre-revolutionary and Soviet Russia. Once Russia's population became more urban and transitioned from farming to wage labor in various industries, people moved from ceremonial toward recreational drinking. Whereas traditional drinking usually engaged the entire village in alcohol consumption on certain holidays, modern drinking in the tavern became a male domain with no ceremonial excuse necessary.

The Soviet government announced that it had inherited drinking problems among many other "evils" of the pre-revolutionary capitalist society. In spite of numerous efforts, the governmental discourse dominating the media was not successful in reforming working-class drinking practices. Workers covertly resisted state control over their private cultural practices. Eventually, the Communist party had to give up and come up with the excuse that "the social roots" of alcoholism had been liquidated, but there were still some individuals who made wrong choices and succumbed to alcoholism.

Another historical analysis by Phillips (2000) focused on the meaning and value of alcohol consumption in the daily lives of Russian workers in St. Petersburg in 1900-1929. Phillips

examined the measures taken by Soviet government and temperance movement activists who claimed that alcohol severely compromised workers' abilities, and said that they had to give up drinking entirely. The workers themselves had a different understanding of drinking and problems related to alcohol abuse. The image of an always sober "advanced worker" created by the Soviet anti-alcohol propaganda was incomprehensible to workers for whom alcohol became an indispensable part of celebrating special occasions, hard work, and communion with others like them. For workers, drinking was a way to celebrate equality and fraternity and build the "symbolic cohesiveness" of their community. More importantly, for men, drinking was an essential part of affirming their identity. Giving up drinking was equal to giving up one's masculinity.

In his book *Russia Goes Dry: Alcohol, State and Society* (1996), Stephen White examined the anti-alcohol campaign to reduce drinking in the mid-80s. The campaign advocated radical measures to remove alcohol from public and private lives and achieve total abstinence among the Russian people. The campaign produced some initial improvement in health indicators. For example, male life expectancy increased by two years during the two years of the campaign. At the same time, the campaign led to overall unhappiness among the population and widespread production of home-brewed alcohol of very low quality.

Some of the studies quoted by White reflect Soviet people's opinions about drinking. People condemned alcoholism or "drunkenness" in the abstract, but when alcohol consumption was applied to them personally, they believed there was nothing immoral or bad about drinking. In fact, drinking was often considered to be beneficial for one's health if done in moderation.

White concluded that the top-down, radical approach of the campaign was a big mistake. It would have been more effective to develop and implement local and more limited

improvements, instead of focusing on dramatic changes in the behavior of the whole society. Bottom-up, direct participation by Russians in the campaigns (not because the “party ordered” it, but because they were personally motivated to do it) could have made such incremental changes more effective. White made another key observation: that alcohol problems were not conceptualized adequately. The campaign developers ignored alcohol’s role in interpersonal relationships, interpersonal communication, and as a facilitator in various sociocultural functions of Russian people.

This review of the literature on Russian drinking will conclude by discussing two anthropological studies that specifically looked into everyday drinking practices in Russia: one by Koester (2003) and the other by Pesmen (1995, 2000).

Koester explored the contradictions attached to the meaning of drinking practices in Kamchatka, a Far East region that had been colonized by Russia. For Russians, drunkenness was considered to be a weakness, especially in the eyes of sober people. At the same time, inebriation on certain occasions was not only approved but required. When one was drinking with others, one had to maintain the group’s cohesiveness by accepting a drink. Each drink was usually marked by a toast. Drinking together to a toast bound the participants together, ensured the group’s identity and helped to maintain it throughout the ritual.

The main finding in Koester’s study was that Russians had imposed their sociocultural expectations for drinking and getting drunk together for certain occasions. This drinking “indoctrination” was forced onto the indigenous population through asymmetric power relations. Indigenous Itelmen people were obliged to follow unfamiliar drinking patterns and accept drinks under pressure from a cultural group that had more power. Refusal to drink was interpreted as resistance and a desire to stand out. As a result, excessive drinking patterns were

introduced to the local people's lives without much opposition but with the disastrous consequence of overwhelming alcohol abuse among the natives.

Pesmen (1995, 2000) introduced an ethnographic analysis of Russian drinking occasions where she identified stages of the Russian drinking ritual and provided local explanations of its symbolic meaning. She explored the cultural term "posidet'" (to sit down together to drink, talk and spend time enjoying one another's company). She described drinking rituals as "the epitome of hospitality, condensing economic, sociocultural, philosophical, and psychological dusha" (Pesmen, 2000, p. 171).

In Pesmen's study, drinking was closely connected to a person's "dusha" (soul). Drinking as a cultural practice was seen as a process leading to the opening of "dusha" in conversations. Dusha openness was a very strong indicator of liminal states, when people involved in the communication process opened up and shared their communal feelings "to the partial exclusion of the rest of the world" (Pesmen, 2000, p. 164, footnote). This humanizing way of drinking, described as a "protesting, magically generative, uniting path, a connection ... between people," was opposed to drinking practices where alcohol consumption replaced the community, "becoming an end in itself," which could "reveal, or cause absence of dusha, often attributed to the absence of hope" (Pesmen, 2000, p. 314).

Pesmen pointed out that one should not exaggerate the power of "individual choice" in Russians' decisions to drink. She said that "drinking is often not experienced as a result of some idealized free choice, but as adamant demands of one's dusha, a fellow human being's dusha, or the social context" (Pesmen, 2000, p. 186). At the same time, in some cases or on certain occasions, one could be involved in extreme alcohol consumption and excuse oneself for doing so because of communal pressure, even though such pressure might be absent.

This review has demonstrated some key findings that should be instrumental in crafting further research on Russian drinking as cultural communication. Historians Phillips and Transchel compared the meanings of everyday alcohol consumption practices to the dominant discourse of the communist government at the beginning of the last century. Russians were able to hold on to treasured drinking practices while governmental images of sober “advanced workers” and despised “drunkards” existed as fictional characters in the official discourse without any impact on the population’s behavior. White’s study explored a much later period in Russian history when a large scale alcohol campaign failed in the 80s. The study demonstrated that Russians aligned with the government in its official discourse of condemning drinking, but had parallel discursive resources that explained and justified drinking. Koester’s and Pesmen’s anthropological studies revealed that drinking practices have deep cultural meanings for Russian people. Koester stressed the strength of Russian drinking rituals as a communication resource used to colonize and establish power relationships. Pesmen brought to the forefront the Russian soul (“dusha”) that needed others and that was strengthened in communication practices. One such practice was “sitting,” when people bonded through drinking together.

Social interaction has played an important role in sustaining drinking practices in Russia for many years. Studying communication practices of drinking can lead to important knowledge both about Russian culture and alcohol consumption among Russians. Several studies have demonstrated that there is a discrepancy in the way alcohol consumption is conceptualized in the folk and official discourses. There is clearly a need in studying drinking as a rich discursive resource that should provide an insight into Russian personhood, relations among people, the way things are done, emotions, and the creation of places and spaces for drinking.

1.2.4 Russian Culture and Communication

This part of the literature review explores studies of Russian culture and communication. The findings in these studies should facilitate our understanding of Russian drinking as cultural communication, something beyond mere alcohol intake. Russian culture and communication have been studied extensively beyond the works of the four scholars who are discussed below. However, these four studies are based on an understanding that language and communication are inherently cultural. Communication here involves and employs a shared cultural history and meanings. Social interaction in these studies is a way of co-creating and negotiating cultural worlds and perpetuating a shared sense of Russianness.

Anna Wierzbicka (1992) carried out a semantic analysis of Russian culture based on the assumption that languages reflect human culture. Wierzbicka discusses cultural keywords, and grammatical and syntactical structures of the Russian language, that abound in cultural meaning and moral force obvious to Russians, but untranslatable or “unmarked” to people who are not a part of Russian culture. These linguistic manifestations of cultural “worldview” very often serve as focal points and cause communication practices in Russian culture revolve in certain ways.

“Dusha” (soul), “sud’ba” (fate, destiny), and “toska” (yearning) are some of the unique concepts in Russian culture, serving as clues to the Russian “cultural universe.” Wierzbicka identified four cultural themes that encapsulate the concepts of “dusha,” “toska,” and “sud’ba” in a salient way. The first theme is emotionality (sometimes beyond human control), which is one of the functions of human speech for Russians. Another theme is “irrationality” or “non-rationality.” This theme underlies expressions of the mysteriousness and unpredictability of life, and is opposed to “official” or “scientific” logical and rational thinking and knowledge. The third theme of “non-agentivity” presupposes that human, individual control of life and events is

limited. This theme demonstrates a tendency for fatalism, resignation, and submissiveness. The fourth theme focuses on “moral passion,” which stresses extreme and absolute moral judgments and reflects moral struggle between good and bad.

Although her study is very useful and insightful, Wierzbicka’s data came from Russian fictional literature not from “real life” interaction. Pesmen (2000) noted that Wierzbicka’s studies do not reflect everyday cultural practices among Russians. However, Wierzbicka succeeded in bringing to the foreground some grand symbols of Russian culture and explicating their complex meanings based on data from Russian literature.

Wierzbicka’s findings served other scholars of Russian language, culture and communication. They used her explanation of Russian key symbols, and explored their usage in situated communication. One focal cultural symbol of interest for those exploring Russian culture is “dusha” (soul). Pesmen (2000) conducted ethnographic research of the Russian soul as an organizing principle of Russian sociocultural life. Pesmen’s study is based mainly on narratives and their interpretations, organized around different spheres of life meaningful to Russians. These spheres of life were analyzed and explained as a universe in which the key Russian cultural symbol “dusha” (soul) guides life from the depth of Russian existence through cultural premises. “Dusha” here is “aesthetics, a way of feeling about and being in the world, a shifting focus and repertoire of discourses, rituals, beliefs and practices available to individuals” (p. 9). “Dusha” and depth as organizing principles can dominate a speech act, performance, work of art or image without being present or mentioned. Depth and “dusha” are living, constantly developing, deeply embedded principles which come to the surface with markers noticed, correctly interpreted, and appreciated only by those who are a part of Russian culture.

Pesmen's research showed that unpredictability, spontaneity and actions defying reason seem to be a way for "dusha" to come to the surface and show itself. Logic and being reasonable in one's behavior would be considered by Russians as soulless and against the overall guiding community principle. Obligations and things one is supposed to do according to schedule should never stand in the way of a person with "dusha." Priorities related to community bonding and friendship are much more important than anything else.

Ries' study (1997) is an anthropological insight into Russian talk during the time of transition when Russian people were trying to make sense of the general disintegration, troubles and hardships of perestroika. Ries' approach to describing and analyzing Russianness is to examine spontaneous conversational discourses as a mechanism for shaping ideologies and cultural stances. Following Geertz, Ries looked at a discursive world not just as a reflection of the world of social action, but also as a way of constructing it in all the variety of conceptual patterns and value systems.

Ries claimed that the importance of talk for Russians is in producing and reproducing the social paradigms of Russianness. One of the most important principles here is that of cultural continuity. No matter what stories people tell and no matter what structural transition society undergoes, they follow certain durable narrative conventions, thus creating a "Russia tale."

One of the most important achievements of Ries' study was its exploration of speech genres active in Russian society during the time of perestroika. Ries explored speech genres as reiterated patterns of means with shared meanings. These patterns functioned according to certain rules and served as the basis for communicative performance. Russian talk genres during perestroika were arranged along two axes – a horizontal gender axis and vertical power axis.

Male genres (mischievous, humorous, nonchalant, exhibitionist) and female genres (serious, involved, moralistic, order-upholding) were demonstratively opposed to each other in Russian talk. It is quite possible that the failure of the official state discourse in its attempt to curb drinking in Russia can be explained by its use of the “female” moralizing genre, which leads to resistance and activation of the genre of mischief among the population.

Carbaugh’s study (1993; 2005) is an ethnographic audience analysis that demonstrated a clash between American and Russian cultural premises about private and public communication in a Phil Donahue Show episode.

In that episode, the ethnographer heard “two cultural systems in conversation,” and he was able to analyze two models for being a person: American and Russian. The American model for being a person presupposes that each person is an individual with a “self.” Everybody’s experiences are unique, and agency is located within each individual. The expression of “self” should be tolerated and respected, and a “collective” is viewed as a constraining force that an individual should strive to get away from. This model of personhood becomes visible in a certain “expressive order” with its rules (speak what you think is right, express yourself) and symbolic forms (“problem talk” – when a problem is stated publicly and a solution is sought).

As for the Russians, in their cultural model the key symbol is not “self,” but “dusha” (soul) – “a passionate, morally committed, distinctly human agent” (Carbaugh, 2005, p. 74). Public communication (especially if foreigners are involved) should be directed toward saving the face of the Russian community, stating and affirming common morals and shared values, no matter how trite and shallow the statements made publicly may appear. At the same time, Russian communication in private contexts demands expressions of “dusha,” its openness, and deep interchange leading to mutual trust and involvement in the matters of the other person.

The Russian model of personhood, just like the American one, demands following a certain “expressive order” with norms (don’t expose your private matters to the public, don’t publicly denigrate the collective or culture you are a part of) and symbolic forms such as “razgovor po dusham” (soul talk – when people have deep personal conversations about private matters with interlocutors they feel tuned into, people who they trust).

Carbaugh explored the clash of the two models of personhood and explained that representatives of the two cultures could not discuss certain issues on a TV show because of communicational constraints and the desire to save face (although different faces and in different ways). The ethnographic analysis in this case allowed one to see the situation through the cultural lens of the participants and become aware of the deep reasons for misunderstanding. More importantly, it prevented a simplistic division of cultures into “collectivistic” and “individualistic,” and made one question such a division.

This review of four works exploring Russian language and communication provided useful observations for cultural discourse analysis of Russian drinking practices. The scholars foregrounded the great symbolic meaning of the Russian “dusha” (soul) for Russian culture and communication. It not only radiates deep cultural meanings even when it is not explicitly mentioned, but it also has enormous force to organize various forms of Russian communicative action. This can lead to situated alcohol consumption and its effects not having negative meaning for Russians. Drinking may celebrate or contribute to “dusha” with emotionality, non-rationality, non-agentivity and moral passion. Those who drink may demonstrate the genre of “mischief” and be in the process of resisting the morality upholding female genre of “order.”

1.2.5 Culture in Public Health Communication

My intent to explore how cultural discourse analysis could be used to study cultural grounding of health issues led me to review relevant literature pertaining to culture, communication, and health. It was important to learn whether any health behaviors and health-related problems had been treated as a communication practice or an important part of cultural discourses. I also wanted to see the role that culture was allocated in developing and implementing public health interventions. Finally, it was essential to find out whether those who develop and implement public health interventions ever questioned their own assumptions about health, culture, and communication.

Some of the first calls to explore the role of culture in health care and public health came from medical anthropologists, who took a social constructionist stance in studying medicine. Wright and Treacher (1982) criticized traditional assumptions of Western medicine that functions on the premise that it is completely separated from sociocultural forces. Medical anthropologist Kleinman (1995) added to the critique of Western medicine, or biomedicine, by pointing out that the process of “medicalization” leads to a search for generic roots of health conditions, to an assessment of individual risk factors, and to creation of treatments or “magic bullet” solutions for complex social problems such as alcoholism, drug abuse, obesity, aging, and violence.

Many scholars see a need to combine both biomedical and cultural perspectives to make medical and public health interventions effective. A possible compromise was achieved in the definition of health introduced by the World Health Organization (WHO) in Alma-Ata in 1978. Health was defined there as “a state of complete, mental and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.” This was a considerable step forward from the

“biomedical model,” which saw health as efficient biological functioning of the human body. The WHO definition draws attention not only to physical well-being but also to a person’s mental state and social environment (Blaxter, 2004; Schiavo, 2007).

Most current models of health communication and behavior change build interventions on thorough research of “target groups” and their social surroundings. However, interventions very often operate with concepts of health and health practices that are based on very specific meanings attached to concepts of “mental and social well-being” and “disease” or “infirmity.” Such meanings could be common in the culture of those who design and implement health interventions, but too often program developers and public health institutions do not consider themselves to be a part of a certain culture. This makes them unaware of a mismatch between the conceptualizations of health issues taken for granted in their campaigns and local cultural frameworks for health practices.

Another drawback of many public health interventions is that they lack “a common vision for how culture ought to inform intervention design and implementation” (Wilson & Miller, 2003, p. 184). In their review of HIV prevention programs, Wilson and Miller note that cultural groundedness is rarely present across the whole process of behavior change intervention, such as planning, development, data collection, implementation and interpretation of results. They also found that culturally specific themes are very often identified, but there are no details about how the results of that cultural research were translated into a culturally appropriate language.

There is definitely a sense in the field of health communication that culture is important in working with health and behavior change. Scholars talk about “cultural appropriateness” (Kreuter et al, 2002), “cultural sensitivity” (Hoeken & Swanepoel, 2008; Resnicow et al, 2000), or

“cultural groundedness” (Wilson & Miller, 2003) of health communication interventions and programs. Dutta (2004; 2008) suggests a “culture-centered approach” to exploring the meanings of health and proposes “to build health communication theories and practices from the vantage point of cultural members” (Dutta, 2008, p. 3). Collins Airhihenbuwa (1995) challenges the traditional westernized medical model and offers a culture-based PEN-3 model. This model helps to anchor health promotion programs in “a dialogic process that allows members of the targeted culture to address cultural sensitivity and cultural appropriateness in program development” (Airhihenbuwa, 1995, p. 28).

The most vociferous discussions with regard to culture and health happen in the field of development communication. Such discussions have been mainly among proponents of two approaches: diffusion and participation.

The conceptual model of diffusion was developed within the “modernization” paradigm of social development. Modernization and growth theory sees development as an evolutionary process and defines the state of underdevelopment in terms of observable quantifiable differences between poor and rich countries on the one hand, and traditional and modern societies on the other hand (Servaes, 1999). Within the modernization paradigm, traditions, religious beliefs, and community rituals have been considered to be more an impediment than a contribution to development efforts (Lerner, 1958; Melcote & Steeves, 2001).

Based on the theoretical assumptions of the modernization paradigm, Rogers came up with a model that conceptualizes development communication as a process of “diffusion of innovations.” Rogers emphasized that diffusion is a special way of communicating, and defined communication as “a process in which participants create and share information with one another in order to reach a mutual understanding” (Rogers, 2003, p. 5). Rogers’ definition of

communication does not quite correlate with his discussion of the practical implementation of diffusion of innovations. His understanding of the diffusion process – as stages of knowledge, persuasion, decision implementation, and confirmation – presupposes one-way (not mutual) communication for the transmission of knowledge. During this one-way process, the “change agent” (whose mission, by Roger’s definition, is to influence “the clients’ innovation-decision in a direction deemed desirable by a change agency” (p. 27)) is diffusing innovation to the “target audiences,” split into innovators, early adopters, early majority, later majority, and laggards. This further explanation of the diffusion of innovations model does not demonstrate “convergence” or sharing and co-creating ideas in the social world among participants. Communication here is not understood as cultural, and communication participants are “target groups” that are subjected to change through “change agents.”

When applied to resolving health-related problems, the diffusion model sets behavior change as the goal of communication campaigns, and intends to persuade individuals to change their behavior through becoming informed and altering their attitude. The mechanics of the model is called KAP (Knowledge/Attitudes/Practice): Information provides Knowledge, which leads to change in Attitudes, which in turn leads to Practice – the desired behavior change (Morris, 2003). This model has often been applied in health communication to convince a population to get vaccinated or to change their reproductive behavior. However, very often, projects based on the diffusion model have changed knowledge and attitudes without having any major influence on practice and behavior. This led to some new, more strategic models for behavior change, such as social marketing and entertainment-education (E-E). Proponents of both social marketing and entertainment-education claim that they manage to involve the local population and maintain a dialogue with them throughout the process of developing,

implementing, and evaluating their health communication campaigns (Storey & Jacobson, 2003).

The E-E and social marketing models have been criticized because what is claimed to be a formative program evaluation with active participation by local people very often turns into scripted focus groups and interviews where agency-hired representatives try to find out local people's understanding and reactions to different concepts and problems (Dutta, 2008; Melkote & Steves, 2001). These problems are usually defined and emphasized as a priority on a higher political level long before any research or involvement of local people. Limited or very structured involvement of the local population in identifying their own health issues and ways to resolve them results in marginalization and blaming people for making a "wrong" choice (Huesca, 2007).

As opposed to the "diffusion" approaches, "participation" presupposes involvement and empowerment of the local population at different stages of project development and implementation. In participatory projects, the grassroots should control the direction of what is going on and the key decisions (Morris, 2003). However, the participatory approach has been criticized because it is hard to evaluate and present participatory communication projects as effective. Participatory approaches suffer from "definitional fuzziness" (Morris, 2003; Huesca, 2003). This "fuzziness" not only impedes funding and intellectual debates, it also makes it easy for participation to become what Escobar called "co-opted" by the dominant discourse (Escobar, 1995). This happens when inherently "diffusive" public health projects such as social marketing and entertainment-education use the keyword "participation," and claim that they are culture-specific and appropriate.

Another critique of the participatory approach is that sometimes the way “participation” and “empowerment” are conceptualized in one culture is applied to another culture with minor adaptation, but based on the same principles. This point can be illustrated by an example from a health communication program, the developers of which encountered a problem with empowerment in a Hutterite community in Canada. Brunt, Lindsey, and Hopkinson (1997) explored ways to make lifestyles healthier among the Hutterites through empowering them to change the existing hegemony where the elders mostly made decisions for the whole community. After an ethnographic analysis, Brunt et al. found that empowerment was quite opposite to the Hutterites’ concept of “glassenheit,” which means living in harmony with the community and adhering to community values. Project-facilitated participation and discussions were maintained through “glassenheit,” and it was impossible to gather both men and women in the same groups and have them openly discuss their problems. Brunt et al. came to the conclusion that their initially planned health promotion program based on empowerment and participation would generally disrupt the community cultural setup and Hutterite values. However, the program developers realized that better health outcomes (improvement in cardiovascular disease indicators) could be achieved if they worked closely with the community elders and involved them in making decisions about the community’s lifestyles. This example demonstrates that sometimes participatory health communication can suffer from the ethnocentricity of empowerment. In cases like this, the processes of participation, decision making, and empowerment are imposed from outside and are not based on local values.

Morris (2003), in her overview of 44 health communication projects, found that diffusion and participation make up a false dichotomy: diffusion approaches actively use “participation” in their discourse when funders require local involvement so that the population and local decision makers will “buy into” the programs. Participatory approaches more often

than not employ instruments used in the diffusion of innovation model, largely because this is what makes their programs “reportable” and “worthwhile.” Somehow, diffusion and participation have merged into a hybrid approach with a common vocabulary. At the same time, the principles and tools they use in the field can be quite different. A common drawback of both the diffusion and participatory models is that they often operate with the concepts of development and empowerment as they are perceived in Western culture. One of the ways to overcome this challenge is to prioritize culture in development communication and find ways to develop and implement programs only after careful research in local communities and with their active involvement.

A recently developed Security Needs Assessment Protocol (Miller & Rudnick, 2008) is an example of a development initiative that adheres to the principles of participatory communication without imposing the processes of “participation” or “empowerment” as they are understood and practiced in the “Western world.” The Security Needs Assessment Protocol (SNAP) was developed by a team of scholars working for the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR). SNAP is based on thorough cultural ethnographic research, and its main goal is to provide “rigorously generated and practical cultural knowledge about community security needs for use in programming and project design” (Miller & Rudnick, 2008, p. 41). SNAP starts by consulting with a local agency about the agency’s needs in terms of security. The next stage is an assessment, when the SNAP team learns about the “cultural logic” of security in use among community members. After that, the local cultural findings are translated into the needs and goals of the client agency. The fourth stage is working closely with the local agency “to create innovative solutions to the integration of standing agency practices and goals with local systems of practice and belief in the design of services for a community” (p.

43). The idea of starting the change in the community through understanding local practices, values and goals could be a step toward an approach that can be called truly participatory.

This part of the literature review has demonstrated that there has been a general turn from conceptualizing health issues and behaviors as biological problems requiring solely medical interventions. To be effective, public health initiatives are usually advised to explore and incorporate local cultural knowledge. Interventions based on a “diffusion” perspective tend to view “target groups” as the ones that need to change their health practices in ways deemed effective and appropriate by those who develop and implement public health programs. Participatory approaches start out with the goal to “empower” people to effect changes in their health practices through active participation. However, “empowerment” and “participation” are very often not explored as cultural concepts that may not even exist in the local community.

Health-related issues bring about culture-specific symbols, values, moral and emotional dimensions, and ways and forms of social interaction. At the same time, local culture should not be considered only when the subject matter of a health intervention is conceptualized. Culture should be involved at all stages of developing a public health intervention. Even at the stage of conceiving a campaign, when program developers conduct assessment, they should understand that their methods of inquiry represent forms of cultural communication. A researcher should be aware of how meanings are negotiated and shared during an interview or a focus group. For example, Russians might appeal to higher moral values and condemn drinking during a group interview with people they do not know. They might open up and share some very intimate observations and inner thoughts during a personal in-depth interview if they feel that the conversation is soulful, they trust the researcher, and their contribution can truly help somebody.

Another important observation from this literature review is that even though people who design and implement programs are part of a culture with certain values, rules, and norms for interaction, this is very often ignored. It is necessary to look closely at the concepts that are offered as a solution to local public health issues. It is quite possible that these solutions in fact represent cultural perceptions of what is “good” or “healthy” among those who develop the campaigns, but not in the culture of the people who are being helped. Local cultures are dynamic and have abundant resources that could be tapped for some solutions for health-related issues. As the SNAP project has demonstrated, cultural discourse analysis, with its ethnographic tools, can be an invaluable approach for developing culturally appropriate programs.

1.2.6 Conclusion

The four parts of the literature review for this dissertation have helped to identify important aspects of studies of drinking as a cultural practice, cultural specifics of Russian alcohol consumption, Russian cultural communication, and culture-based health communication programs aimed at behavior change.

Anthropological studies demonstrated that drinking practices are deeply cultural. Drinking practices are performed in ways specific to each culture and have certain meanings particular to each cultural group. Exploring drinking practices in a community can open doors to important cultural knowledge. Looking at drinking as social interaction (as a communication form with certain rules and norms, symbolic descriptions, dimensions of meaning, and cultural premises) can “decode” deep cultural meanings conveyed through alcohol consumption in different societies.

Historical and anthropological studies devoted to Russian drinking revealed the importance of drinking for maintaining communal bonds and celebrating cultural values. What is considered “normal” drinking is not done just for inebriation, it is done together with other people for “душа/dusha” (soul) and other important cultural values. Russian people have certain understandings and expectations of what is acceptable and what is problematic drinking. In the past, state campaigns have condemned drinking in general and blamed individuals for alcoholic excesses. Anti-alcohol programs in Russia did not acknowledge a possibility of “normal” alcohol consumption. The population demonstrated patterns of resistance to the government-sponsored programs. If researched as cultural forms of communication, Russian drinking practices should become a discursive resource for learning about cultural ways of being in Russia. Cultural discourse analysis of how problematic and normal drinking is conceptualized by Russian people and government-run campaigns can potentially reveal important cultural assumptions and premises that could inform behavior change interventions.

Russian cultural communication studies drew our attention to a highly potent cultural symbol, the “душа/dusha” (soul). Russianness seems to revolve around “soul.” “Soul”-guided decisions are driven by emotions, irrationality, non-agentivity, and passion. The significance of “dusha” can guide cultural analysis of Russian practices pertaining to drinking.

Developers of public health interventions have long realized the importance of the local culture for the success of their programs. Unfortunately, a lot of adaptations to the needs of local communities are more “cosmetic” than based on deep cultural knowledge of local practices. Most of the interventions reflect the views and values of those who initiate, develop, or fund such public health efforts. Very often, such inherently culturally grounded notions as “empowerment” and “participation” are used and applied in the ways practiced in the culture of

those who came to the local community with change efforts. This literature review did not reveal any studies that would show how a government (not a nongovernmental organization) could learn and implement cultural knowledge about its population in a state-run campaign. Learning from the experience of the development field should help to avoid its mistakes and misperceptions.

1.3 Theoretical Perspective: Cultural Discourse Analysis

1.3.1 Introduction

This study of Russian drinking practices is based on philosophical assumptions, theoretical perspective and methodological guidelines for cultural communication research elaborated in cultural discourse analysis (Carbaugh, 2007). Cultural discourse analysis (CuDA) was developed on the foundation of the ethnography of communication (Hymes, 1972; Carbaugh, 1995; Philipsen & Coutu, 2005) and related theories of cultural communication (Philipsen, 2002) and speech codes (Philipsen, 1997).

CuDA studies cultural discourses and social realities as they are constituted and maintained through cultural means and forms of communication. The main focus here is on responding to two general questions. First, how is communication shaped as a cultural practice? Here an analyst explores symbolic resources and forms (or means) of communication in a particular community. For example, if we look at Russian drinking, we will identify, describe and interpret communication forms (ritual, social drama) and other discursive resources or means of communication (cultural terms, communication norms) that constitute and maintain the cultural practice of alcohol consumption and talking about different ways of alcohol intake in Russia.

The second question for a CuDA researcher is, what system of symbolic meanings is conveyed by the identified means of communication? Answering this question, an analyst decodes a “symbolic world” and deep meanings underlying the participants’ means of communication. This provides access to a meta-cultural commentary with radiants of meanings about who people are (being, personhood and identity), how they are related to each other (relationships), how they feel (feelings, emotions and affect), what they are doing (acting, actions and practice), and how they are situated in the nature of things (dwelling) (Carbaugh, 2007; Carbaugh & Cerulli, 2013).

In explicating the philosophical and theoretical assumptions at the base of cultural discourse analysis, this theoretical perspective discusses views on culture, discourse, and communication that are cornerstones of this research. The next step is to elaborate the key theoretical concepts focal to this study: cultural terms, communication ritual, social drama, ritualistic corrective process, facework, motives as strategies for action, and communication norms. These concepts serve to identify cultural means of communication and bring to the surface deep cultural meanings for further analysis.

One of the advantages of cultural discourse analysis is that it offers a comprehensive methodological framework with five investigative modes: theoretical, descriptive, interpretive, comparative, and critical. This overview of the theoretical stance ends by looking at the five investigative modes and identifying what they offer to a communication study of alcohol consumption.

1.3.2 Culture

The review of literature for this dissertation looked at anthropological studies devoted to cultural aspects of alcohol consumption. These studies demonstrated rich, data-based evidence proving that the way people drink is deeply “cultural.” Very often, anthropologists study drinking patterns and traditions to uncover valuable knowledge about people’s “culture.” The way people engage in communication with others is also “cultural.” The review of public health and health communication research demonstrated an urgent need to develop public health programs based on “culture” to make interventions “culturally” grounded, “culturally” appropriate, “culture” centered, and “culturally” sensitive. One of the most important concepts that needs to be clarified from the very beginning in this study is “culture.”

The key definition of culture in most ethnography of communication studies comes from interpretive anthropology, and it was offered by Geertz:

Culture ... denotes an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes towards life (Geertz, 1973, p. 89).

Fieldwork and research has allowed scholars of anthropology and ethnography of communication to elaborate on the five important propositions in the definition above: (1) culture is based on symbolic resources; (2) these resources are patterned and are organized in a system; (3) there are certain shared meanings sustaining the system of patterned resources; (4) shared symbolic resources allow people to partake in social actions; (5) the system of cultural resources and their meanings is historically grounded.

Symbolic resources in cultures include nonverbal and material symbols as well as symbols expressed in key terms (and clusters of terms) and symbolic forms of social action (Carbaugh, 1990c). All these resources serve as “vehicles for conceptions.” “Conceptions” here

are structures of cultural meanings carried by symbols (Schneider, 1976). The “vehicles” can operate because of a complex systemic organization that sustains them. Schneider points out that “symbols and their meanings can be clustered into galaxies” that have “core or epitomizing symbols as their foci” (Schneider, 1976, p. 218). Such “galaxies” are interconnected because they share cultural meanings. Another way to look at the systemic organization of a culture’s symbolic resources is to view it as a code. Here the system of “cognitive and moral constraints” helps us understand and experience culture as “the fixed and the ordered” (Philipsen, 1987, p. 249).

Effective functioning of the system of symbolic resources is only possible because those who claim membership in a certain culture share meanings rendered by systems of symbols, symbolic terms and their clusters, or symbolic forms of cultural action. Such shared meanings are about “the nature of the universe and man’s place in it” (Schneider, 1976, p. 197). Symbolic resources and their meanings also embody cultural members’ “ideas, attitudes, judgments, longings, or beliefs” (Geertz, 1973, p. 91). Here a culture could be seen from the standpoint of a “community” where members “claim a commonality derived from shared identity” (Philipsen, 1987, p. 249). “Shared identity” becomes possible through sharing cultural meanings that have to be “deeply felt,” “commonly intelligible,” and “widely accessible” (Carbaugh, 1988a, p. 38).

In his ethnographic study of the “Donahue” show, Carbaugh described and interpreted a system of symbols that structure senses of personhood for US American speakers. The core symbols that helped to understand US Americans’ orientations in the world in terms of their own personhood were “the individual,” “self,” and “social roles.” Description and interpretation of this system of symbols revealed what constructs US American personhood and signals membership in the US American community (Carbaugh, 1988b).

Geertz, in his definition of culture above, talked about the value of symbolic forms “by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge and attitude towards life.” This aspect of culture allows its members, who meet for the first time, to be able to understand one another and act upon cultural symbols. Cultural members are also able to take part in various forms of cultural social action, follow cultural norms, or understand when such norms are violated. A great example of this is the notions of personhood shared by the US Americans that were demonstrated in Carbaugh’s study. His study found that the US American assumption about an “individual” is that he or she should “speak factually” about his or her “individual thoughts, feelings, and experiences.” People who had never met before would gather at the Donahue talk show and express their “selves” openly and freely using a shared universe of symbolic resources and their meanings (Carbaugh, 2005). However, an intercultural contact in the context of the same talk show revealed that not every culture shares the same assumptions about personhood. Unlike the US Americans, a Russian (Soviet at the time) audience affirmed values of collective virtue and morality. The symbolic resource of “soul” prevented them from “open” and “free” talk show discussion of private matters such as sexual relationships (Carbaugh, 2005). In that particular intercultural encounter, US Americans and Russians were not able to collaborate in their social actions because they did not share meanings for the symbolic resources that were used.

Culture is “historically transmitted” and “grounded,” with symbolic resources and their meanings shared by cultural members “projected from a very particular past” (Carbaugh, 1990c, p. 20). This does not mean that culture is handed down from one generation to another as some sort of family heirloom. Culture changes, but new symbolic resources and their meanings are constructed based on shared experiences in congruence with “old” meanings common to the cultural members. Schneider (1976) calls this ability of culture a “generative” function.

In this study of Russian drinking, culture is assumed to be a system of highly patterned symbolic resources that are shared by cultural members. These resources have deep cultural meanings accessible to those belonging to the same culture and make it possible for the members to take part in joint social actions. Both symbolic resources and their meanings are transmitted historically and are resistant to change. Any cultural change usually occurs in tight connection with the existing shared symbolic resources and their meanings.

1.3.3 Communication

The detailed overview of culture above builds a bridge to understanding cultural discourse and communication practices within it. Cultural discourse in CuDA is defined as:

a historically transmitted expressive system of communication practices, of acts, events and styles, which are composed of specific symbols, symbolic forms, norms, and their meanings (Carbaugh, 2007, p. 169).

While this description bears a lot of similarities with the core definition of culture by Geertz and other scholars discussed previously in this chapter, there is one important distinction. Symbolic resources that construct culture do not necessarily have to be *communication* practices, acts, events and styles. In other words, the social process of communication between people who represent a certain cultures is “acted through distinctive culture systems,” but it is “not itself culture” (Carbaugh, 1990c, p. 21). It is important to understand culture because its resources and meanings are key in constructing and maintaining communication processes, but it is also important not to equate communication to culture and culture to communication.

In this study, communication is conceptualized as “construction and maintenance of an ordered, meaningful cultural world which can serve as a control for human action” (Carey, 1975,

p. 6). This view stands in a stark contrast to the way communication is conceptualized, studied, and applied in many public health programs. As mentioned in the literature review, public health approaches, such as “diffusion of innovations” (and its spin-offs), see communication more as “transmission of signals and messages” (Carey, 1975, p. 3). The difference in the two views on communication is that in the first one (Carey calls it “ritualistic”), all the participants in the communication process represent a culture, and they bring with them certain symbolic resources and share certain meanings that structure the discourse where they construct reality through communication as cultural participants. In the second definition (“transmission view”), some participants in the communication process are senders and others are receivers. Information is transmitted and feedback comes back, showing the success or failure of the “transmission.” The product of communication in the “transmission” view is a message that is either received or not. In the “ritualistic” view, the outcome of communication is construction of a shared reality (or a failure to construct it).

In the “ritualistic” view, communication is not just a device to transfer signals and messages from one participant to another. It is a culturally grounded process that acts to construct and maintain reality. Hymes, the founder of ethnography of communication, pointed out that communication not only differs cross-culturally and is patterned, but also serves as a metaphor of social life (Hymes, 1962; Hymes, 1974). Following Hymes’ programmatic statement for ethnography of communication, decades of fieldwork have proved that certain patterns and systemic relations are demonstrated in the means of communication. These systemic relations are sustained and function based on the meanings shared by cultural members. And, indeed, communication plays an important role in constituting sociocultural life (Carbaugh, 1995; Philipsen, 1992).

Ethnography of communication, as well as related theories of speech codes and cultural communication, have developed and applied a conceptual background and methodological toolkit to identify communication means and their meanings. Using this methodology in studying communication, we can get closer to understanding sociocultural life in different cultural communities. For example, exploring cultural communication practices associated with drinking in Russia, we can access deep cultural meanings conveyed by the symbolic resources that people use when they engage in alcohol consumption or talk about it. This study looks into such symbolic resources and forms of communication as cultural terms and the term clusters that they build, communication rituals, social drama, corrective processes to restore one's face in an interaction ritual, motives as strategies for action, and communication norms. These theoretical concepts are reviewed below.

1.3.4 Cultural Terms

Key cultural terms are explored in cultural discourse analysis to identify and interpret deep local meanings about people's identity, their relations with others, feelings, acting, or dwelling (Carbaugh, 2007). Burke offers one of the most comprehensive theoretical stances on what makes cultural terms focal for understanding human activities through exploring communication practices. He talks about understanding "terminology of motives," "terministic screens," and "associational clusters" as a way to decode how "identification" with others occurs when we communicate with them (Burke, 1965; Burke, 1966; Burke, 1973).

Burke suggests a theory of motives where any motive is a "shorthand word" for a situation, and it is assigned and interpreted based on the cultural group's general orientations. Motives are highly dependent on a particular vocabulary and associated systems of meanings in

different cultural groups. Verbally molded and socially constructed concepts in people's minds provide certain ways to interpret reality. So there is no absolute judgment or "interpretation of reality." Each situation derives its character from a particular framework of interpretation specific for each cultural group. This turns motives into "terms of interpretation" when an analyst can get access to people's "rationalization" about what is accepted as good and useful in their society and what they should do to expect good treatment (Burke, 1965).

Burke's discussion of "terministic screens" draws our attention to language as "symbolic action." Any terminology reflects reality, but in a specific way. It directs our attention to some channels rather than others. Many of people's "observations" are but "implications of the particular terminology in terms of which the observations are made" (Burke, 1966, p. 46). There is no such thing as "objective" observations. Any type of behavior is usually observed through some kind of a "terministic screen," which directs our attention, interpretation and ultimately understanding of this behavior in a certain way.

If we identify and interpret key cultural terms, we can open doors to identifying and interpreting the motives verbalized by people when they perform or explain their actions. Analysis of the expressed motives underlying people's actions leads to decoding the "terministic screens" of different cultural groups. Burke suggested organizing such terms in "associational clusters," where an analyst would put together "what goes with what" (Burke, 1973, p. 20). Burke talked at length about how to inspect literary works for such "associational clusters," tease out the "structure of motivation," and understand the "symbolism" or deep cultural meaning of words.

Several scholars have used Burke's method of cluster analysis to explore key terms repeatedly and noticeably used by cultural groups to convey deep cultural meanings in communication.

Foss (1984) studied the discourse of the Episcopal Church establishment when it was confronted by the possibility of allowing women to be ordained as clergy. Foss analyzed words that clustered around four key terms: “church,” “priest,” “male,” and “female.” The analysis revealed polarities within the four term clusters: the hierarchy and its meaning for the establishment and the challengers’ view of the way things should be changed within the church. An alternative world verbalized by those who wanted women to have access to priesthood was based on a set of values and meanings opposing the establishment. This new opposing discourse challenged the existing system and eventually changed it.

In another study based on Burke’s cluster analysis, Mackenzie (2007) explored alternative identities created by people with Williams Syndrome (WMS) through their stories. Mackenzie identified three key terms in the discourse of people with WMS: “normal” (once people with WMS start “getting called normal,” they hope to start “getting treated normally”), “positive” (WMS is considered to be something “positive, not negative” in terms of attitudes and the contributions people with WMS can make to society), and “feelings” (students with WMS are said to experience everything with intense feeling and emotions, which is reflected in their music and their affective community). The clusters around these three terms were contrasted with the key groups of terms used to define people with WMS in the medical discourse: “abnormal,” “negative,” and “thinking without emotion.”

Mackenzie’s cluster analysis proved to be an efficient tool to understand, interpret, and tell a story about people with Williams Syndrome who studied at the Berkshire Hills Music Academy. This story differed from the mainstream and medical discourses. The study demonstrated new ways to understand people with WMS and advocate for better learning and social opportunities for them.

Key cultural terms, their clusters and their symbolic meaning were explored by Burke and those who used his ideas and concepts in studies of discourse. This dissertation explores key terms and their clusters as an important part of Russian drinking practices and the Russian folk and official discourses about problematic drinking practices. The study assumes that key terms and their clusters are means of communication used consistently in communication practices. These means of communication radiate meanings that are shared by people belonging to the same culture and enable social interaction practices. Describing and interpreting implicit and explicit meanings expressed by key cultural terms and their clusters allowed this study to formulate cultural premises. These cultural premises provided access to a meta-cultural commentary about alcohol consumption in Russian culture.

1.3.5 Communication Ritual

One of the research goals for this dissertation was to look at how normal drinking practices among Russians are performed as a communication ritual. Communication rituals have long been a focus of studies in ethnography of communication. A definition guiding most such studies was offered by Philipsen, who described a communication ritual as “a structured sequence of symbolic acts, the correct performance of which constitutes homage to a sacred object” (Philipsen, 1987, p. 250). The review below identifies studies that explore communication rituals and foreground deep cultural meanings that sustain these rituals and make them valuable for ritual participants.

Philipsen’s definition of a communication ritual draws our attention to four main aspects of this form of communication: (1) it is highly patterned, with a “structured sequence” of actions recognizable and performed collectively by members of a certain culture under

certain circumstances; (2) these actions are “symbolic,” or have a deep cultural meaning and significance, very often beyond what happens or is communicated directly during the ritual; (3) the actions need to be performed in a way that is “correct” or follows certain norms and communal expectations; (4) ultimately, the ritual “pays homage to a sacred object” that may not be verbalized or exist in any physical form or shape. Such an “object” could be some communal value, common good, or culturally recognized and collectively appreciated way of being.

“Structured” actions performed during a communication ritual do not have to be the same exact words or phrases uttered in a predictable sequence every time the ritual is performed. Communicative actions during a ritual have certain predictable patterns of functions that they accomplish. For example, in the *keh chee* (“guest spirit”) ritual in Chinese culture, the structured sequence starts out with the host offering a guest more food; then the guest declines to have more food, the host challenges the refusal, and finally the guest submits to the offer (Chen, 1990/1991). In a Colombian ritual of leaving a party that Fitch (1997) calls “*Salsipuede*” (leave if you can), communicative actions are performed based on the following pattern: a guest at a party announces his or her intention to leave, the host asks for an “account” or an explanation of a reason to leave, the guest gives an account, and the host denies the account and/or offers an alternative. Carbaugh (1996) described a ritualized communicative sequence of “being a fan” at basketball games in the USA. The sequence adhered to by the fans starts out with “warm-up” conversations serving to “orient the crowd to the events at hand,” and then the “salutation,” when the fans pay homage to the flag and the national anthem. This is followed by the “introductions” of the teams, when fans ridicule the opposing team. Ensuing “game talk” includes such kinds of talk as “individual comments,” “group chants and cheers,” and “halftime talk.” The ritual is concluded by “dissipation,” when the game is over and fans chat about the results as they leave the event.

The three examples of ritual patterns above were singled out here to demonstrate that a communication ritual can often happen during or as part of other human activities that may not conventionally be considered “communication,” such as eating, partying, or watching a game. As with alcohol consumption, in all these practices the participants are engaged in a patterned social interaction that makes these practices recognizable, culturally distinct, meaningful, and performed collectively. Learning more about communication rituals that accompany various practices provides deep insight into cultural meanings constructed and reaffirmed by the participants.

Another important note about the “actions” that constitute a ritual’s sequence is that they do not have to be spoken or performed. Hastings (2000) explored an Asian Indian ritual of self-suppression, where the main orientation is toward being, not doing. Hastings’ alternative definition of a ritual mentions “a constellation of thoughts” (not the “sequence of symbolic acts” that we see in Philipsen’s definition) that need to be processed correctly to express or suppress self-disclosures and self-expressive actions in interpersonal encounters among Asian Indians.

Geertz once said that “meanings can only be ‘stored’ in symbols” (Geertz, 1973, p. 127). He further explained that “symbols” contain deep cultural knowledge about the world, emotional life, morality, and ways to behave. This knowledge may be lost on those who happen to notice a symbolic action but are unaware of its meaning. Consider, for example, Geertz’s famous example of a wink: for some it could be a contraction of the eyelids, for others it may mean “conspiracy in motion.” In a similar way, the “symbolism” of each move in the communication ritual has a certain recognizable and clearly identifiable meaning for the cultural members. Such symbolic meaning that transpires through a ritual performance usually does not relate or transfer information. It represents shared beliefs and controls and regularizes a social situation to maintain society in time (Carey, 1975; Firth, 1973).

One of the main meanings symbolized through a patterned sequence of communicative acts in a ritual is expressing, experiencing and reaffirming a shared cultural identity (Carbaugh, 1990b). Perhaps the best examples are two studies that were able to decode how shared identity is symbolized through ritual performance: explorations of the US American Communication Ritual and the Israeli Gripping Ritual (Katriel & Philipsen, 1981; Katriel, 1990). Enactment of the Communication Ritual in the US is based on the assumption that “selves” are separate and burdened by their individual problems. An expected symbolic outcome is to solve personal problems and affirm relationships while validating the unique “selves” of the participants through performing the sequence of the Communication Ritual. Performing the Gripping Ritual in Israeli culture allows people to express their communal identity and locate problematic issues in public life through a recognized, symbolically structured sequence. The focus here is on “common fate” and bringing the problem to the surface without any solution in sight.

These two examples demonstrate how adhering to certain patterns in communication can be symbolic, and serve as a “vehicle for conception” (Schneider, 1976). This “vehicle” for constructing and reaffirming meaning in a ritual can work only if all the actions are performed “correctly” or follow certain rules and expectations. The most obvious expectation for the correct performance of the ritual is for the participants to follow the suggested sequence of the ritualistic form of communication. If a US American is approached by another person who experiences a problem and “would like to sit down and talk,” he or she is expected to reciprocate by initiating a Communication Ritual (Philipsen & Katriel, 1981). If, in Colombian culture, a party host just says “good-bye” instead of initiating a *Salsipuede* ritual, the guest and everybody else at the party may feel that “connectedness” and relational bonds are not recognized and appreciated (Fitch, 1997).

Other norms and expectations that make ritual performance “correct” concern the situation or physical and psychological set-up of when and where the ritual is initiated. For example, the Griping Ritual is not supposed to be carried out at work with the boss present. Having the “right” participants in the ritual also ensures its “correctness”: foreigners or children are not supposed to be part of the Griping Ritual (Katriel, 1990).

Besides certain expectations for ritual performance, mentioned above, ethnographers describe specific norms of a communicative action, or “a system of ought statements that participants can use as bases for instructing, regulating, and evaluating social action” (Carbaugh, 1990b, p. 8). Carbaugh suggested that such communication norms are based on verbally invoked moral standards, and they are used to coordinate people’s behavior. Learning about the moral values at the foundation of such verbalized norms provides access to cultural expectations for acting correctly.

The previously mentioned “game talk” is regulated by a normative rule that “fans should be competitive and passionate in conduct” (Carbaugh, 1996, p. 56). This rule operates within the “metacommunicative moral” that when in a contest, one should play through a “proper” form with words, not “improperly” with physical aggression. This normative stance regulates the “correct” performance of the “game talk” ritual in US American culture, when sports fans avoid physical violence and resort to structured verbal play to celebrate their team and being together against the other team’s fans.

Norms that regulate communicative action and structure the discourse are discussed in greater detail in a separate section below.

If all the norms and expectations in a ritual are followed through performing a structured sequence of communicative acts that have deep symbolic meaning for the participants, then the ultimate goal of celebrating a “sacred object” of the ritual should be

accomplished. A sacred object is some “ideal or cultural good” (Hall, 1997), something shared and maintained to keep the “social equilibrium” and order (Philipsen, 1987). In the Colombian ritual of Salsipuede, the sacred object is the *vinculo*, the relationship formed among the participants of the social event where the ritual is initiated when a guest decides to leave (Fitch, 1997). In the Chinese *keh chee* ritual, the sacred object is the host’s face and his or her ability to be generous by offering more food. However, the guest’s generosity is equally important, because by eating what is offered, the guest maintains the host’s face (Chen, 1990/1991). In Asian Indian culture, every individual has a certain role in the “social order,” and is supposed to live and act according to the constraints and responsibilities of that order. The intrapersonal ritual of self-suppression honors that social order, making it a “sacred object” (Hastings, 2000). The Griping Ritual celebrates “togetherness” (Katriel, 1990), whereas the US American communication ritual is focused on honoring the “selves” of each participant, and their ability to have a “relationship” with one another (Katriel & Philipsen, 1981).

As we see from the summary of “sacred objects” above, rituals most often honor achieving harmony and interconnectedness with other members of the cultural group while maintaining and strengthening some social order. Exploring communication rituals provides important insights about their patterns, the meaning of each symbolic move within that pattern, expectations and norms for communicative performance, and what kind of value or common good is celebrated. As noted above, a lot of communication rituals are an integral part of different kinds of human activities. If we want to learn more about such human activities, the “heuristic” value of the communication ritual becomes of primary importance (Philipsen, 1993). This study of drinking as communication does not claim that all Russian alcohol consumption is a communicative practice. Rather, it looks at the communication ritual of “sitting” that is an important communication process, with alcohol consumption as an integral component. This

ritual involving drinking is considered normal and valued in Russian culture. Learning about this communication ritual should reveal deep cultural meanings associated with normal and enjoyable drinking practices among Russian people.

1.3.6 Ritualistic Corrective Sequence

If certain drinking practices could be considered a normal and valued communication ritual used to identify with others and maintain the social order, then any intervention, or a participant's refusal to drink during such a practice, would interrupt and disturb the normal flow of social interaction among the ritual participants and challenge the "sacred object" of the ritual.

Several theoretical concepts are used here to understand the deep cultural meanings that ritual ruptures have for the participants and how such ruptures occur. A social drama is a "spontaneous unit of a social process" (Turner, 1980) when a cultural group deals with a "breach" and either repairs it, or splits up as a group in the process of cultural negotiations. Philipsen suggested considering "social drama" as a form of communication that serves "to remake and negotiate a particular people's sense of communal life" (Philipsen, 1987, p. 252). Another useful theoretical concept is that of a "corrective process" (Goffman, 1967) that ensues when interaction ritual participants need to repair their "faces" after a particular ritualized expressive order is interrupted. In this study, I bring together both Turner's "social drama" and Goffman's "corrective process" frameworks in a theoretical concept of "ritualistic corrective sequence" to explore ruptures in the Russian drinking ritual. A precedent for using both frameworks exists in Carbaugh's (1996) study of a decision making drama that emerged as a result of discussing the environmental and economic consequences of developing a natural site.

Social dramas occur when the expected flow of events is challenged by cultural group members in a way that is noticeable and significant enough to require a collective action on the part of the group members. Turner emphasized that social dramas can occur only among people “who share values and interests and who have a real or alleged common history” (Turner, 1980, p. 149). Such “common history,” for example, being Russian and knowing exactly what one is expected to do when drinking with others, allow participants to notice when something out of the ordinary occurs, challenges the group’s integrity, and interrupts the culturally expected flow of events.

According to Turner (1980), social dramas have four phases. First, a “breach” happens. Such a breach usually breaks some commonly held rule, norm, or routine flow of events. The breach is deep and causes division of interests and loyalties. A “crisis” is the second stage of the social drama. This is when the antagonisms become visible, everyone involved recognizes the disturbance, sides are taken, and the problematic nature of the incident becomes public. In the third stage of “redressive action,” attempts are made to resolve the crisis through repairing or correcting the damage. Such attempts may vary depending on the nature of the breach and the scale of the cultural group’s involvement. The final stage of the social drama – either “reintegration” or “schism” – depends on the success of the redressive actions. In the case of reintegration, the necessary repairs are made and the group comes back to the initial pre-crisis stage of cohesiveness. The “offenders” are reintegrated back into the community. In the case of a schism, everyone in the group recognizes the irreparable breach and goes their separate ways. In either outcome, the community learns important things about itself, its values and interests, existing rules, and how cultural group members are retained or lost.

Another way to explore breaches in a communication process is to look at the “corrective process” that participants initiate when their “faces” are threatened in an

“interaction ritual.” Goffman described one’s “face” as the “positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact” (Goffman, 1967, p. 5). One’s face is maintained through interactive processes with others who also have to do necessary “facework” to successfully accomplish communication goals. People’s “faces” are not “lodged” in their minds, they are located in the flow of interactive events. Goffman called “facework” ritualistic because one’s face is a “sacred thing” that requires an “expressive order” consisting of acts with a “symbolic component.”

If there is a “threat” to one’s face, then a “corrective process” consisting of four moves is set in motion to “re-establish a satisfactory ritual order” for the participants. The first stage of such a process is “challenge,” when everyone’s attention is brought to the misconduct. At the second stage, an “offering” is made when an offender is given a chance to perform necessary work and restore the expressive order that he or she has interrupted. An “offering” may consist of “compensation for the injured” if the threatened face is that of another participant. The participant can also provide “punishment, penance, and expiation for himself” if he or she lost his or her own face. The stage of “acceptance” follows the “offering.” This is when the group or other participants acknowledge and accept the offender’s offer to restore the interactive process. In the terminal stage of the “corrective process,” the forgiven person expresses “thanks” (Goffman, 1967).

Goffman’s framework for restoring an interaction ritual has similarities and overlaps with Turner’s description of what happens in a social drama. “Breach” in the social drama would be something that interrupts the flow of the interaction ritual. The “crisis” stage includes Goffman’s “challenge,” but it is a broader and more encompassing explanation of what happens right after the violation or interruption occurs. Social drama’s stage of “redress” was not explicitly described by either Turner or Philipsen, but Goffman’s stages of “offering” and

“acceptance” provide an idea of what communicative actions may happen as the participants work on repairing the ruptured expressive order. Goffman mentioned the possibility of negative outcomes when interaction participants withdraw and deny the offender his or her status as a participant in the interaction. To accommodate the possibility of a negative outcome, this study of Russian drinking will refer to this stage as “acceptance/rejection.” The final stage of Goffman’s “thanks” suggests a positive outcome for the face being repaired. Turner’s final stage of “reintegration/schism” offers a more comprehensive view of what can happen in a social group as a result of the social drama: the offender is either brought back or there is recognition that the breach is irreparable.

Another major difference between the two frameworks is the “sacred object,” or the ultimate goal of the ritualistic corrective sequence. Turner (and Philipsen after him) broadly described the “violated” notion as the “rule of morality, law, custom, or etiquette” that constitutes “social process.” The group’s “rules of living” are brought to everyone’s attention and are negotiated (Philipsen, 1987, p. 252). This broad definition provides a lot of room for defining the notion that is violated and is at the core of a social drama.

Goffman defined the “sacred object” as the “face” of participants lodged in the interaction process. The face is threatened and requires a “corrective process” similar to “social drama.” As Chen (1990/1991) has noted, Goffman’s framework of restoring “face” is based on a more Western cultural idea of individual identification with others and individual strategies for cooperating with others. If we explore other cultures, the “face” that is threatened and needs to be saved may not be that of individuals (and not even “teams” interacting with other “teams” (Goffman, 1986)). That “face” could be the collective face of a group. The group’s “face” could be co-constructed and maintained through a ritualistic process by participants sharing the same

cultural background. If somebody refuses to participate in a ritualistic interaction process with the rest of the group, the face of the whole group is threatened.

Comparing the “sacred objects” that guide the performance of the “social drama” and “corrective process” of restoring one’s face, we see that the ultimate goal for repairing a rupture in the ritualistic interaction process should depend on the ritual participants and specific cultural circumstances where such a rupture happens. A study of the interaction process would show what is threatened, what the participants are negotiating, and what they are working on restoring. If we conventionally say that “face” is the threatened notion, with “positive social value that a person claims for himself,” we need to explore and define what the “positive social value” is, and “who” is claiming it: an individual as defined by others, a group of individuals in a tight interpersonal relationship in this particular situation under these particular circumstances, or a cultural group that is performing a cultural form of action guided by a common moral value.

Identifying the sacred object of the social drama/corrective process should reveal the kind of “face” that the participants are trying to “save” or “repair.” It can also get us closer to understanding deep cultural meanings and values held dear in a particular community. Interchange during the “redressive” stage of the social drama is an invaluable resource to get closer to the “sacred object” and to cultural meanings guiding people’s discursive strategies. As mentioned above, the “redressive” stage is best described when it includes a dialogic interchange of “offering” and “acceptance/rejection.”

The theoretical stance guiding the exploration of a ruptured drinking ritual in this study is based on frameworks developed by Turner/Philipsen, Goffman, and Mills. What is called in this dissertation a “ritualistic corrective sequence” is a form of communication set in motion when there is a “breach.” Further moves will be described and interpreted based on the following stages: crisis (with a “challenge” when attention is called to misconduct); redressive

action (with a dialogic interchange of “offering” and “acceptance/rejection”); and the final stage or reintegration or schism. The ultimate goal of a ritualistic corrective sequence as a form of communication is to remedy the ruptured expressive order that is needed to maintain a “face.” The “face” as a sacred object of the ritualistic corrective process should be defined based on the specific cultural premises guiding communicative behavior in the community.

1.3.7 Motives as Strategies for Action

When conflict situations arise, and people are confronted for their noncompliance with the behavior expected from them, they tend to come up with what are called “accounts” (Scott & Lyman, 1968). The accounts are offered when a person’s action is questioned by others and judged to be not complying with the social order. Scott and Lyman (1968) provided a range of examples that helped to classify various accounts as excuses and justifications. Stokes and Hewitt (1976) discussed aligning actions that help to maintain interpersonal communication in the face of a problematic situation that challenges the culturally expected flow of events. Both “accounts” and “aligning actions” were developed on the basis of “motive talk,” a concept offered by Mills (1940). People’s verbalized explanations of the actions that guide their behavior choices have been studied in a variety of contexts. Trammel and Chenault (2009) explored justification of violence among inmates who assaulted incarcerated child molesters. Sharp (2009) studied vocabularies of motives used by conservative Christian victims of domestic abuse who struggled both to maintain their religious identity and to go through divorcing their husbands.

In this study, the stage of “offerings” and “acceptance/rejection” in the ritualistic corrective sequence when someone refuses to accept a drink in a “sitting” presents a unique glance into the “vocabularies of motives” that Mills (1940) described as “terms with which

interpretation of conduct by social actors proceeds” (p. 904). One of the most appealing notions in Mills’ theory of situated actions and vocabularies of motive is that people’s motives are not located in their heads and they are not based on individual desires. Mills described motives as situated in verbal actions. Such motives facilitate “common grounds for mediated behavior.” Mills explained that observation and analysis of the terms used to verbalize “motives” in “situated actions” should help to understand the functions of certain types of speech actions and what they accomplish. Treating motives as “strategies for action,” we can find out what is considered “good” for the community, how deep meanings of actions can be explained through motives, and how the participants of a communicative process conceive and carry out the illocutionary force used for repairing the interactional ritual.

The reason for identifying and exploring motives in the “redressive” stage of the social drama is that they usually justify (“offering”) or criticize (“acceptance/rejection”) an act when people coordinate their actions with others. In such situations, motives are closely linked with accepted norms for human interaction and behavior. Such norms could be “typical constellations of motives” that are referenced by society and linked to certain “classes of situated actions” (Mills, 1940). Exploring cultural terms that participants use to formulate motives in the “redressive” stage of the ritualistic corrective sequence can open doors to the deep normative assumptions and premises guiding discursive decisions in particular communities. Further interpretation of motives should yield important information about what is considered to be “good” in the community, and what norms guide people’s social action.

1.3.8 Communication Norms

Hall (1988/89) reviewed a number of social science studies to understand how norms and actions are related. The search for studies that explain this relationship was based on the assumption that communication plays a role in how actions are “constituted” and “mediated” by norms. In other words, communication efforts are considered to be, to an extent, necessary for the norms to exist, function and regulate human action. Hall was able to identify three approaches that link norms and action: the normative force approach, the interpretive approach, and the discursive force approach.

The normative force position assumes that certain norms exist in a society, and they are internalized by individuals. Communication’s role is to be a “neutral tool” to transmit objective realities and norms as part of such realities. Referring to sociologist Parsons and other scholars, Hall explained how under the normative force approach, societal norms make individuals’ actions predictable and explainable. Society always has sanctions ready if a norm is violated. However, this approach does not explain change in the society and largely ignores the role of communication as a process that constitutes norms.

If we look at the theories of development communication reviewed earlier in this dissertation, we see some key similarities in the normative force approach and the “diffusion of innovations” perspective. In both theories, communication transmits knowledge considered important, good, and useful. It also provides sanctions if the “important, good, and useful” knowledge is not perceived as such and acted upon by the “target audience.” Neither theoretical position acknowledges that the communication process itself is constitutive and based on a certain system of cultural values that may have a different understanding of what is “important, good, and useful” and what norms regulate human behavior.

In the interpretive approach, norms exist to account for social order, but they are not themselves a cause of that order. People's actions are not oriented toward norms, they are linked to perceived meanings that arise from social interaction. In this case, if a norm is violated, there is no "objective reality" or "social order" that could signal that there was a violation and that a sanction is needed (Hall, 1988/89). In the interpretive approach to norms, there is a way to explain why social change happens, but this approach lacks any accountability for society's stability and continuity.

The third approach to linking norms and action Hall identifies as the discursive force position. The discursive approach considers norms to be sociocultural constructions that are largely instrumental in coordinating human action and ensuring social order. Violations of norms are possible and even likely, but they all happen in the context of common understanding that a violation has occurred, and there are various culturally conditioned ways to deal with such a violation through communication. This position relies heavily on the norms as resources for interpreting, evaluating, explaining, partially constraining, and very often predicting (but not absolutely binding) social action (Hall, 1988/89). Learning about human action through interpreting norms as they are expressed in the cultural discourse is one of the key ways to get access to systems of cultural meanings.

The discursive force approach to norms has been a guiding position for the ethnography of communication, the theory of speech codes, and cultural discourse analysis. A key point in these communication theories is that discursive force makes it possible to predict, explain, and control various forms of cultural discourse about the intelligibility, prudence, and morality of communicative conduct (Philipsen, 1997). This approach is different from positioning a norm as means of communicating and facilitating a regular behavior, or "transmitting" a message to act in this or that way. The discursive approach looks at the norm as a sociocultural construction

representing a shared system of morals recognized to be legitimate in a cultural group. And the cultural group members can communicate these morals to instruct, regulate, and evaluate social action (Carbaugh, 1990a).

Hymes (1974) wrote about norms of interpretation (implied in the belief system and governing interpretation of cultural meaning) and norms of interaction (rules governing various forms of speaking). Carbaugh (1990a) went further and elaborated on these two types of norms as code rules and normative rules.

Code rules imply cultural meaning and a system of folk belief to provide for shared coherence in performing a cultural action. They are formulated in the following way: “in context C, the unit, X, counts as meaningful on another level as y, y’...” (Carbaugh, 1990a, p. 140). This type of norm helps to understand relationships among symbols in a term cluster by defining the cultural context and clarifying the meaning conveyed through cultural terms. For example, if we look at different cultural contexts that require the use of different terms for the process of alcohol intake among Russians, we will be able to identify discourse junctures that demand specific terms conveying certain symbolic meanings. As a result, this will make it possible to formulate “code rules” for different kinds of drinking to be located at different places in the Russian moral system.

Normative rules are ought statements based on abstract cultural patterns that guide and coordinate sociocultural action. Such action is performed in different forms of communication, for example, the rituals and ritualized dramas that were discussed in more detail above. Carbaugh suggested formulating normative rules in the following way: “In context C, if X one should/not do Y” (Carbaugh, 1990a, p. 142). Formulating normative rules that ensure cultural performance of rituals and ritualized dramas is possible through analyses of moral messages stated by the participants of cultural forms of communication. For example, in a

Russian “sitting” ritual, a participant may say: “We can’t just drink without a toast! What are we – alcoholics?” This statement implies that when drinking with others, if people want their drinking to appear “normal” (or non-deviant) they should make a toast and drink to it together. It is also possible to discern normative rules from the way cultural discourse is structured (Carbaugh, 2007). For example, when a Russian makes a toast in the informal context of a “sitting” situation, his or her listeners will easily interrupt and interfere in the toast production and contribute to the toast’s content. Observing this communication sequence may lead us to the normative rule regarding the appropriateness and common acceptance of co-producing a toast when “sitting” with others. Further analysis of these norms should lead us to deep cultural meanings that are expressed through following or failing to follow these rules. As a result, we will be exposed to deep cultural meanings about relationships that are demonstrated, established, strengthened, and re-affirmed through drinking together.

Identifying norms implicit in a cultural discourse is important to get access to deep cultural meanings and moral systems that make communication possible. It is also instrumental to formulate norms (both code and normative rules) for further comparative analysis of two or more cultural systems. If we compare norms guiding social action in folk discourse and norms considered appropriate in government/public health discourse, we may get access to possible differences in understanding social actions and design ways to breach these differences.

1.3.9 Five Investigative Modes

The five investigative modes of cultural discourse analysis make it a comprehensive research framework for exploring cultural communication practices and their meanings. The first three modes (theoretical, descriptive, and interpretive) have to be present in any CuDA

research. The comparative and critical modes are optional (Carbaugh, 2007). The five research modes are not meant to be followed in a strictly linear fashion. An analyst may return to the theoretical mode at any time. For example, interpretive accounts may require additional theoretical input, or the comparative and critical stages of inquiry may add new findings that can lead to reconsidering theoretical concepts. One of the main advantages of having five investigative modes in cultural communication research is that they create multiple possibilities for interdisciplinary application. In the case of this dissertation, the CuDA framework is used to demonstrate its applicability and value for research that informs and helps to develop public health interventions.

The *theoretical* mode of CuDA explicates philosophical assumptions, main theoretical concepts and methodological frameworks used in the research. For example, the theoretical mode in this research on Russian drinking practices explains key aspects of culture, discourse, and communication. It also presents the main theoretical concepts, such as cultural terms, term clusters, communication ritual, social drama, corrective process, communication norms, and others. In the process of discussing the concepts of social drama and corrective process, we created another concept that is more applicable for this study: ritualistic corrective sequence. All this sets the research in the context of the theoretical framework of cultural discourse analysis.

The *descriptive* mode of inquiry is responsible for demonstrating what actually happens in a communication practice. The researcher produces transcripts of communication practices with all the necessary comments about where, when, and how the phenomena of interest happened and who the participants were. For example, a description of key cultural terms would require creating and presenting transcripts that demonstrate contextual use of such terms – both explicitly and implicitly (Foss, 1984).

In most cases, CuDA researchers use some methodological guidance or a framework that helps to describe the aspects of a communication practice as it happened in real life. One such framework is Hymes' descriptive framework, which has been used extensively in ethnography of communication research. Hymes (1972, 1974) suggested focusing ethnographic descriptions on one of the following social units: speech community, speech situations, speech event, speech act, etc. The description of speech event components is organized according to a framework based on the mnemonic device SPEAKING: S is situation and scene, or the circumstances of the event; P is the participants; E is the ends, or purposes and outcomes of an event; A is the act sequence of the event; K is the key, or "tone, manner, or spirit in which the act is done" (Hymes, 1974, p. 57); I is the instrumentalities, or channel and mode; N is the norms and rules; and G is the genre, which could be formal or casual. The SPEAKING descriptive framework is presented in more detail in the chapter devoted to analysis of the "sitting" ritual.

An analysis of a speech event based on the SPEAKING framework is not solely a descriptive presentation of a social unit. The descriptive mode here merges with the *interpretive* mode, when an analyst identifies cultural meanings active in different components of the communication phenomena or practice under analysis. These meanings could be expressed explicitly, when the discourse participants discuss cultural meanings important for them, or implicitly, when the CuDA analyst decodes deep symbolic meanings that are conveyed but not directly stated in the communication practices. CuDA organizes interpretive accounts around five radiants of cultural meaning: (1) meanings about being, personhood and identity; (2) meanings about relationships; (3) meanings about action and practice; (4) meanings about emotion and affect; and (5) meanings about place and environment (Carbaugh & Cerulli, 2013; Carbaugh, 2005; Carbaugh 2007).

To produce interpretive accounts, a CuDA researcher first formulates cultural propositions that present statements composed of cultural terms. Such propositions are close to the native accounts and reflect taken-for-granted knowledge (Carbaugh, 2007).

The next level of interpretive work involves developing cultural premises. Such premises summarize the results of interpretive work, and they are defined as the “analyst’s formulations about participants’ beliefs about the significance and importance of what is going on, both as a condition for that practice of communication, and as expressed in that very practice” (Carbaugh, 2005, p. 5). Cultural premises reveal the essence of meta-cultural commentary that is not explicitly stated by cultural members, but is taken for granted and considered to be common sense in the analyzed culture.

After an analyst comes up with a description of communication means and interpretation of their cultural meanings, he or she can move on to a *comparative* mode of CuDA, when communication practices and other symbolic resources are compared across different cultural discourses in search of similarities and/or differences. Such comparison may expose different cultural meanings attached to seemingly similar means of communication.

When discussing the reflexivity involved in the comparative mode, CuDA researchers have pointed out two ways to compare communication practices (Carbaugh, Nuciforo, Molina-Markham, & van Over, 2011). One is to focus on one type of communication practice or communication phenomenon in two or more speech communities. Another way is to focus on a moment of “cultural asynchrony,” when communication fails because different cultural meanings are attached to the means of communication by the participants.

The comparative mode is important in applying the CuDA concepts and framework in the fields of policy development, international relations, and, in the case of this dissertation, public health. Carbaugh (2008) talked at length about how CuDA can help to explore and

identify a potential “gap” between the cultural meanings of symbolic resources and forms of action active and valuable in the local community and service agency. Such a comparison results in important recommendations for more efficient policies and practices of change. A great example of such work is the SNAP project described above in the literature review (Miller & Rudnik, 2008). Witteborn (2010) used CuDA to identify how practices and values related to children’s rights are promoted by the transnational NGO Save the Children. She found that the communication practices of self-expression and participatory decision-making are not only drastically different from the local practices in Urumqi in northwestern China, but sometimes they contradict what local people consider to be a valuable and appropriate communication practice.

The *critical* mode of CuDA research strives to answer the question: “Does this practice advantage some more than others?” To answer this question, a researcher needs to explain how he or she came to identify and evaluate “advantage,” “power,” and other terms that do not necessarily exist in the culture under investigation. Even when such terms do exist in the studied culture, they may not have the symbolic meanings or cultural premises that the same terms have in the investigator’s culture. As ethnographers of communication have pointed out (Carbaugh, 1989/1990; Philipsen, 1989/1990), the critical mode of an ethnographic inquiry comes from an ethical standpoint that needs to be presented before any evaluative statements are made. Judgment that comes with critique should not “overpower the act of inquiry” (Philipsen, 1989/1990, p. 256).

1.3.10 Conclusion

This theoretical stance identified several concepts important for cultural discourse analysis. Culture here is based on a historically grounded system of patterned symbolic resources that have meanings shared by cultural members. Sharing these resources and their meanings helps cultural members coordinate their social actions and take part in them. Communication practices that build a cultural discourse are patterned and sustained by cultural symbolic resources. Communication as a deeply cultural practice helps to maintain society, and if studied as such, reveals important knowledge about cultural members and their ways of being and acting in the world. This study specifically focuses on such symbolic resources and forms as communication ritual, ritualistic corrective sequence, motives as strategies for action, and communication norms.

This dissertation is built on three key theoretical positions. The first is that a communication ritual presents a communication form that has heuristic value in ensuring continuity of social interaction and providing access to key cultural meanings. The second is that cultural meanings of social action are conveyed by term clusters that are constructed by cultural terms and are arranged in the cultural discourse according to certain rules. The third is that the five investigative modes of cultural discourse analysis organize research in a way that helps to describe, interpret, compare, and take a critical stance in exploring means and meanings of cultural communication.

1.4 Research Questions and Preview of the Chapters

My review of relevant literatures from a range of disciplines, including communication, anthropology, history, sociology, and public health, brought to the fore the need to study

alcohol consumption as a communication practice deeply embedded in Russian culture.

Anthropological studies emphasize the cultural significance of what transpires during collective drinking, but they do not present comprehensive explorations of alcohol consumption as a communication practice specific to Russian culture, with its own ritualistic sequence and cultural meanings. There are many mentions of the problematic nature of alcohol intake in Russia, but beyond statistical data and historical accounts there is not much sociocultural analysis of the current state of affairs and how this problem is handled by the government and perceived by the population.

One of the directions this dissertation takes is to explore the cultural value of drinking practices for Russian people through studying these practices as a form of communication. Another direction for this CuDA study is to look into the essence of what is considered to be problematic alcohol intake by the Russian people and their government. All this is done to provide valuable input for developing a public health intervention that could aim to reduce the burden of alcohol abuse in Russia.

The theoretical stance explicated earlier in this chapter provided a detailed description of the philosophical and theoretical concepts that are instrumental in exploring drinking practices as communication and learning about what is considered to be problem drinking in folk and official discourses. Four sets of research questions that guide this study are presented below. I also preview each chapter that contributes to responding to the research questions.

To understand the value of drinking among Russian people, it is important to learn why some ways of consuming alcohol are considered to be enjoyable and appealing in spite of the potential threats to health. One such valued drinking practice is “*посидеть/posidet*” (to sit). The first research question is:

1. What is the cultural value of the “sitting” ritual for the Russian people?

Understanding the cultural essence of the ritual of “sitting” as a form of communication is based on describing and interpreting the following four aspects: (1) the constitutive parts of the ritual; (2) the sequencing of the ritual’s structure; (3) the norms and rules for the ritual’s correct performance; and (4) the deep cultural meaning and significance of the ritual. These four key aspects of the communication ritual are at the core of the first set of two research sub-questions in Chapter 3:

1.1 What are the components of the “sitting” ritual: setting and scene, participants, ends, acts, key, instrumentalities, norms and rules, and genre? I use Hymes’ SPEAKING descriptive framework (Hymes, 1974) to answer this question. This framework emphasizes the importance of the psychological settings and physical circumstances of the ritual (setting and scene), the people who make the ritual possible through contributing and following a variety of expectations (participants), the tone, manner, or spirit in which the ritual is carried out (key), the directness and spontaneity of interaction during the ritual (instrumentalities), and the level informality of what is going on (genre). Three communication norms regulate the correct performance of the “sitting” ritual. These norms help to maintain the group’s integrity and the continuity of the communicative experience for everyone involved in “sitting.”

The act sequence of the “sitting” ritual, and the toasting rituals that constitute “sitting,” is important for understanding a proper cultural action. The chapter specifically focuses on the toasting and drinking ritual sequence and the symbolic phrasing used in the ritual. Collective production of toasts brings Russian people together. Recurrent symbolic phrasing of toasts involves cultural vocabulary with deep meanings for all those gathered at the “sitting” event.

1.2 What are the deep cultural meanings and significance of the “sacred object” of the “sitting” ritual for its participants? The “ends” of the “sitting” ritual, or its “sacred object,” are

built on three layers of sacredness that are specific for this particular group, separate the group from the outer world, and bring the participants closer together.

Chapter 4 is devoted to studying the cultural implications of refusing to drink together with the others in a ritual of toasting and drinking during a “sitting” ritual. Two research questions are set here:

1.3 What is the ritualistic corrective sequence that occurs when one participant refuses to drink with everybody else during a “sitting” ritual? Refusals to drink and the group’s responses to such refusals are analyzed here as a ritualistic corrective sequence that is based on Turner’s concept of a social drama (Turner, 1980) and Goffman’s framework for the corrective process of face saving (Goffman, 1967). Description and interpretation of the stages of the ritualistic corrective sequence that starts after someone refuses to drink bring to the surface another layer of sacredness in the “sitting” ritual – the collective face of the group.

1.4 What individual and collective motives are brought up to strategize action in refusals to drink? Motives verbally exchanged by the participants in the offering and acceptance/rejection stage of the ritualistic corrective sequence are considered here to be “strategies for action” (Mills, 1940). These expressed motives help to carry out the illocutionary force for repairing a “sitting” ritual interrupted by someone’s refusal to drink. Cultural discourse analysis of the “battle” of individual and collective motives highlights the importance of the communal values that are active in constructing the group’s face in the “sitting” ritual.

Chapter 5 summarizes all the descriptive and interpretive findings of the two data-based chapters about the communication ritual of “sitting” and the ritualistic corrective sequence that ensues when someone refuses to drink while “sitting.” Based on this material, the chapter identifies key cultural terms, formulates cultural propositions and develops cultural premises of the Russian ritual of “sitting.” The research question for Chapter 5 is the following:

1.5 What radiants of meaning about personhood, interpersonal relationships, emotions and feelings, proper actions, and location in the nature of things are expressed through the communication ritual of “sitting” and serve as a condition for its correct performance?

With this research question, Chapter 5 concludes cultural discourse analysis of what is considered to be normal and valuable drinking practice in Russian culture.

The next goal of this dissertation is to understand what Russian people consider to be problem drinking. The main research question here is the following:

2. How is problem drinking defined in Russian folk discourse?

To respond to this research question, Chapter 6 focuses on three sub-questions:

2.1. What key cultural terms constitute the term clusters for problematic alcohol consumption in Russian folk discourse?

2.2. What communication norms structure the term clusters for problem drinking?

2.3. What deep cultural meanings underlie the term clusters for problem drinking in Russian folk discourse?

To answer these three questions, Chapter 6 analyzes two key folk terms and their term clusters. These two key terms referring to alcohol consumption that is said to cause problems (albeit in two different ways) are: “напиться/napit'sia” (to get drunk) and “пить/pit'” (to drink). The two terms and their term clusters are analyzed as functioning in the discourse according to communication norms that are constituted by code rules and normative rules (Carbaugh, 1990a). Chapter 6 concludes by comparing the communication norms and cultural premises that build the term cluster for problematic alcohol consumption in Russian folk discourse.

Chapters 7 and 8 focus on exploring the official discourse of Russia's government on problem drinking, and the guiding research question here is:

3. What is considered to be problem drinking in the Russian government's official discourse?

To respond to this question, the study looks at various policy documents and public service announcements. The first subset of research questions that are answered in Chapter 7 concerns the terms used by the Russian government to refer to various forms of alcohol intake in its official documents:

3.1 What are the key cultural terms referring to alcohol consumption in the Russian government's official documents?

3.2 What cultural meanings do the terms imply about Russian personhood, actions, emotions and location in the nature of things as far as alcohol consumption is concerned?

3.3 What are the communication norms (code rules and normative rules) for each term referring to alcohol consumption in the official discourse?

3.4 What cultural premises underlie the terms used to refer to alcohol consumption in the Russian government's official documents?

These sub-questions help to identify eight cultural terms that are used (to different extents and with different frequencies) in official documents to refer to different ways alcohol is consumed by the population. Analysis of the radiants of meaning for each of the terms brings to the fore code rules about the terms' specific meanings in a specific context and normative rules about the terms' strategic usage at different discourse junctures. Cultural premises for the terms identify a range of meanings about personhood, actions, emotions, and location in the nature of things for all the eight terms.

Chapter 8 explores problem drinking as it is portrayed in the public service announcements about alcohol developed by a governmental agency and shown on national TV in Russia. The sub-questions in this chapter focus on identifying key cultural terms and their

clusters reflecting the essence of problem drinking in the official discourse. Interpretation of the term clusters provides access to deep cultural meanings about people's being and personhood, relationships, actions, emotions, and location in the nature of things:

3.5 What are the key terms used by Russia's government to talk about problem drinking through public service announcements?

3.6 What deep cultural meanings about people's being and personhood, relations, actions, emotions, and location in the nature of things are presumed and conveyed by the term clusters consistently used in the PSAs?

Since the PSAs purpose is to effect change in people's minds about certain values and alcohol-related behavior, Chapter 8 specifically looks into the change that is expected to occur in people as a result of watching the PSAs. The research sub-question here is:

3.7 What kind of change in people's actions is the Russian government expecting from the PSAs?

Chapter 9 concludes the data-based analysis for this dissertation and focuses on the CuDA comparative mode with a research question:

4. What are the similarities and differences in the radiants of cultural meaning about personhood, relations, actions, emotions and location in the nature of things associated with consuming alcohol in a problematic way in the folk and official discourses?

Chapter 9 compares radiants of meaning implied in the three different ways of problematic alcohol intake. One is a portrayal of problem drinking through the term cluster in the government's discourse, and the other two ways of problem drinking are reflected through two term clusters in the folk discourse.

CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGY: DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

2.1 Data Collection

The data collected for this study included qualitative interviews, participant observation, films and TV series, home videos, web discussions, public service announcements, and government documents. All the data were in the Russian language and were collected in 2007-2010.

2.1.1 Qualitative Interviews

In cultural discourse analysis and other theoretical frameworks at its foundation, qualitative interviewing is an important methodological tool for getting access to the means and meanings of communication. One of the most distinctive features of qualitative interviewing is that it does not need to have a specific set of questions that must be used repeatedly in a clearly defined way and order. A qualitative interviewer has a “general plan of inquiry” that guides the conversation between him or her and the respondent (Baxter & Babbie, 2004, p. 325).

Developing a “plan of inquiry” in an ethnographic study takes into account the referential function of language to “point to persons, objects, events, and processes” (Briggs, 1986, p. 42). For example, in this study, it was important to find out what exactly Russian people do in an event described as “(хорошо) посидели/(khorosho) posideli” (to have sat together (well)), or when one could say that it did not quite work out “to sit.” Responses to these two

questions provide an insight into the components of the “sitting” event and their meaning for Russian people.

Another important language function that needs be recognized and used in designing and analyzing qualitative interviews is indexical, or when the meaning is highly dependent on the context of the analyzed utterance (Briggs, 1986). In this study, an instance of the indexical meaning came through when some interviewees refused to respond to questions about alcohol consumption, saying “I don’t drink.” Follow-up questions and analysis of such responses led me to formulate a normative rule for the key term “to drink” and its cluster: “one should not attribute any terms from the ‘to drink’ cluster to one’s personal experience, if one does not want to be considered as somebody who is suffering from alcohol dependency and permanent damage to one’s self.” Both indexical and referential functions of language were taken into account when the interview guide was developed and updated on the basis of previous interviews, while the interviews were conducted, and when interview transcripts were analyzed based on the specific goals of this CuDA study.

The interviewing process in this CuDA study was guided by seven stages described by Kvale & Brinkmann: thematizing, designing, interviewing, transcribing, analyzing, verifying, and reporting (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2008). The first stage of *thematizing* focused on identifying the purpose of interviewing and what it was setting out to explore. Perhaps the best description of the purposes of qualitative interviewing was introduced by Lindlof and Taylor (2010). Data collection through qualitative interviews was oriented toward these purposes:

- Understanding the social actors’ experience and perspective through stories, accounts, and explanations. By asking the Russian respondents to describe how they “sit” together with others, the study was able to identify the “sitting” ritual’s setting and scene, participants, ends, actions, key, instrumentalities, norms, and genre. When the

respondents were asked to come up with stories and evidence of someone consuming alcohol in a problematic way, they provided an insight into what Russian people understand by problem drinking.

- Eliciting the language forms used by social actors. When the interviewees responded to questions about problem drinking, they provided explanations that were rich in cultural terms constituting the two term clusters for problematic drinking practices in the folk discourse. Individual and collective motives for strategizing action in refusals to drink were identified through questions about what the respondents (or people they have had drinks with) usually say if they refuse to have a drink.
- Gathering information about things or processes that cannot be observed effectively by other means. Deep cultural meanings about some key components of the “sitting” ritual could not be derived only through participant observation or analysis of films, home videos and internet posts. Interviews helped obtain access to the “sacred object” of the “sitting” and encouraged the respondents to share their thoughts about what makes that ritual especially valuable and unique for them. Besides, as mentioned above, the interview sequence and the respondents’ choice of phrasing in answering the questions helped to identify communication norms for discussing problem drinking.
- Inquiring about the past. This is where the respondents were asked to recall their experiences with drinking and refusals to drink.
- Verifying, validating, or commenting on information obtained from other sources. The interviews do not serve as the sole source of qualitative data because CuDA analysis in this study is based on triangulating the results of multiple sources of qualitative research. At the same time, each source is valuable in corroborating the findings. For example, interview respondents were asked whether an episode from the movie “The

Irony of Fate” (which was analyzed in detail to learn about a rupture of the “sitting” ritual and motives as strategies for action) reflected what might happen in real life and why the character Zhenia did not succeed in refusing to drink.

- Achieving efficiency in data collection. Besides being an important part of the data triangulation process, the interviews were helpful in obtaining important data that were not available from any other sources. Interviewing was also a flexible methodological tool that was used during three years with both male and female respondents of different ages and different educational and social backgrounds.

The second stage in Kvale and Brinkmann’s interviewing process is *designing*, when the researcher plans how to accomplish his or her purposes. At this stage, the interview guide was developed. It had approximate questions reflecting the study’s “plan of inquiry.” The choice of themes for the questions was based on the literature review, participant observation, and the specific research questions set for this study. For example, it was already known from Pesmen’s study and my own experiences that “sitting” is a valued cultural practice that involves alcohol consumption considered normal and enjoyable. As a result of this knowledge, the interview questions reflected that “sitting” was a practice involving alcohol consumption and recognized as valuable in Russian culture.

The interview questions focused on six major themes: (1) what “health” or “being healthy” means for the respondent; (2) what the respondent understands by “sitting (well)” with others; (3) what kind of alcohol consumption is normal and appropriate; (4) what kind of alcohol consumption is not normal and may cause problems; (5) the ways to refuse a drink at table while “sitting” with other people; (6) the main features of “soul talk³.”

³ The interview themes of “soul talk” and what it means to be healthy in Russia gained only marginal attention in this dissertation. However, they provided a lot of valuable

Interviewing is the third stage of the process. It requires the researcher's presence in the field and actual conversations with the respondents. All the interviews were conducted in 2007, 2008, or 2009, with the majority conducted in 2009. The total number of respondents was 77, including 45 women and 32 men. The age of the respondents ranged from 18 to 75 years; the average age was 38. Most of the interviews were with one person. However, three respondents were interviewed together in two cases and two respondents together in five cases. Respondents were interviewed in the town of Ust-Barguzin (2), the city of Pskov (6), the city of Ulan-Ude (31), and the city of Moscow (37). Some of the respondents were my family and friends (10). Other respondents were approached at two outpatient clinics (26), at three universities (22), at a construction site (13), and at an office (6). All the respondents were told the objectives of the interview and the goal of the study. They agreed to sign the informed consent in Russian (Appendix B).⁴ The interviews lasted from 8 to 40 minutes, with a total of 20 hours and 35 minutes. All the interviews were conducted in Russian and recorded on a digital voice recorder.

At the fourth stage of the interviewing process, *transcribing*, a written text of all the interviews was created in Russian. Such important things as interruptions, long pauses (and what they implied), laughter, and various exclamations were noted in the transcripts. This was sufficient for the initial analysis. If a more detailed transcript was needed for further analysis, I went back to the recordings and noted more details of the interaction with the respondents.

background information for understanding the "sacred object" of the "sitting" ritual and for understanding why people prioritize alcohol consumption with others over abstaining from a drink and staying healthier. Both themes require further investigation and should undoubtedly contribute to culturally grounded public health efforts in Russia.

⁴ The informed consent was approved by the University of Massachusetts Amherst Institutional Review Board.

Analyzing the interviews involved responding to the research questions of the study: exploring the key means of communication exposed in the interviews and cultural meanings of these means. In order to code the qualitative data from the interviews and create reports with the selected data for a cultural discourse analysis, the computer program ATLAS.ti 6 was utilized.

The sixth stage of *verifying* involved evaluating the findings and seeing whether they were corroborated by other types of qualitative data collected through this CuDA research. Since interviewing for this study took place during three years when I was involved in other public health projects in Russia, I brought back preliminary findings to representatives of Russian culture and asked if they agreed with them.

Reporting is the seventh stage of Kvale and Brinkmann's interview process. In the case of this study, reporting is presented in this publicly defended dissertation at the University of Massachusetts.

Kvale and Brinkmann's description of the seven stages of the interviewing process does not quite reflect the "cyclical dynamic" of the activities through which ethnographic research gets done, as conceptualized by Carbaugh and Hastings (1992) and later presented in the five CuDA modes (Carbaugh, 2007). And even though the cyclical way of doing research concerns the overall research design, it is important to note that methods of inquiry within the research also reflect the general dynamics of ethnographic or CuDA research. The researcher does not go through the seven stages of interviewing in a linear fashion. He or she constantly goes back and looks for ways to reconceptualize and readjust the methods of data collection and analysis. Interviewing becomes a fluid process that is being guided by certain thematic milestones, but constantly changes based on new knowledge of the cultural discourse that is being investigated. This cyclical nature is not only important for qualitative interviewing, it is also key to the participant observation that is discussed next.

2.1.2 Participant Observation

The participant observation is noted for its appropriateness in studying “attitudes and behaviors best understood within their natural setting” (Baxter & Babbie, 2004, p. 301). This statement could be referring to drinking practices, which are deeply embedded in cultural settings and are hard to describe through secondary accounts without losing such important attributes as spontaneity, the emotional set-up of the situation, the natural flow of events, and other significant features.

Throughout my life, I have participated in quite a number of social gatherings involving alcohol consumption when family and friends got together to celebrate various holidays and other important events. Some of the most eye-opening occasions were intercultural encounters when Russian people were part of foreign gatherings, or foreigners participated in Russian drinking practices. This is when the Russian way of drinking and its sociocultural value stood out as something different from that of other cultures. I used my experiences to reflect on the means and meanings of drinking practices for Russian people and to plan for the participant observation of drinking practices for this study.

I went to Russia to collect data for this research in 2007 (105 days), 2008 (46 days), 2009 (43 days), and 2010 (14 days). During each of these trips, I participated in what could be described as “sitting” events. The “sitting” events lasted on average four hours. In total, I was able to do participant observation at 10 “sitting” events that included 55 drinking rituals. I did not record any of my “sitting” experiences on camera or voice recorder, but I made careful observations and took detailed notes after each event. In addition, I used home video recordings of several parts of two “sitting” events with six drinking rituals where I was a

participant in 1993-1994. I was not involved in CuDA research at the time the events happened, but I was able to watch the video recordings as a CuDA researcher to identify the main components of the communication events and analyze them.

The observations of the “sitting” events were guided by Hymes’ SPEAKING descriptive framework (1972). Attention was paid specifically to the situation, participants, goals and outcomes of the event, the acts constituting the event and their sequence, emotional key, the linguistic and non-linguistic instruments, the norms of interaction, and the genre or type of communication during the event. Every instance of refusals to accept a drink and the reasons for the refusal were also noted. Nonverbal and verbal behavior of the participants and the details of their physical environment were carefully described.

Besides doing participant observation of “sitting” events, I noted instances of the cultural term “sitting” in my communication with Russian friends and family. Every time I heard someone refer to an event as “мы так хорошо посидели” (we sat together so well) or “не получилось хорошо посидеть” (it didn’t work out to sit together well) in a conversation, I would write down the instance and the available details of the event that made it a failure or a valuable cultural experience. I noted and described 60 instances of spontaneous use of the “sitting” term occurring in context.

Geertz (1973) talked at length about “thick description” of what a researcher observes in the field and how the context of that observation gives access to the shared cultural meanings of the symbolic systems that people use to successfully co-participate in social actions. A “thick description” of the communication ritual that I observed was ensured by detailed descriptions of the exact context where the term “sitting” occurred.

Participant observation and “thick description” of the occasion in its cultural context proved to be the main source of primary data for CuDA of the “sitting” ritual as one of the most

enjoyable and valued ways to consume alcohol in Russian culture. Almost four years of participant observation provided a great opportunity to go back and rethink some of the cultural meanings, look for new aspects of different event components, and pay attention to more contextual details.

2.1.3 Movies and TV Series

It is very often not possible to record cultural events involving drinking without interrupting their natural flow. To supplement uninterrupted and authentic video recordings of “sitting” events and refusals to drink for this cultural discourse analysis, I used popular Russian movies and TV series that reflect the everyday life of Russian people.

Two Russian television series reflecting the life of Russian people in a historical perspective were selected for analysis. One of these TV series is “Только ты/Тол’ко ты” (Only You) consisting of 12 episodes lasting 45 minutes each. The show was produced by the TV Channel NTV (HTB) in 2004 and premiered on national TV in 2005. The TV series takes a historical perspective on the life of a Russian woman, starting with her childhood and youth in Soviet times, and continuing into adulthood in post-Soviet Russia. All the drinking events that were a part of a “sitting” ritual (not mere consumption of alcohol) were described and transcribed. The total number of “sitting” instances from “Only You” was 19.

The second TV series analyzed for this study was “Одна семья/Одна sem’ia” (One Family) consisting of 16 episodes that lasted 45 minutes each. The TV series was produced by Intra TV (Интра ТВ) in 2009. The show portrays more than a decade in the life of a regular Russian family starting in 1992 (right after the breakup of the Soviet Union). The total number of instances of “sitting” events in the show is 47.

Two popular movies were a valuable source of instances when one of the participants refused to drink during a “sitting” ritual: “Moscow Does Not Believe in Tears” (Москва слезам не верит) (1980) and “The Irony of Fate or ‘Enjoy Your Bath!’” (Ирония судьбы или “С Легким паром!”) (1975). Both films are immensely popular in Russia to the point that almost everyone in the country can recall and use phrases from these films in everyday communication. As mentioned above, the interviews checked whether the respondents remembered the analyzed episodes and thought that they could have occurred in real life.

Three instances from the two films portray refusals to accept a drink during a “sitting” event. These three instances provide examples of “sitting” occasions with the participants in various degrees of intimacy: drinking at dinner in a situation when the participants are not quite familiar with one another; drinking at a dinner celebrating birth of a child, where all the participants know each other very well; and drinking among four male friends in a Russian sauna (“баня/bania”) to celebrate the impending wedding of one of them. The three instances very conspicuously demonstrate what is called in this dissertation a rupture in the drinking ritual (refusal to drink) and a ritualistic remedial sequence initiated by the participants after the rupture occurs. All three episodes were transcribed in Russian.

2.1.4 Video Recordings

Besides the home video recordings of the two “sitting” events that I participated in (I qualify these data as participant observation), I also used video recordings of drinking and toasting events that I was not a part of. These video recordings were publicly available on YouTube website at the time of my search in January 2010. YouTube website was searched for videos with the key word “тост/tost” (toast) in the Russian language. In the list of returned links

to videos, I selected the ones that met these criteria: (1) they were in the Russian language and took place among representatives of Russian culture; (2) they were a part of what could be described as a “sitting” event; (3) they were spontaneous and not read or previously rehearsed for a video recording. Based on these three criteria, 21 instances of toasting and drinking events were selected. All the videos were transcribed based on the transcription key available in Appendix C to this dissertation. The physical situation in the videos was described in detail: where people are in relation to one another, whether they sit or stand, how close they are to one another, whether they have eye contact, what is on the table and whether there is a table, how close they are to the person delivering a toast, their verbal/nonverbal reactions, etc.

2.1.5 Internet Based Posts and Discussions

The internet provides an endless source of data through on-line discussions, blogs, and commentaries to articles on various topics. Internet resources in Russian were used to support CuDA of Russian drinking practices.

The phrase “хорошо посидели/khorosho posideli” (we sat well together) was searched for in the Google search engine in quotes (which yielded exact occurrence of the phrase). The first 37 occurrences of the phrase that were available without logging in or opening an account were saved and analyzed. This provided access to additional descriptions of the main components of the “sitting” ritual and also backed up findings about the deep cultural meaning of the “sacred object” of the ritual.

2.1.6 Government Documents

An important source of data reflecting the official discourse about alcohol consumption in Russia was government documents. The search here was limited to 2008-2010, when President Medvedev initiated a widespread campaign to curb excessive alcohol consumption in the country.

The official website of the President of Russia (www.kremlin.ru) and the official website of the Ministry of Health and Social Development (www.minzdravsoc.ru)⁵ were searched for the term “алкоголь/alkogol” (alcohol) and its derivatives. The search returned 16 documents that discuss alcohol-related policy.

Three of these documents directly and specifically discuss Russia’s problems with alcohol and how the government should work on them. The first document is a transcript of the beginning of an official meeting in August 2009 in the city of Sochi of various governmental representatives, who came specifically to talk about “measures to reduce alcohol consumption in Russia” (меры по снижению употребления алкоголя). The second document is the president’s list of tasks for the government based on the results of the Sochi meeting. The third document is an official “Concept Paper for State Policy on Reducing the Scale of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism Prevention among the Population of the Russian Federation till Year 2020” (Концепция государственной политики по снижению масштабов злоупотребления алкоголем и профилактике алкоголизма среди населения Российской Федерации на период до 2020 года). The other 13 documents returned by the search are either interviews

⁵ In May 2012 (after this data collection and analysis were completed), the Ministry of Health Care and Social Development of the Russian Federation (Министерство здравоохранения и социального развития Российской Федерации) was reorganized into two ministries: the Ministry of Health Care (Министерство здравоохранения) and the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection (Министерство труда и социальной защиты). The new website of the Ministry of Health is www.rosminzdrav.ru

with health care officials (six) or transcripts of official meetings (seven) that address or mention alcohol consumption.

2.1.7 Public Service Announcements

The public service announcements analyzed in this dissertation were an important part of the Russian government's official discourse. In 2009, the Federal Agency for Print and Mass Communication in Russia produced⁶ and launched a series of public service announcements (PSAs). Thirty-five public service announcements that aired on Russian national television in 2009 served as data for this dissertation. Thirty-one short video messages under the general slogan "Береги себя!"/"Beregi sebia!" (Take care of yourself!) were aired on TV Channel 1, and four PSAs called "Антиалкоголь/Antialkohol'" (anti-alcohol) were shown on TV Channel RTR.

Twenty-one of the PSAs (all "Anti-alcohol" and 17 "Protect yourself") had famous people talking about various aspects of problems with alcohol and asking the viewers directly not to drink, or implying that they should not consume alcohol. In nine PSAs, the viewers could see animated versions of what happens to one's internal organs (each PSA was devoted to a different organ) as a result of alcohol consumption. Five videos showed a life situation or a story with a speaker commenting behind the scenes.

I transcribed what was said in the PSAs. I also described in detail what was happening in them: images, actors' positioning on the screen, the emotional setup of the videos, the words appearing on the screen, and other important details. For example, in all the PSAs with famous figures or people with a lot of achievements (actors, producers, athletes, doctors, researchers, etc.), several images were inserted in the middle of the person's talk. The images showed

⁶ An inquiry into which company or advertising agency made the PSAs and whether any research was done to design these PSAs yielded no results.

drunken people, fatal car accidents, children with fetal alcohol syndrome and other outcomes of alcohol consumption. Detailed descriptions of the PSAs included accounts of all the images and all the written messages of the PSAs. The messages usually included statistical data about alcohol consumption in Russia and its effect on people's lives.

2.2. Data Analysis

The overview of the data analysis below looks at the methods of working with the data chosen for this dissertation. The overview describes methodological procedures for the data-based chapters 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9.

2.2.1 Chapter 3. Communication Ritual of Drinking: "Sitting"

Chapter 3 explores the Russian communication ritual of drinking and responds to the following two research questions: (1) What are the components of the "sitting" ritual: setting and scene, participants, ends, acts, key, instrumentalities, norms and rules, and genre? (2) What are the deep cultural meanings and significance of the "sacred object" of the "sitting" ritual to its participants?

The chapter presents a detailed description of each component of the "sitting" event and interpretation of the components' symbolic meanings. The analysis is based on Hymes' SPEAKING descriptive framework, which helps to identify the communication event's setting and scene, participants, ends, acts, key, instruments, norms, and genre (Hymes, 1972, 1974). Interpretive claims are made on the assumption that "sitting" is a communication ritual.

Video recordings and detailed transcripts of toasts demonstrated that a focal event of toasting and drinking in the “sitting” ritual has a consistent sequence, phrasing and symbolic meaning that contribute to understanding the deep cultural meaning (“sacred object”) of the “sitting” ritual. The toasting and drinking event was identified and analyzed as a communication ritual that structures and constitutes the “sitting” ritual.

The data for the chapter included transcripts of interview responses, home videos, film and TV series episodes, YouTube videos, and mentions of “sitting” in discourse, as well as descriptions of physical environment of the “sitting” locations and situations. All the data were typed in Microsoft Word documents and uploaded to ATLAS.ti 6 (Qualitative Data Analysis and Research Software) as primary documents. Codes for the chapter’s data analysis were based on the eight components of the SPEAKING mnemonic device. When I read through each primary document, I coded anything that was related to the “sitting” ritual as “setting and scene,” “participants,” “ends,” “acts,” “key,” “instruments,” “norms,” or “genre.” After coding all the primary documents, I saved the outputs for each code and read through them to identify key phrases, expressions and explanations that carried important cultural meanings so that I could formulate interpretive accounts of what it means in Russian culture to be “sitting” with others.

2.2.2 Chapter 4. Refusal to Drink as Rupture of Ritual

Chapter 4 explores what happens when somebody refuses to have a drink with everyone else during “sitting.” The chapter responds to the following two research questions: (1) What is the ritualistic corrective sequence that occurs when one refuses to drink with everybody else during a “sitting” ritual? (2) What individual and collective motives are brought up to strategize action when someone refuses to drink?

A refusal to drink is treated here as a rupture in the communication ritual of “sitting.” The analysis of the ritualistic corrective sequence that ensues from such a rupture was carried out based on the theoretical framework of social drama (Turner, 1980; Philipsen, 1987) and the framework for the corrective process of face saving (Goffman, 1967). A redressive action that is a part of the corrective sequence was analyzed to identify motives as strategies for action based on the framework offered by Mills (1940).

Primary data used in this chapter’s analysis were instances from my participant observation of “sitting” events. Ten instances of people refusing to drink were identified and described after the event, based on the notes. Three instances of refusals to drink at “sitting” from two popular Russian films (described above) were transcribed and analyzed. The analysis included identifying and describing each move (or stage) of the ritualistic corrective sequence: a crisis (with a “challenge”), redressive actions (with a dialogic interchange of “offering” and “acceptance/rejection”), and reintegration or schism. Individual and communal responses in the interchange of “offering” and “acceptance/rejection” were singled out and analyzed separately as motives that strategize the action of refusal.

Secondary data for this chapter came from the qualitative interviews. All the respondents were asked to elaborate on what happens if someone refuses a drink during a “sitting” event. When the interviews were coded for the “sitting” components in ATLAS.ti, there was a special code “refusal to drink,” which yielded 101 instances. These data were instrumental in interpreting the cultural meaning of the ritualistic corrective sequence and supplemented individual and communal motives used in refusals to drink.

2.2.3 Chapter 5. Cultural Meanings of “Sitting”

Based on the analysis in chapters 3 and 4, Chapter 5 formulates cultural propositions and premises for the “sitting” ritual in Russian culture and responds to the following research question: What radiants of meanings about personhood, interpersonal relationships, emotions and feelings, proper actions, and location in the nature of things are expressed through the communication ritual of “sitting” and serve as a condition for its correct performance?

Cultural propositions are statements close to how natives would describe what is going on in a cultural practice. Such propositions are usually formulated based on the key cultural terms that reflect the essence of what is happening. Cultural premises for the correct performance of a communication ritual are developed based on the cultural value and meanings of this communication event for the participants. The cultural meanings are expressed (both explicitly and implicitly) as the ritual gets performed. The meanings also serve as a condition for the event to be carried out correctly (Carbaugh, 2007).

The data for formulating the propositions and developing the premises came from the transcripts and descriptions uploaded as primary documents to ATLAS.ti for the analysis of the “sitting” ritual components. All the output documents for each of the “sitting” ritual components (and instances of refusals to drink) were analyzed and searched for key cultural terms and explanations that carried important cultural meanings. These key cultural terms, phrases and explanations were further coded in ATLAS.ti as radiating cultural meanings about the “sitting” participants’ personhood, their relationships with others, their actions, their emotions, and their location in the nature of things. Interpretation of the five output documents (based on the five radiants of meaning) brought this cultural discourse analysis of the “sitting” ritual to the formulation of cultural propositions and developing cultural premises in Chapter 5.

2.2.4 Chapter 6. Russian Folk Discourse on Problem Drinking

Chapter 6 looks at how Russian people define alcohol consumption that causes problems. The chapter responds to the following three research questions: (1) What key cultural terms constitute the term clusters for problematic alcohol consumption in Russian folk discourse? (2) What communication norms structure the term clusters for problem drinking? (3) What deep cultural meanings underlie the term clusters for problem drinking in Russian folk discourse?

The research framework for Chapter 6 was built on the assumption that Russian folk discourse has certain cultural terms that are key in defining problem drinking. The key terms build term clusters that carry deep symbolic meanings about what Russian people specifically identify as problem drinking. These term clusters function in the discourse according to certain communication norms that are based on code rules (regulating the meaning of the terms) and normative rules (setting the requirements for strategically placing the terms at different discourse junctures).

The primary data for this chapter came from 77 qualitative interviews with Russian people. All the interview transcripts were uploaded to ATLAS.ti. Responses that described alcohol consumption causing problems were coded as “problem drinking.” Preliminary analysis of the output document with all the data coded as “problem drinking” demonstrated that there were two distinct ways of having problems with alcohol. One was associated with the key term “to get drunk” and meant heavy alcohol consumption and intoxication at one sitting with no regularity but possibly causing problems (behavioral and health). The other way of consuming alcohol in a problematic way was “to drink,” or to consume alcohol with a certain pattern on a regular basis and demonstrate alcohol dependency and a general decline in health and social value. After this finding, the document containing “problem drinking” output was uploaded to

ATLAS.ti as a primary document and coded based on two codes: “to drink” and “to get drunk.” In the process of coding, the key terms (based on their potency and frequency of occurrence) that were instrumental in carrying potent cultural meanings for either of the two terms (“to drink” and “to get drunk”) were noted.

The number of instances of the “to drink” term cluster was 305, and the number of instances of the “to get drunk” term cluster was 158. In the process of coding interviews, the instances were identified based on the following criteria:

1. A story or a narrative told by one respondent about a person (group of people) who “got drunk” or “drank” was considered to be one instance. The story could contain any of the following: a description of what people did, what personalities and relationships they had, what emotions they caused or experienced, or what circumstances surrounded their problem drinking. For example:

R: I have a classmate. They *drank* and *drank* with her husband. My classmate’s younger daughter. And they died in a fire in July, I think. At XX St here at XXX.

I: You mean there was a fire?

R: Oh yeah, quite a bit! ... It was lucky that they lived in a house separately (from other people), it was good that at 3 am somebody saw and called the firefighters, otherwise the neighbors would have suffered. He was all burnt, and she perhaps was in another corner. But looks like they were smoking cigarettes. And when they took her out, she was all intact, just suffocated. Perhaps, she was sleeping in another corner. And he was taken out all burnt. You see, they were young. Two kids left¹ (woman, 65).

In the instance above, the respondent mentioned the key term “to drink” two times. However, she described one story that helped to understand what people did and what kind of outcomes referred to this way of problem drinking in the folk discourse.

2. A description of a quality that can identify a person as somebody who “drinks” or “got drunk” was considered to be one instance. Such a description could be a sentence within an

utterance, a whole utterance or a detailed description with probes from the interviewer. For example:

R: Well, when alcohol becomes a separate interest. It comprises the only interest in life. So, alcohol for him is a reliable way to relax. If this kind of a situation happens, then it's no good. I mean when the person is not interested in communicating with relatives, people close to him, for example, be involved in something, but when he is interested in having a drink and this way switch off, for example from troubles and problems. This, it seems to me is when alcohol turns from a side product ...

I: Side product to what?

R: Well, for example, to relaxation or something else. When it becomes the main thing. The main goal² (woman, 21).

In the instance above, the respondent talked about a way of drinking that was described through the term cluster "to drink." This was considered to be one instance because it demonstrated how one indicator of the action (alcohol consumption as a sole goal in drinking) shows what one has to do to be described as someone who "drinks."

One utterance by the same respondent could contain several instances that refer to someone who "drinks" or "got drunk." For example, an interview participant mentioned in her response that those who do not have "сила воли/sila voli" (will power) are those who "drink," and then the same respondent added right away that people who drink also have to have "наследственность/nasledstvennost'" (inherited qualities) to become alcoholics. In this case, the description yielded two instances belonging to the "to drink" cluster.

Potent cultural terms within the term clusters "to drink" and "to get drunk" were organized in term clusters based on five radiants of cultural meaning: identity, relationships, actions, emotions, and location in the nature of things. Term clusters were instrumental in building cultural propositions about problem drinking consisting of the folk terms.

Communication norms (code rules and normative rules) were identified separately for the "to drink" and "get drunk" clusters. Formulating code rules ensured understanding of the

systems of deep cultural meanings in each term cluster, and normative rules provided access to understanding where and why these term clusters were strategically placed in the Russian discourse sequence.

The final step in this chapter's CuDA was to formulate Russian folk cultural premises about problematic alcohol consumption based on the systems of deep cultural meanings associated with the term clusters "to drink" and "to get drunk."

2.2.5 Chapter 7. From Consumption to Alcoholization: Russia's Government on Drinking

Chapter 7 looks at the official documents of the Russian government to identify the terms used to refer to alcohol consumption and interpret their meaning. Four research questions were set for the chapter: (1) What are the key cultural terms referring to alcohol consumption in the Russian government's official documents? (2) What cultural meanings do the terms imply about Russian personhood, actions, emotions, and location in the nature of things as far as alcohol consumption is concerned? (3) What are the communication norms (code rules and normative rules) for each term referring to alcohol consumption in the official discourse? (4) What cultural premises underlie the terms used to refer to alcohol consumption in the Russian government's documents?

I started the analysis of the official discourse by working with 16 government documents from the years 2008-2010. All 16 were uploaded to ATLAS.ti as primary documents. When the documents were analyzed, every reference to alcohol consumption was noted, and a separate code was created for each new term. The number of references to alcohol intake was 258, and these references were made through eight different terms. The analysis of eight output documents (one per term), helped to identify four radiants of cultural meaning that were

implied in each of the terms and communication norms that regulated strategic placement of the terms at different junctures of the official discourse.

The meanings were implicit in each term with messages about the personhood of those who consumed alcohol, actions related to alcohol intake, emotions that alcohol consumers caused or experienced, and the circumstances of consumption.

The final stage of the analysis included formulating cultural premises about problem drinking in the discourse of the Russian government.

2.2.6 Chapter 8. Public Service Announcements: Official Discourse of Change

Chapter 8 studies public service announcements produced by the Russian government. The following three research questions guide the analysis: (1) What are the key terms used by Russia's government to talk about problem drinking through public service announcements? (2) What deep cultural meanings about people's being and personhood, their relations, actions, emotions, and location in the nature of things are presumed and conveyed by the term clusters consistently used in the PSAs? (3) What kind of change in people's actions is the Russian government expecting in the PSAs?

Public service announcements were treated in this study as a cultural form of communication of the Russian government. The PSAs were analyzed following the assumption that certain terms carry strong messages about what is considered to be problem drinking in the official discourse. The terms were analyzed based on their clusters that build cultural propositions. The term clusters are assumed to function in the discourse on the basis of deep cultural meanings that are expressed in this analysis by cultural premises.

All the transcripts of the public service announcements were analyzed to identify the key “actors” and all the key terms related to the description of what they do. The assumed actors were the speakers, those whom they addressed, and alcohol (which emerged as a powerful agent in the process of analysis). An important term cluster was related to the “place” of problematic alcohol consumption. Another term cluster reflected actions, or descriptions of how people are presumed to consume alcohol. The analysis also looked into the key terms calling for change, since the PSAs goal was to cause public health improvement in alcohol consumption.

The next step was to formulate the PSAs’ cultural premises about problem drinking in the country. These were premises reflecting the government’s assumption about the personhood of those who consume alcohol, their relationships with others, what they do, what emotions they cause, and where they are located in the nature of things.

2.2.7 Chapter 9. Comparing the Problem: Folk and Official Discourse on Drinking

Chapter 9 compares the Russian folk and official discourses to respond to the following research question: What are the similarities and differences in the radiants of cultural meaning about personhood, relations, actions, emotions, and location in the nature of things associated with consuming alcohol in a problematic way in the folk and official discourses?

The findings in Chapters 6, 7, and 8 were instrumental in formulating cultural premises about what constitutes problem drinking in folk and official discourses. Chapter 9 puts all the premises side by side and compares three kinds of problematic alcohol consumption (two from the folk discourse and one from the official discourse) based on the radiants of meaning about personhood, relations, actions, emotions, and location in the nature of things.

2.3 Notes on Presenting the Data

All the data for this research were collected in the Russian language. This presents certain difficulties in making the findings available to an English-speaking audience. The first difficulty is that the Russian language is based on the Cyrillic alphabet, which differs substantially from Latin script (the English alphabet). Second, Russian grammar differs from English language grammar as well, which leads to difficulties in translation, for example, when relating the agent/doer of the action: “Мне плохо/Мне plokho” would be translated as “I feel sick.” But in the Russian language the person does not “feel sick”; rather, the idea is expressed impersonally as “it feels sick to me.” The third difficulty is that the Russian language (as any other) has certain words and expressions that are not translatable into English without a lengthy explanation with examples. Wierzbicka’s works (1992, 1997) demonstrate this very well. For example, the word “судьба/sud’ba” does not have a linguistic or cultural equivalent in English. One of the explanations of what this word means is the following: “Russian sud’ba emphasizes ... the course of life, or what Russians call ‘life’s journey’ ... and in Russian, it is this entire course, rather than the extreme points, which is viewed as ‘fated’ (not in every detail, but in its general character)” (Wierzbicka, 1992, p. 68). This lack of equivalents in English for certain Russian words and notions is especially conspicuous in research that is done through cultural discourse analysis, one of the directions of which is to identify and analyze cultural terms.

To avoid making the dissertation’s text cumbersome with the constant presence of both English and Russian, and at the same time preserve the “Russianness” of the data used in this study of Russian communication, the data are presented in several ways.

If the cultural terms consist of not more than three words, they are presented in Russian in Cyrillic letters, and a transliterated equivalent in the English alphabet is added next to it. The transliteration is based on the Library of Congress Russian Romanization Table⁷ (Appendix D). This is followed by a translation of the word/phrase into English in parentheses, for example, “напиться/napit’sia” (to get drunk). The translation into English is usually approximate, but the meaning of the key term is expanded through CuDA in the text of the dissertation. In cases when the term is used very often or is the main subject of the chapter, only its English equivalent in quotes is used. For example, instead of “посидеть/posidet’” (to sit), the dissertation mostly uses “sitting.” This makes the text less cumbersome, especially considering that the dissertation explains early on that this is one of the key terms for a form of cultural communication in Russia and that to understand its full meaning, one would need to be aware of what goes on in that ritual and what its cultural premises are.

If a quotation that is brought up in the text of the dissertation is longer than three words, it is presented in four ways. First, if the quotation is very short, it is presented in the body of the text in English with quotation marks, and the original in Russian is put in parentheses right after the English version. Second, if the quotation is long, and a term or a phrase needs to be presented in context, the English translation of the original quotation in Russian is put in the main text of the dissertation with the term/phrase in question in italics. The original text in Russian is placed in an endnote to the chapter where the quotation is used.

The third way of presenting the data is used when it is necessary to discuss the term and its occurrence in context in more detail and reference it in the analysis. In cases like this, each

⁷ The table was slightly modified to remove letters that are no longer used in the modern Russian alphabet. Three letters (й, ц, э) require diacritical marks that are not available in Microsoft Word, so I used the English equivalent of these letters without any marks above the transliterated letters.

line of the quotation is numbered, and an English translation of the original Russian is presented under each line of the quotation. For example, when a PSA transcript is used to discuss the PSA speakers, the data are presented in the text of the dissertation this way:

1. (Лес, ребенок бежит за мячом) Это ведь так здорово – быть отцом,
(Video of a child running in the woods) It is so great to be a father,
2. видеть, как сын делает первые шаги. Учить его играть в футбол.
to see how your son is making his first steps, to teach him to play soccer,
3. показать ему этот огромный мир.
to show him this enormous world.

The fourth way of presenting long quotations is used when discourse sequences are discussed, especially when overlaps, pauses and interruptions are important and meaningful. Here the lines are numbered, the English translation is presented under the Russian lines, and descriptions of nonverbal language are provided (for example, laughter). Such sequences are presented based on a transcription key provided in Appendix C. For example, in a ritual of toasting and drinking, overlaps and interruptions have a deep cultural meaning. This is why a toast is presented in the following way:

1. TP: Я коротко и ясно скажу, (смех) (0.6) с днем рождения тебя! (смех) (2.0)
I'll be short and clear, (laughter) (0.6) happy birthday to you! (laughter) (2.0)
2. (серьезнее) С совершеннолетием, конечно, поздравляю тебя! (смех) (0.9)
(in a more serious tone) I congratulate you on coming of age. (0.9) (laughter)
3. P1: Немножко не дотянула до выборов!
You almost made it to the elections!
4. Ps: да::
yeah::
[]
5. BP: Да, вообще я так печалилась! (смех) (1.0)
Yes, I was so upset! (laughter) (1.0)
6. P2: BP, а ты [за кого бы голосовала]?
BP, and [who would you have voted for]?

In the instance above, we can see the elapsed time in a pause (0.6), nonverbal language (laughter), prolongation of the immediately prior sound (:::) and overlaps ([]).

Another important note on presenting the data in this dissertation is about the terminology that was selected. Some of the terms that are actively used throughout the study are “alcohol intake” and “alcohol consumption.” These two terms coincide with the translation of the official term “употребление/упotreblenie.” To distinguish the “native” term from the language of the dissertation, every time “consumption” is used as shorthand for “употребление/упotreblenie,” it is presented in quotation marks. In cases when alcohol consumption or intake is discussed as part of the analysis or referred to as a general public health problem, it is used without quotation marks.

2.4 Conclusion

Cultural discourse analysis and the theoretical frameworks at its base (such as ethnography of communication and cultural communication) were used to analyze Russian drinking as communication. The key theoretical concepts instrumental in this study are cultural terms, communication ritual, social drama, ritualistic corrective sequence, motives as strategies for action, cultural propositions and premises. All the analyses went through the five CuDA modes: theoretical, descriptive, interpretive, comparative, and to some extent critical. The authentic Russian data that were collected, presented, described and analyzed in this dissertation came from a variety of sources: qualitative interviewing, participant observation, home videos, TV series and films, and government documents and public service announcements. All the data were collected in the Russian language and are presented here in a way that provides for data authenticity and keeps the analysis from becoming cumbersome and difficult to read for an English-speaking audience.

Notes

¹ R: у меня одноклассница. Пили, пили они с мужем. Одноклассницы моей дочь младшая. И вот сгорели же вот в июле, по-моему. На XX, вот здесь, на XXX у нас.

I: В смысле, пожар был?

K: Ну еще как! Еще хорошо, что в бараке они жили, хорошо, что они в три часа ночи кто-то увидел, да пожарку вызвал, а то соседи бы все пострадали. Его обугленного, видимо, вытащили, а она видимо в другом углу. Но, похоже, что курили сигареты просто. А ее-то вытащили просто, она-то целая была, задохнувшаяся. Видимо в другом углу спала. А его-то обугленного, мужа ее вытащили. Молодые, пожалуйста. Двое детей осталось.

² R: Ну, когда алкоголь становится отдельным интересом. Составляет отдельный интерес в жизни. То есть, алкоголь для него - стабильный способ расслабиться. Если такая ситуация имеет место быть, то это уже нехорошо. То есть, когда человеку действительно интереснее не общаться с родными, близкими, например, заниматься чем-то, а когда ему интересно просто конкретно выпить как бы, и тем самым отключиться, например, да, от забот от проблем. Вот это, мне кажется, уже грань - там, где алкоголь становится из побочного как бы продукта....

I: Побочного чему?

R: Ну, например, расслаблению или чему-то еще. Когда он становится основным. Ну как бы одной целью.

CHAPTER 3

COMMUNICATION RITUAL OF DRINKING: "SITTING"

3.1 Introduction

When I began my ethnographic study of Russian communication, I reviewed literature on Russian culture and society. Ethnographic and anthropological accounts about Russia provided interesting insights and prompted new directions for my research. Contemplating a study of Russian drinking as communication, I came across the following story in Pesmen's book:

One night I had to leave a party early ... When I said I had to go, a drunk man stood up and condemned my desertion: "That's the difference," he said, "between 'you' and 'here.' What's a minute between people? When people get together, everything else should fade. Russians don't count minutes when we sit. But some people have no soul. Exist exclusively by logic." (Pesmen, 1992, p. 46-47)

I instantly realized the seriousness of that "condemnation." If an event was referred to as "we sit" (мы сидим/мы sidim), such an occasion invoked a certain cultural sequence of actions, expectations and rules for the participants. All this had deep cultural meanings for everyone involved. Leaving such an event prematurely may have put in question one's belonging to the group and solidarity with its values, and challenged the group's integrity.

I began to pay closer attention to each mention of "sitting" by Russians. When I talked to my friends and family in Russia, they would often mention that we "хорошо посидели/khorosho posideli" (we sat together well), referring to an enjoyable get-together involving drinking with other people. It was expected that I, a native Russian, would understand exactly what was going on, and why it was such a great experience, even if I did not know the details. Such a gathering and alcohol consumption were assumed to be non-problematic, acceptable, and desirable. A family member once said that she was talking to a nurse at the

outpatient clinic where they worked, and the nurse mentioned: “We haven’t *sat* with the girls (staff) for so long here in the clinic. I feel like something is missing. We should think of something.¹” It seemed that “sitting” was something that people longed for and looked forward to, something that had an emotional significance for them personally and played an important role in keeping that group of people together. The overwhelming majority of the “soulful” experiences during “sitting” were facilitated by alcohol consumption, which was never pointed out as the most significant thing, but was implied to be an integral and very important part of the event.

When I and my parents came to stay at our summer house on one of my vacations in Russia several years ago, our 75-year-old neighbor was upset that we were leaving just three days after our arrival. She said, “What? You are leaving already? So soon! We didn’t have a chance to *sit* this time, I thought you would come over tonight and we would *sit*.²” She said this two days after we stopped by her house to say hello, and we literally sat in the kitchen and had a quick chat with her, without eating, drinking or having a long conversation. Apparently, “sitting” involves much more than just physically being with other people and sitting at some place. It involves a certain communication sequence and deep meanings attached to the cultural means used to maintain that sequence.

I once attended a formal dinner with Russian and US representatives of the business and political elite. A Russian businessman produced a lengthy toast thanking the Americans for their hospitality. He was very happy about the established friendship between the Russians and Americans involved, and at the end of his toast he said: “We, Russians, say that until you *sat* with us and had a drink, you can’t claim to be our friend. So, let’s drink to real friendship!³” Here, “sitting” is identified as a cultural performance that is ostensibly Russian, and it is significant in establishing, maintaining, and reconfirming long-lasting relationships with others.

The examples above demonstrate a range of meanings that “sitting” as a cultural activity has for Russians. Drinking is explained as something taken for granted and integral to the event. More importantly, if alcohol consumption is done according to certain rules and expectations, it becomes normal, appropriate, and desirable for facilitating a good time together. Russian performances of “sitting” and explanations of how to do “sitting” correctly have multiple meanings. Such meanings are important for understanding this cultural practice and alcohol consumption as part of it. Exploring “sitting” practices and their deep cultural meanings through cultural discourse analysis opens doors to understanding the instances when drinking is considered good, normal, acceptable, and valuable for Russians.

In this chapter, the Russian practice of “sitting” is explored as a form of cultural communication. CuDA is applied as a framework to describe and interpret the practice of “sitting” through the concept of a “communication ritual” described by Philipsen (1987) as a “communication form in which there is a structured sequence of symbolic acts, the correct performance of which constitutes homage to a sacred object” (p. 250). A detailed analysis of the communication ritual of “sitting” in its cultural context is done through Hymes’ descriptive framework (1972, 1974).

The descriptive framework draws an ethnographer’s attention to the following components of a communication event: situation is the setting and scene; participants are personalities, their social positions, or statuses, and relations among them; ends are the goals and outcomes; acts are the message content, form, sequences, dimensions, and types of illocutionary force; key is the tone or mode; instrumentalities are the channel or media; norms are of interaction and interpretation; genre could be native or formal (Carbaugh, 1995). Norms and rules of “sitting” are especially important because they ensure the “correct performance” of

the ritual (Philipsen, 1987) and capture deep cultural meanings about proper, value-laden action (Carbaugh, 2007; Hastings, 2000).

Description and interpretation of symbolic acts and events that constitute the “sitting” ritual as a form of communication are important for understanding how the ritual is performed. A key event in “sitting” is toasting and drinking. This focal event has a ritualistic structure, and it is organically woven into the ritual of “sitting.” Toasting is done through “symbolic phrasing,” which is a shared way for the participants to celebrate the “sacred object” of the ritual.

As the “sitting” ritual is described and interpreted, symbolic meanings of each component are brought to the surface. Such symbolism is expressed in the familiarity and deep cultural importance of these meanings to all the participants when they use the ritual not to transfer information, but to reaffirm “a sense of (personal and communal) identity” (Katriel, 1990, p. 112).

Exploration of the “sacred object,” or the “ends” of “sitting,” brings to the fore a “heuristic” value of the ritual when we uncover deep meanings about the participants’ shared values that are conveyed through the correct performance of the ritual.

To describe and interpret this ritual of “sitting,” I analyzed both primary data (actual occurrences of “sitting” events and mentions of the term “sitting” in Russian discourse) and secondary data (people’s descriptions of their past “sitting” events and their explanations of what they mean when an event is described as “sitting”).

This chapter responds to the following research questions:

1. What are the components of the “sitting” ritual: setting and scene, participants, ends, acts, key, instrumentalities, norms and rules, and genre?
2. What are the deep cultural meanings and significance of the “sacred object” of the “sitting” ritual for its participants?

3.2 “Sitting” Situation: Setting and Scene

In his description of speech act components, Hymes distinguishes a situation’s setting as something pertaining to physical circumstances, and the scene as designating “‘the psychological setting,’ or the cultural definition of an occasion as a certain type of scene” (Hymes, 1974, p. 55).

The physical circumstances of “sitting” involve people literally sitting together around a table or anything that resembles it. It is usually some surface that can accommodate drinks and food. All the participants are located so that they can see each other at the table with the least possible effort. Attention and central focus are especially important during the focal points of the “sitting,” when toasts are announced and when everybody is supposed to have a drink at the same time. A “table” should have food that is usually called “закуска/zakuska,” translated from Russian as something to “bite” after a drink (hors-d’oeuvres). A more elaborate meal comes along as the “sitting” progresses. Bottles with alcohol are on the table. All the finished bottles are immediately removed, because “empty bottles mean that your life will always be empty.” In media episodes (movies, TV programs, public service announcements), deviant drinkers and alcoholics are usually portrayed sitting at table with minimal or no food and a battery of empty bottles. In a “normal” situation, empty bottles are immediately replaced by new ones. This ensures continuity of the “sitting” process, very often forcing the participants to keep drinking and become quite resourceful in replenishing supplies of alcohol.

A Russian woman mentioned an event when the city administration convened nurses from the city outpatient clinics to give them awards for their outstanding work. After the

ceremony, some drinks and food were provided in a buffet style to celebrate the occasion. The woman commented:

We all were standing around with drinks and chatting, and it was sort of odd. So, we pulled some chairs to the table and sat down. We *sat* together well, and we communicated well with everyone. Nobody wanted to leave⁴ (woman, 54).

This demonstrates that people prefer the physical space of “sitting” to be relatively immobile. The participants like to stay at the same table or anything that can replace it. They enjoy sitting while facing one another because this facilitates a more “открытое/открытое” (open) and “душевное/dushevnoe” (soulful) interaction. Facing each other gives the participants an “added mechanism of focused attention and social cohesion” (Koester, 2003).

If the whole party (or a part of it) moves to dance or goes out for a smoke, the participants reconvene at the table to continue conversation and have drinks together. Sometimes, toasts are announced elsewhere (for example, on the dance floor), then all the participants stand facing the toasting person and drink together after the toast. If the party moves to another house, the physical space of a table with “zakuski” and everybody sitting around may be reconstructed in the new location, as the following respondent describes:

We *sit*, dance, drink, have fun in one (house) and that’s that. ‘Well, finish it up, and I am going to my house. I will set up a table (with food) there’ – this is what a hostess says. ‘Ok, enough, let’s go (to my house)’ ... this way we would walk through five houses⁵ (woman, 74).

As for the psychological scene, the data show that “sitting” has to have a reason. It should be some occasion that all the participants are aware of. An occasion could be a national holiday, birthday, wedding, receiving an award, retirement, purchase of something (the term in Russian for this is to “обмытъ/obmyt,” or “wash” the purchase with alcohol). At other times, the fact that people got together prompts “sitting” and drinking because social circumstances require it. Examples of such social circumstances are going “на природу/на prirodu” (out of

town on a picnic) together with friends, getting together because “parents are out of town and there is an available apartment,” reuniting with friends after a long time of not seeing them, going to the “баня/bania” (Russian sauna) with friends, and so on. No matter what the occasion is, all those present agree that they got together not to drink, but for some “повод/povod” (a specific reason to have a drink).

Another important feature of the psychological scene of “sitting” is “нормальная обстановка/normalnaia obstanovka” (normal, comfortable psychological environment) when the “компания/компания” (company, meaning all those present) is great and “создана атмосфера/sozdana atmosfera” (a psychological atmosphere has been created). A key factor in creating a comfortable psychological environment and atmosphere is to shut off distractions from the world outside the “sitting.” Such distractions could be anything from an unwanted participant to disastrous weather, bad news or an emergency, or some authority breaking into the flow of the event. Very often a “sitting” would happen as a challenge to a distraction (with the distraction turning into a “повод/povod” (reason for drinking). The “distraction” may organically tie into the “sitting” event itself. For example, an angry neighbor comes to complain about the noise, but changes her mind and joins the participants. Bad weather at a picnic may make participants pick up everything, run for shelter, and continue “sitting” together in an environment where everyone is even closer after a common adventure. Such a transformation, turning a distraction into an inherent part of the event, enhances everybody’s experience.

3.3 “Sitting” Participants

One of the most important requirements of “sitting” is to have other people to sit with. Pesmen (2000) points out that in Russia, drinking is always “explicitly with others” (p. 174). This

means that “sitting” in Russia should be with others, those who are “близкие/blizkie” (people close to you, through family ties or closeness of mind and soul), “друзья/druz’ia” (friends), “хорошие знакомые/khoroshie znakomie” (good acquaintances), or “хорошая компания/khoroshaia kompaniia” (good company). All these people should be “все свои/vse svoi” (belong together, when everybody is “one of us”). A lone drinker is considered to be “truly alcoholic, a pitiable and lost person who has reached a point of no return” (Draitser, 1999, p. 88).

The group could be all male, all female, or mixed. There can be just two people, and there can be several people, but not more than the number you can reasonably communicate with at the same time. If the group is too big, for example, two hundred people at a wedding, people may still refer to the experience as “sitting,” but with a smaller group located around them.

The quality of the “sitting” event depends on who you are sitting with. The respondents often said that somebody noisy, unpleasant, and clearly not a part of your “good company” can ruin everyone’s “sitting” experience. Just having known your companions for a long time, being related to them, or finding yourself among a circle of people at a celebration is not enough to have a “good company.” One needs to feel good together with the others (“хорошо вместе/khorosho vmeste”) and have something “общее/obshchee” (in common). One needs to get to “понимание/ponimanie” (understanding) with the others, which is only possible through “душевная связь/dushevnaia sviaz” (soulful connection) and a similar “душевное состояние/dushevnoe sostoianie” (soulful state) with the other participants. Such a connection can develop through years of friendship or other common experiences. The connection cannot be explained or verbalized. It is something that the participants have to feel: “хорошо вместе/khorosho vmeste” (it feels good to be together). This connection could also be a

spontaneous spark with a person who you just met and started a soulful conversation with, for example, on a train or on an airplane. An informant below explains such a connection:

They (wives) don't want to drink with us, they don't like it. Why? They can't get into that soulful state, feel it with their marrow, that truth that we are discussing. It is clear for everyone without any explanation. And using our imagination we are trying to get to more sensitive, narrower angles, narrower sides in order to feel them. Not to understand, they are understandable, but to feel. And this feeling leads to unity. And you start feeling the other person better⁶ (Man, 55).

Another important requirement for the "sitting" participants is that everyone should drink at the same pace together with the rest of the group, and consume equal amounts of alcohol every time the group drinks. A term that describes this "expected togetherness" in action is a Russian phrase "как все/kak vse" (like everybody else). If a person prefers not to drink at all, drink less, or drink substantially more than all those present, and if he or she does not conceal this deviation, he or she becomes an outsider and can ruin everyone's experience because he or she is not on the same "wavelength" as the rest of the participants:

Well, if I don't want to drink at all, I don't go there. Because as a rule, it is awkward if in a company everyone is sitting and having a drink, and somebody just keeps drinking water or juice, well, this sort of ... seems weird. Well, that the person is sitting alone. It seems like everyone is on their own wavelength, and he just stays where he was. Well, I think it is better not to find yourself in a situation like this not to bother the others and yourself⁷ (woman, 23).

Another respondent supports:

In fact, if we talk about alcohol and "not sitting well," then the presence of non-drinkers has a negative impact on this. Because when everyone gets wasted and they start loosening up their tongues ... if there is a non-drinker there, then in the morning, you'd feel ashamed to look him in the eye. And you'll be fine with everyone else. So, this non-drinker ruins all "sitting together"⁸ (woman, 22).

The "sitting" participants need to be homogeneous in the way they consume alcohol and communicate. They need to be what is called "свои/svoi" (belonging to the group, one of

us, literally “our” person), or “наши/nashi” (our people, belonging to our group). All the participants need to have a certain commonness among them. Outsiders can ruin the “sitting” experience because they bring their own understanding of how to “sit” and what to talk about, and they may just not fit in. An outsider may drink on par with the participants, but not be in tune with them and the “атмосфера/atmosfera” (atmosphere) created in the group. Because an outsider is there and accepts drinks, the participants may consider it rude to make such a person leave, and this creates awkward situations:

We are *sitting* with my family on vacation. And a lady walks in. So, we are in that group of people, and nobody knows her. Turns out she is my older brother’s classmate. Well, there is nothing to talk about with her. So, she sits and sits. We poured her one shot, poured the second one, poured the third one. And this person just wouldn’t leave. She is sort of one of us. (laughs) She thinks that she is one of us, “our” person. ... And we don’t need her. It would be good to ask her to leave somehow, but the person wouldn’t leave ... Well, how do you make her leave? A lady?⁹ (Man, 50).

“Sitting” with participants who are close to you is also important to reduce or avoid negative consequences of drinking. Such consequences could be saying things that you do not mean, doing something that you would be ashamed of the next day, or getting in trouble after the “sitting” if you venture outside drunk. “Our people,” those who are “close to you,” will do everything to get you out of an awkward situation, or at least will not judge you the next day. One needs other people who were in exactly the same situation to discuss the events and laugh at what happened the night before.

The “sitting” participants need to be able to reach a common bond of “понимание/ponimanie” (understanding). This is possible through sharing past experiences or getting an unexplainable spontaneous feeling of emotional closeness with the other people’s “душа/dusha” (soul). In order to be “свой/svoi” (one of us, belonging to the group) and avoid being an outsider, participants need to adhere to the rules and expectations of the group

(including pace and amount of alcohol consumption), and they need to be on the “same emotional wavelength.” An outsider cannot force himself or herself on the communication process happening in the group. The “sitting” membership needs to be organic and based on the group’s acceptance and intangible, unexplainable closeness.

3.4 Key of “Sitting”

The key of the “sitting,” or the “tone, manner, or spirit in which an act is done” (Hymes, 1974, p. 57), is readily described by the participants as something important and “felt,” escalating throughout the ritual. Positive emotions, generally referred to as “душевность/dushevnost” (soulfulness) during the “sitting” ritual, are said not only to escalate, they also enrich the participants so that “что-то остается/chto-to ostaetsia” (something remains) to think about the next day and look forward to in the future:

When you take something out of it for yourself. And it is important to have good emotions the next day. After such an evening, of course I will say – I “*sat well*” yesterday¹⁰ (man, 45).

A good mood (“хорошее настроение/khoroshee nastroyenie”) is important for having positive experiences while “sitting.” One’s good mood can be ruined by other participants, or it can be enriched by them. In fact, positive emotions, good mood, and soulfulness during “sitting” is not an individual key experienced by each participant, it is a collaboratively created spirit of the event that is either enhanced or ruined if something goes wrong.

Interestingly, a conversation without the above described “key” of “sitting” makes the event less valuable in terms of emotional enrichment and bonding with other participants:

Then again, this is some emotional component. A lot depends (on it). It could be an awesome male company, and since I am not married, it is interesting and important for me, but you don’t experience emotional comfort, and the conversation doesn’t quite work out, so no ... And sometimes it happens that you get together with the girls, and

you laugh and have so much fun with them that you can say “yes, we *sat well*” together with them¹¹ (woman, 34).

The “key” of the “sitting” event is geared toward collective building of the event’s “soulfulness” and enrichment of the participants’ communication experience. “Sitting” participants are left with lasting memories of the positive feelings long after the event.

3.5 “Sitting” Instrumentalities

“I don’t know” is a very common first response when the respondents are asked to describe what exactly happens during the “sitting” ritual. The respondents say that their experience with “sitting” is best when there is nothing planned or logical about it, it just happens:

How it happens? Well, I don’t know. It always happens spontaneously. Yes. We are all friends of course. But you can *sit well* with somebody who you don’t know. I don’t really know – it all depends on the occasion, circumstances¹² (woman, 21).

“Sitting” is always a direct and immediate interaction built around specific circumstances. It is infused with expected spontaneity of interpersonal interaction. Through their actions, everybody recognizes and honors the sequential and highly structured nature of the ritual, but none of the participants would agree that there is any plan or logic behind “sitting.”

3.6 “Sitting” Genre

The genre of “sitting” is informal, and the data show that it is, in a way, anti-formal. Nothing from the outside, formal, official world should interfere or be in the way of people’s

“sitting.” Any formality or officialdom kills the “душевность/dushevnost” (soulfulness) of the ritual, making it rigid and fake, because “soulfulness” presumes openness and emotional bonding. Even if drinks are served at an official event, it most probably still lacks the “soulfulness” to be considered a “sitting” ritual. Respondents shared stories of how they went and “sat well” together at somebody’s house or at a restaurant after an official event, or changed the setting of the official event and “sat” at the location of the event after it was over.

3.7 “Sitting” Act Sequence

“Sitting” is an event with a meaningful cultural sequence of symbolic acts. Russian people know how to perform the required acts within that event correctly. They notice if something goes wrong, and they know what to do about it. Focal events within “sitting” are the rituals of toasting and drinking discussed below.

The diagram in Appendix E illustrates how the ritual of “sitting” and ritualistic events of toasting and drinking within it unfold. A large curving line with an arrow shows how a “sitting” ritual happens. The arrow pointing upward signifies escalation in the “key” of “душевность/dushevnost” (soulfulness) and bonding of the participants if everything goes the way it is supposed to go. The circles along the line are events of toasting and drinking following one another (their number is not limited to three as shown in the diagram). However, the decreasing size of the circles demonstrates a shorter and more concise performance of the events of toasting and drinking as the “sitting” ritual progresses and when “понимание/ponimanie” (understanding) is achieved. Smaller dotted line circles inside larger circles illustrating drinking events show a ritualistic corrective sequence in case any of the

participants refuse to drink⁸. This creates an escalating double-looped sequence which ultimately leads to maintaining the correct performance of the overall ritual of “sitting” and celebrating its ultimate “sacred object” – “понимание/понимание” (understanding).

The ritual of “sitting” consists of several stages. First, people locate themselves so that they can face the other participants. Everybody helps themselves to food and offers it to others. The host usually urges the guests to take more. Drinks are poured, usually by one person (the host) or, if the table is too big, several people. Considerable effort is taken to make sure that everyone is comfortable, provided with enough food and has a drink poured in a glass. After that, toasting and drinking events follow one another, linked by the conversation flowing in between. As participants get inebriated and the “sitting” unfolds, the topics of conversation shift from casual, everyday affairs (discussing friends, relatives, current events, etc.) to deeper moral and existential themes (such as love, friendship, meaning of life, destiny and the course of life, and more). Toasting reflects this progression of themes. Dancing and singing songs together can also be “fillers” between the events of toasting and drinking.

The final stage of the “sitting” ritual can be what Reis (1997) calls the “mischief” genre of both behavior and narrative – absurd and often dangerous acts that defy societal norms in a carnivalesque way. The data abound in stories of things getting increasingly dangerous at this final stage, when the “sitting” participants become inebriated. A classic example of the final “mischief” stage of the “sitting” ritual is drinking in the sauna in the movie “The Irony of Fate, or “Enjoy your Bath!” which is analyzed in the next chapter. Two men get so drunk that they both climb on a scale and decide to “weigh themselves the bruderschaft⁹ way.” Then all four friends

⁸ Refusals to drink and the ritualistic corrective sequence that follows are discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

⁹ Drinking in the bruderschaft (or brotherhood) way is a German ritual, when two friends put their right arms in the loop of each other’s elbows and drink bottoms up.

stand up together and start singing a song in a public place. The drunken mischief in this story ends with one of them mistakenly sent to another city on a plane. It is not surprising that the mischief stage of Russian drinking receives the most publicity and results in problems, such as physical injuries, death and destruction at home, and the notoriety of Russian drinking abroad.

However, not every “sitting” ritual ends with the “mischief” stage. Very often, sitting and drinking together ends naturally and not abruptly, when the majority of the participants come up with various reasons to leave the scene of “sitting.” Most such reasons are related not to the participant himself or herself or to his or her own desire to leave, but to somebody or something else – “the kids are alone at home, we’d better go,” “I have to be at work early tomorrow, and my boss gets mad when I am late,” “my wife/husband/mother/father will be upset if I don’t show up soon,” “the metro closes in half an hour and I have to be home.” This will work to end the “sitting” ritual only if a critical mass of participants decides to leave around the same time for different reasons, but not for their personal desire to end the “sitting.” Such a desire would be considered rude, unacceptable, and enough to ruin the experience for everyone. Very often, in circumstances when it is difficult to come up with a reason not related to somebody’s personal desire to leave, the participants may get drunk, as there is no cultural mechanism to end the “sitting.” Instead, a very efficient ritual to perpetuate drinking is in place.

3.7.1 Ritual of Toasting and Drinking: Structure¹⁰

The symbolism of actions in a communication ritual serves to “re-affirm the relationships of members to a culturally sanctioned ‘sacred object’” (Katriel, 1990, p. 100). In her

¹⁰ Parts 3.7.1 and 3.7.2 of this dissertation were published in the article Nuciforo, E. V. (2013). Russian toasting and drinking as communication ritual. *Russian Journal of Communication*, 5(2), 161-175.

research on the griping ritual among Israelis and a communication ritual among US Americans, Katriel pointed out how ritualistic acts within both rituals do not facilitate transmission of information new to the ritual participants. Correct performance of the ritual in Katriel's study builds a pattern for "dramatizing major cultural problems and providing a preferred social context for the crystallization of feelings of frustration" (Israeli griping ritual) and "a sense of (personal and communal) identity" (US American Communication Ritual) (Katriel, 1990, p. 112). In a similar way, the symbolism of a ritual of toasting and drinking within the "sitting" ritual is expressed in its familiarity and deep cultural meaning for everyone involved.

A ritual of toasting and drinking is structured in a particular way, and all the participants know and typically follow the expected sequence. Such a sequence may be elaborate or extended, or short and fitting in as much as one phrase or word. Toasting and drinking events follow one another in the "sitting" ritual. In a way, they are focal structuring points for performing the ritual of "sitting." People performing these events adhere to a certain cultural sequence that helps them reach the ends of the toasting and drinking ritual (and eventually the "sitting" ritual) and maintain cultural membership. Such a sequence in the ritual of toasting and drinking usually follows these four steps: (1) announcing a drink; (2) making sure everyone is ready to have a drink; (3) proposing a toast and; (4) drinking together.

A toasting and drinking ritual starts when somebody announces that it is time for everybody to have a drink. This ranges from simple "ну, давайте!/ну, davajte!" ("well, come on, let's get to it!"), or "ну, ладно, надо выпить/nu ladno, nado vypit'" ("ok, it is necessary to have a drink") to announcements that "тост созрел/tost sozrel" (a toast has ripened). Then a participant starts pouring drinks in everyone's glasses, as people are not supposed to pour their own drinks (a bad sign – if you pour your own drinks, you may become an alcoholic). The person who pours the drinks is usually someone responsible for initiating drinking, pouring drinks,

making sure everybody drinks, and designating somebody to say toasts throughout the whole event. Such a person could be the host of the party, an informal leader/authority, or an older person or somebody with a higher social status than anybody else present. This person makes sure that everybody's attention is drawn to those who have not finished their drink or those who refuse to have their glasses filled. After all the participants' drinks are taken care of, a toast is delivered. After the toast, the participants drink together at the same time, making sure nobody stays behind.

The range of collected data demonstrates that more often than not, a ritualistic event of toasting turns into a collective production, with all the participants commenting, sometimes getting distracted, but in general contributing to the overall meaning-making through a toast. Below, such collective meaning-making is demonstrated in a four-minute toast co-produced by 11 college students in Russia (aged 17-20).

(TP - toasting participant; P – participant; Ps – participants all together; Px – unidentified participant, BP – birthday participant; XX, XXX – personal name references).

A group of fourteen 17-20-year old first-year college students is sitting very tightly around a table in an apartment where they celebrate the 18th birthday of one of them. This group of first-year students has been taking all classes together for about four months, and their first finals will begin in three or so weeks. All the drinks have been poured, and the participants have designated the only male in the group to say the first toast to the birthday girl. He stands up and starts talking, holding a glass in his hand. He is uncomfortably jammed between the table, the wall, and two people sitting on either side of him.

1. TP: Я коротко и ясно скажу, (смех) (0.6) с днем рождения тебя! (2.0) (смех)
I'll be short and clear, (laughter) (0.6) happy birthday to you! (2.0) (laughter)
2. (серьезнее) С совершеннолетием, конечно, поздравляю тебя! (0.9) (смех)
(in a more serious tone) I congratulate you on coming of age. (0.9) (laughter)
3. P1: Немножко не дотянула до выборов!
You almost made it to the elections!
4. Ps: Да::
Yeah::
Yeah:::
5. BP: Да, вообще я так печалилась! (1.0) (смех)
Yes, I was so upset! (1.0) (laughter)

6. P2: BP, а ты [за кого бы голосовала]?
BP, and [who would you have voted for]?
(TP is at a loss, still standing with his glass, looking at the participants who suddenly deviated to talk about the elections)
7. P3: [за кого голосовала бы]?
[who would you have voted for]?
8. BP: За XX бы конечно! (0.5) А вот P4 сказала, что она голосовала за XXX!
Of course for XX! (0.5) And P4 said she voted for XXX!
9. P4: (возмущенно) Отстань ты! (1.5) За [XXX]! (смех)
(indignantly) Get lost! (1.5) For [XXX]! (laughter)
10. P5: [сейчас разборки!] (2.0) (смех)
[there will be a fight!] (2.0) (laughter)
11. TP: (внимание вернулось к нему) Найти хорошего мужа! (1.0) (смех)
(the attention is brought back to him). Find a good husband! (1.0) (laughter)
12. P6: Как я, да? (2.0) (смех)
Just like you, right? (2.0) (laughter)
13. P3: Кстати, а чего далеко ходить, да?
By the way, why look anywhere else, right?
14. P7: [Рядышком сидит!]
[Sitting right by your side!]
15. TP: [По жизни] чтобы он был веселый, добрый, умный, (0.5)
[So that throughout your life] he could be fun, kind, smart, (0.5)
16. как говорится. (0.5) И мог [защитить тебя всегда!]
so to speak. (0.5) And could [always protect you!]
17. P4: [На коленку встал].
[He pushes off his knee].
(commenting TP's actions who is not comfortable being squeezed between the wall and the table)
18. P7: Все выше и выше с каждым словом!
He is taller and taller with each word!
19. TP: Что можно еще пожелать в этот день? (1.5) Конечно всех благ. (1.0)
What else can we wish you on this day? (1.5) Of course all good things. (1.0)
20. P4: Сейчас в стихах начнет! (1.0) (смех)
Now he is going to start talking in verses. (1.0) (laughter)
21. TP: Ну, стихи я, (0.3) к сожалению, (0.3) не знаю. (1.0) (смех)
Well, (0.3) unfortunately, (0.3) I don't know verses. (1.0) (laughter)
22. P6: Он стоит [еле-еле]!
He is standing [barely]!
23. P8: [Сейчас упадешь], садись!
[You are going to fall], sit down!
24. TP: Ну, наш коллектив тебя поздравляет еще раз. (1.0)
Well, our collective is congratulating you again. (1.0)
25. Pх: Коллектив!
Collective!
26. P9: Коллектив [трудящихся]!
Collective of [workers]!
27. TP: [коллектив] нашей группы 211 А.

[collective] of our group 211 A.

28. TP: Желаем тебе [с отличием закончить институт], получить (1.0)
We wishing you [to graduate with honors,] and get (1.0)
(at the same time, BP is being poured a drink by P4 who is several years older than everybody else)
29. BP: [P4, мне много!]
[P4, this is too much for me!]
30. TP: надеемся красный диплом.
hopefully a red diploma¹¹.
31. Ps: О:::!
Wo:::w!
32. P4: Все что ли надеются?
Is everyone hoping?
33. Pх: BP!
BP!
34. P1: Но по латинскому “автомат” мы тебе желаем! (1.0)
But we wish you an “automatic” passing grade¹² in Latin for sure! (1.0)
35. BP: А по исто[рии?]
And what about histo[ry?]
36. TP: [и конечно] на первой сессии успеха тебе!
[and of course] success at your first finals!
37. Pх: [Пятерок всех!]
[All the “fives”!]
38. P5: [Повышенная стипендия!]
[Increased stipend...¹³!]
39. P2: Да, чтобы [первая стипендия]...
Right, so that [the first stipend]...
40. Pх: [первая сессия]...
[the first finals]...
41. TP: Ну, а теперь, давайте выпьем!
Well, now come on, let’s have a drink!
42. Ps: Давайте!
Come on!
43. BP: Садись, не мучайся!
Sit down, stop suffering!
- (everybody clinks their glasses with drinks; participants call each other by names to attract attention and make sure they clink their glass with BP.)

¹¹ A “red diploma” is the Russian equivalent of graduating from college with distinction, when most of the final grades are “fives” (five being an equivalent of an “A” in the US).

¹² An “automatic” passing grade (автомат) in this particular context means that the person’s grades throughout the semester were so good that the professor gives the student a good grade before the finals. So the student has the privilege of not having finals for this particular course, and his or her grade becomes “automatic.”

¹³ At Russian universities, most students do not pay tuition (although this is changing). They receive a monthly stipend if their grades for the finals pass a certain threshold. Better grades increase the amount of the stipend.

When the toasting person was called on to say the first toast of the party (as the only male at table), he stood up with a drink and started out by mentioning the occasion for “sitting” (1). He then proceeded to make good wishes about things considered important for this particular birthday person and other participants at the table: coming of age (2); finding a good husband (11, 15, 16); all the good things (19); success in graduating from college (28, 30); success at the first finals (36). The toast is finished by a call for everyone to drink (41).

This sequence reflects what goes on in most of the toasting and drinking events during “sitting.” The sequence in other toasting and drinking rituals in other circumstances might not be as elaborate or extended. All the components in a sequence can fit in one sentence or even a phrase. However, most of the toasting and drinking rituals follow a similar four-step sequence: announcing a drink; making sure everyone is ready to have a drink; proposing a toast; and drinking together.

This and other instances of toasting and drinking events demonstrate how toasting emphasizes values important for the participants. These values are verbalized, put to the fore, celebrated, and confirmed through drinking. Such values or things important for the “sitting” participants are validated through co-production of toasts. Most of the time, toasts in a “sitting” ritual are not monologues by a toasting person, but a joint creation with other participants actively and extensively contributing to the toast, overlapping their statements, interrupting, and contributing in many other ways. Based on the analysis of the collected data, there are four ways for the “sitting” participants to co-produce a toast:

(1) Unsolicited contributions to the toast, such as finishing sentences, elaborating on the topic, supplementing or questioning information, or adding a humorous touch. In the data presented above, the participants elaborate on the toasting person’s word “collective,” making

it a popular phrase reminiscent of the “collective of workers” in Soviet times (25, 26); a participant and a birthday person add that it would be nice for the birthday person to get good grades in Latin and history (34, 35); and two participants note that success at the first finals means that the birthday person will get a stipend (38-40).

(2) Side conversations not related to the theme of the toast among non-toasting participants. In the example above, there is a side conversation about elections (3-10). Such side conversations may at first glance seem to be a disturbance in the toast production. However, such side conversations are very common, and their occurrence increases as the general atmosphere becomes more informal and relaxed. Side conversations demonstrate that the participants are at ease, share common interests, and feel comfortable enough to interrupt the flow of the toast. After all, “все свои/vse svoi” (everyone belongs here, everyone is a part of this close group of people).

(3) Personal comments about the toasting person. These could be joking comments, for example, that the toasting person could make a good husband (12, 13). These could also be comments about the way the toasting person looks, talks, or behaves at the moment, or how good his or her toast is. In the instance above, these were comments about the awkward positioning of the toasting person, who was jammed between the wall and the table (17, 18, 22, 23, 43), and the way he was producing the toast (20).

(4) Emotional responses to what is being said during the toast, both by the toasting person and other participants. Such emotional responses could be laughter (1, 5, 9, 10, 12), exclamations (31), words of approval (for example, “правда/pravda” (true), or “да/da” (yes), and repeating or echoing the toasting person’s words (for example, a toasting person says “We are wishing you enormous success,” and a participant at table repeats: “enormous success!”). If

a toast is made to a person, emotional responses can also include protests from that person: “да ладно/da ladno” (that’s OK), or “ну хватит!/nu khvatit” (well, enough).

If a non-Russian person looked at this collective toast production during a “sitting” ritual, he or she might be confused by what is being said and how chaotic this verbal production of the toast is. Sometimes it might even seem that the toasting person is being heckled. However, Russian participants (including the toasting person) are quite comfortable with this “unstructured” structure and know what, how, and when to contribute to the toasting ritual.

Key elements of cultural meaning that are demonstrated through the structural organization of the toasting and drinking ritual are (1) foregrounding and reconfirming values and issues important for all the participants and worthy of drinking to; (2) active contribution to the toast production, making it a shared cultural experience; and (3) re-affirmation of existing relationships through collective toast production and delivery.

3.7.2 Ritual of Toasting and Drinking: Symbolic Phrasing

Cataloguing the symbolic content of Russian toasting and drinking rituals is quite a formidable task. After all, as some Russians joke, “well, again, there is no excuse not to get a drink” (ну вот, опять нет повода не выпить!). And if Russians drink, they need that “повод/повод” (an excuse, a reason), which is often expressed in toasts, because “what are we, alcoholics – to drink without a reason?!” The analysis of the toast transcripts demonstrated that Russian people systematically employ recurrent vocabulary and phrasing that has deep cultural meaning well understood in Russian culture. The vocabulary that consistently “anchors” the content of each toast to familiar and shared notions is called in this dissertation symbolic phrasing. Such symbolic phrasing is present in each toast, but is put together in a way that

reflects a particular drinking situation involving people who share experiences, some history together, or values and general understanding of life. Russian people use recurrent symbolic phrasing to anchor their personal stories and backgrounds so they can express messages that are shared by representatives of Russian culture.

One of the most popular types of toasts is drinking to the occasion that brought the group together: birthday, wedding, retirement, or some other milestone in a person's life. It could also be a national holiday, or a festive event that has significance for all those who got together to celebrate. For example, the New Year is a very important threshold event in Russian culture, with a lot of things to wish for others and desire for yourself. A toast is proposed to the occasion, but it is usually elaborated further and is "anchored" by symbolic phrasing to something or somebody important in a group, or the whole group itself.

One of the most important such "anchors" is what could be expressed in symbolic phrasing as "за вас/za vas" (to you (formal or plural "you")), or "за тебя/za tebia" (to you (informal single "you")). This symbolic phrasing occurs when a toasting person proposes to drink to another person. The person may be a dear guest, someone whom people have not seen for a while, a birthday person, or somebody who is celebrating an event. This could also be a round of reciprocal toasts, when a toast is made to each person at the table. Someone (or a group of people) is singled out, and his/her/their virtues and/or deeds are extolled: "I want to drink to you, you are such a super great friend. I will never forget how ..." (Хочу выпить за тебя, ты просто супер друг. Я никогда не забуду как...), and a story follows. Or, "Let's drink to the birthday girl, she is so beautiful, smart, and kind ..." (Давайте выпьем за именинницу, она такая красивая, умная, добрая...). In these cases, the person's positive qualities are brought to the fore, and sometimes stories and anecdotes are told to illustrate the person's virtues. Instead of one person, a group of people could be singled out: "Let's drink to our women, we love you

so much! To you!” (Давайте выпьем за наших женщин, мы вас так любим! За вас!), or “I am proposing a toast my parents, they have greatly contributed to me, that’s why I have achieved all of this” (Предлагаю тост за родителей, они столько в меня вложили, поэтому я всего этого добилась).

Another important “anchor” in a toast is symbolically phrased as “за нас/za nas” (to us). This is when common bonds, friendship, relations and shared experiences are brought to the fore. “We” are important. This moment here when we drink “to us” is precious. There is no “you” and “me,” there is only “we,” and we know what brought us together and what holds us together. Such a toast is usually accompanied by a story of a common experience, or something that strengthened the relationship among us:

And I really value that we see the New Year in together like this with the whole family, because if you have noticed, we saw each other more often this year than in the other previous years. We have done a lot of unusual things that we haven’t done before. We have lunches, dinners, go to different places. I want to say that this year I am very proud of you, I love you all ...¹³ (7Denis7, 2007).

In this toast, the occasion to get together is the New Year, and the toast is proposed to the past year as a very good one, and to the next one being even better. But a key symbolic phrasing here is “мы/мы” (we) who are close together right now, have had great experiences together, and affirm our closeness through toasting and drinking.

Closely related to “to us” is drinking to the immediate environment, situation, or something that brings this particular group of people together at this very place at this very moment. This is some “душевная связь/dushevnaia sviaz” (soulful connection) that binds all the participants. Such a connection could have been developing for some time, or has emerged in the course of this particular event. Very often, a toasting person stumbles because of overwhelming emotions, and has trouble articulating this sort of a connection to the others:

This is very important to me, this atmosphere, all that unites us, binds us together. It is sort of super pleasant, very important. I am sorry, I am shy ...¹⁴ (GrandTruck, 2007).

Usually there is an appeal to the significance of being together right now and right here – whether it is somebody’s kitchen, a plane, a train, or a beautiful natural setting. The sense of connecting to the others, and the merging of the environment and the people, can be overwhelming. This is a toast recorded by two men drinking up in the mountains. The toasting person addresses the viewers:

Those who see me at this moment, I want to tell you – love these mountains, respect these mountains, respect ... be in awe of them. I would like to drink ... This is the most organic, natural healing that exists only here, only in this moment, in this second, and right here. I wish you all to experience this around you, all that I am experiencing. I am sharing this with you¹⁵ (Psihilend, 2009).

Another key symbolic phrasing in a toast starts with “чтобы/chtoby” (so that), or alternatively “за/за” (to) followed by mentioning some value or an abstract notion. This phrasing anchors some wish, a desire for better outcomes, a prosperous and healthy life, fulfillment of most cherished dreams, abundance and joy. The phrasing “chtoby” (“za”) is a gateway to what people in this particular group need and long for. It shows the group’s values and aspirations. The most common things that people look forward to, wish to others, and value for themselves are “счастье/schast’e” (happiness), “радость/radost’” (joy), “любовь/liubov’” (love), “дружба/druzhiba” (friendship), “здоровье/zdorov’e” (health), “богатство/bogatstvo” (wealth), “удача/udacha” (luck), “успех/uspek’h” (success), and in general “чтобы всё было хорошо/chtoby vsë bylo khorosho” (so that everything turns out well). The data demonstrate that even though drinking to all the valuable things above recurs persistently in different groups (male, female, college students, retired people, young professionals, and mixed groups), people come up with stories (real or made-up) illustrating how one of these values and notions (love,

friendship, joy, luck, etc.) apply to this particular group of people. This is a toast to friendship by a young college woman on her 20th birthday:

And I would like to say a toast – let’s drink to friendship. Because today friendship is one of the most important qualities of every person. Because you can see a true friend not only in joy, but also in trouble. So, yeah. I have very few friends like this. That’s why I am very glad that I ... I am very glad that my group¹⁴ is here, we have here those closest people who I would like to see ... Let’s drink to friendship!¹⁶ (NikaGorovska, 2011).

Another key symbolic phrasing in toasting is “давай(те)/davai(te)¹⁵” (come on, let’s do it, an urge to immediate joint action). Sometimes it is followed by “выпьем за/выр’ем за” (have a drink to), so it becomes “let’s have a drink to...” This phrase is present in almost every drinking act, sometimes several times.

“Давай(те)/davai(te)” can start a toast, come in the middle of it, or appear at the end as a call to drink together. Very often it is repeated throughout the toast both by the person who delivers that toast and his or her audience:

(In this YouTube video, about ten people are sitting at one table outside a house having dinner in a rural area in summer. Some people are hosts, and the others are guests, all seem to be members of an extended family)

1. Woman: За всех оптимистов!
To all the optimists!
2. Woman: Да, за всех, за всех!
Yes, to all, to all!
3. Woman: За всех нас, [и кто не смог приехать].
To all of us, [and those who couldn’t come here].
4. Woman: [Да, бросили дела, огороды], приехали.
[Yes, we left all our business, gardens], came here.
5. Man: Приехали сюда.
Came here.
6. Sasha: Я посчитал у нас (2.0), это так (1.0) минимально, (0.5)
I counted, we have (2.0), about (1.0) minimum, (0.5)

¹⁴ Группа (group) in Russian universities and colleges is usually a group of students who have the same curriculum during their college years; they go to all classes together and usually spend a lot of time getting to know each other and bonding.

¹⁵ “Давай(те)/davai(te)” is a modal particle, and the ending –те/te is added if the speaker addresses several people or chooses to address a single person with a formal “you.”

7. 14 братьев (2.0) двоюродных (1.5) и 16 сестер...
14 male (2.0) cousins (1.5) and 16 female...
8. Man: Где-то так, (0.5) больше [тридцати].
Something like that, (0.5) more than [thirty].
9. Sasha: [Это только] по маминой линии. (0.5)
[This is only] on mom's side. (0.5)
10. Батиной я прикинул, там два, три.
On dad's I estimated about two, three.
11. Woman: Батиной, (0.5), батинкой не [в счет].
Dad's, (0.5), dad's doesn't [count].
12. Sasha: [Вот] сколько!
[So] many!
13. Woman: Ну давайте, давайте!
Come on, come on!
14. Sasha: Я ехал в поезде, всех вспомнил!
I was on the train and I recalled everyone!
15. Woman: Ну, давайте! (0.5)
Well, come on! (0.5)
16. Sasha: Всю родню! (2.0) (все встают, начинают чокаются) Ура! (8.0)
All the relatives! (2.0) (people stand up, start clinking the glasses) Hurray! (8.0)
17. Woman: Давай, давай, Толя. (все тянутся друг другу чокнуться)
Come on, come on, Tolia. (everyone is reaching out with a shot glass)
18. Man: Людочка, давай!
Liudochka, come on!
19. Woman: Коля, Коля, давай!
Kolia, Kolia, come on!
20. Voices: Давайте! Давайте!
Come on! Come on!
21. Sasha: Чтобы знаясь, писаться, родниться, да? (2.0)
So that we keep in touch, write to each other, stay related, right? (2.0)
22. Иначе мы скоро старые будем. (2.0) Давайте!
Otherwise, we will soon be old. (2.0) Come on!¹⁶
- (Marakazicha, 2009)

In the above example, the word “davaite” is repeated ten times (13, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22), and it serves as a dynamic urge that invites everyone to join in drinking and keep the action going. It is an urge and a connector in a toast that turns into an interaction among the participants. In lines 13 and 15, “davaite” serves as an urge to pour drinks and move from

¹⁶ Most of the time, there are other utterances in the background throughout this toast, such as comments addressed to the man with the camera, or offering food to one another. During lines 16-22, a lot of things are said simultaneously and they are mostly hard to distinguish. Only the ones that were clear are transcribed here.

talking to drinking. In lines 17-20 and 22, “davaite” accompanies the process of collective drinking when the participants invite the others to join them.

In many cases, “davai(te)” is the only thing said as a toasting ritual.¹⁷ This can come up when the participants feel that the right moment to have a drink has arrived. The right moment would be when, as a result of an ongoing conversation, “понимание/ponimanie” (understanding, bonding) among the participants has reached the point when no words, explanations, or elaborate toasts are necessary. Somebody’s “davai(te)” and a raised glass with a drink is a sign of mutual understanding that signals the beginning of a joint drinking action.

Symbolic phrasing in the Russian ritualistic event of toasting and drinking is recurrent throughout toasts and evokes cultural vocabulary with deep meanings. “За вас (тебя)/za vas (tebia)” (to you) brings out one’s personal value and contribution to other people’s lives. “За нас/za nas” (to us) emphasizes a soulful connection that develops as a result of shared experiences in the past, or an immediate spark of closeness as a result of bonding during current drinking and talking. Drinking is done “so that” important things happen and desires come true. These important things and aspirations are connected to key values such as love, friendship, happiness, and more. Inviting others to drink to any of these values evokes sharing and reliving the stories and experiences of the participants involved in drinking. “Davai(te)” is symbolic phrasing that is used to facilitate and urge the act of joint drinking. “Davai(te)” without elaborate toasting signals mutual understanding and a high level of soulful connection.

¹⁷ “Davaite” is the most common symbolic phrasing used in the toasts that have been analyzed. There are other variations of the phrase used to urge the participants to have a drink together. Some of such variations include “ну, будем/ни, budem” (well, shall we?), “поехали/поеkhali” (let’s get going!), or “вздоргнем/vzdrognem!” (let’s give it a start, jump). Cataloguing all the variations and their subtle meanings would require another research endeavor, so all these options are considered here under the symbolic phrasing of “davaite,” as it has the meaning of a short call for collective drinking.

3.8 Norms: Correct Performance of “Sitting”

The “sitting” ritual is governed by norms and expectations that are obvious and familiar to Russian participants in the ritual. The norms are taken for granted, and they are noticed and get verbalized when somebody violates them. Such a violation challenges the cultural flow of the event. Formulating these norms allows the researcher to see a prescribed action for the “sitting” ritual participants (Carbaugh, 2007; Philipsen 1992). We also get closer to understanding cultural meanings about proper, value-laden action that is required to perform the ritual correctly (Hastings, 2000). In the “sitting” ritual, the norms regulate the participants’ relationships with one another, uphold alcohol consumption patterns and amount, and maintain the soulful nature of the event.

First and foremost, all the participants are expected to know the ritual sequence and perform the events and acts constituting the ritual “как все/kak vse” (like everyone else). They are also expected to demonstrate a sincere interest and respect for the “sacred object” of the “sitting,” for example:

People are *sitting* together and celebrating. And celebration it is not only sitting at table and drinking, there are some events going on, some games. And if a person is not interested in any of these, he is just sitting and drinking without having “zakuski,” maybe he already has some problems (with alcohol)¹⁷ (woman, 20).

Another respondent describes a deviant person as someone who will not participate in the flow of activities during the ritual. Such a person “doesn’t need anything, doesn’t care about anything” (ему ничего не надо), so he or she would not wait for toasts and would not take part in the ongoing communication:

(People with alcohol problems) go ahead and just do one shot after another, they don’t wait for toasts, (don’t wait) for anybody or anything. For example, we said a toast, had a drink, we are talking. We could be singing, or dancing, or having a conversation, I mean, communicating. We are *sitting* well. And those people – they are done, *they don’t need*

any of that. Nothing – no communication or anything like that – they just do one shot after another¹⁸ (woman, 58).

The first norm in the “sitting” ritual is: when “sitting” with other people, if one wants to be an integral part of the event and maintain membership in the group, one should uphold the sequence of ritualistic events of toasting and drinking, and participate in conversation simultaneously with the others and in the same way as the others in the group.

The first norm is closely connected to the second norm regulating “sitting” experiences.

This norm concerns alcohol consumption not being a sole goal of “sitting”:

To *sit* well it (doesn’t mean) to get drunk and not to remember anything the next day. (It means) just to *sit* well in a good company. You danced, *sat* well, communicated. This is what I consider sitting well¹⁹ (man, 30).

Alcohol consumption (both consuming alcohol as substance and the process of alcohol consumption as part of a “sitting” ritual) should enhance a communication experience but not replace it:

Why have a drink? To keep the conversation going. Some sort of communication and such. And to improve the mood. And if you get wasted, drunk – what’s the point?²⁰ (man, 26).

People should be attuned to the group’s alcohol consumption pattern to perform the ritual correctly. This way, alcohol becomes an integral part of the communication process, enhancing the interaction:

And if in a company everyone is without alcohol problems, they won’t drink much. They will drink as much as necessary for everyone to be merrier and more interesting. And if someone begins unmotivated alcohol consumption, when it is already great and fun, but a person continues drinking for no reason, then you notice such a person. He will be noticeable, I think, because he will switch off from the general conversation, and will go into himself or into his glass²¹ (woman, 20).

The second norm for correct performance of “sitting” is that when participating in the “sitting” ritual, if one wants to maintain an uninterrupted sequence of acts and be an integral

part of the group, one should not prioritize personal alcohol consumption as the most significant among other actions, such as enjoying food, having a conversation with other participants, dancing, playing games, singing songs, etc.

This chapter started with Pesmen's quotation that related a story about a man who accused her of "existing exclusively by logic" because she left a "sitting" event earlier than everyone else. The data for this study demonstrate that when any of the "sitting" participants try to refuse a drink, or attempt to leave the scene of "sitting" prematurely, others often accuse such people of not being "как все/kak vse" (like everyone else), putting personal interests above the group, and ruining the integrity of the group and the "soulful" nature of the gathering. The third norm of the sitting ritual is that when "sitting" with other people, if one wants to preserve the integrity of the group and maintain the "soulfulness" of the event, one should not be logical or reasonable about the demands of the outside world and individual inconveniences of the "sitting" ritual. One cannot appeal to any external circumstances that may constrain the group's performance of the drinking ritual.

A key observation about these three norms regulating "sitting" is that the most valuable activity during the ritual is building a positive and continuous communicative experience for everyone and maintaining integrity of the group through this experience. Anything or anybody that enhances that experience – through talking, drinking, eating, dancing, singing – is considered to be a positive and welcome contribution to the "sitting" ritual. Anything or anybody that disrupts the experience – by leaving prematurely, refusing to drink or drinking too much, challenging other members verbally or in a physical fight – is considered inappropriate and undermines the ritual. Everything that happens during the "sitting" ritual in a group should be governed by the rules and expectations existing within this specific group, whether these are

quantity and pace of alcohol consumption (which could be little, moderate, or excessive), or types of activities during the event (dancing, singing, saying elaborate or short toasts, etc.).

3.9 “Sitting” Ends: Sacred Object of the Ritual

Celebrating a “sacred object” is the ultimate goal or “end” of the ritual (Philipsen, 1987). Understanding the “sacred object(s)” is important for decoding cultural essence of “sitting.” The “sacred object(s)” of the “sitting” ritual provide access to learning about the value of drinking for Russians. This study demonstrates that the overarching sacred idea of the “sitting” ritual in Russia is that of “togetherness” and building solidarity with all those who are present at the event. Such bonding brings the participants closer to “understanding” one another. This sacred idea is expressed through several layers of sacredness.

The first layer of sacredness, and the most conspicuous, visible and pronounced one, is the sacred object of the occasion. This sacred object is usually verbalized in toasts that are short summations of something the occasion of “sitting” is devoted to, some important values or life occurrences that are expected to bring people together. As we have seen earlier in this chapter, the structure of a toasting event and its symbolic phrasing emphasize and bring to the fore values specific to the occasion, place, participants, relationships among them, and their shared history. Toasts can vary and can be devoted to different things even within one “sitting” occasion. But in all cases, through toasting and then drinking together, the participants demonstrate that they agree with what has been said in the toast. They show that they are a part of the group present at the “sitting” event, understand what is valuable for the other group members, and share the importance and meaningfulness of the values at stake.

Another “end,” or the second layer of the sacred idea of “sitting,” is becoming separated from the outside world, and, very often, defying everything and everybody outside the context of “sitting.” This idea is less obvious than the previous “layer of sacredness” verbalized in toasts, but has been pointed out by the interview respondents and has been identified by researchers writing about Russian culture and communication. For example, Reis (1997) discusses a genre of mischief-making in both behavior and narrative as something “mounting a challenge to the pragmatism and material concerns of everyday life while also mocking the (often absurd) rationalism of state projects and promotions” (p. 69). Reis also says that “alcoholism”¹⁸ as a performative/narrative phenomenon very often becomes the possibility for such mischief-making. Pesmen (1995) claims that since “sitting” is being “together against a greater power, the boss, the System, Fate,” then “sitting must simultaneously be outside and in defiance of contexts of power relations” (p. 72).

When asked about reasons for “sitting,” the respondents mentioned that an event like “sitting” helps them to relax, rest, and forget about everyday troubles and concerns with people who are close to them. They talked about “leaving the mundane world,” “not feeling the pressure from the outside world,” and leaving “all this” (“все это/vse eto” – meaning all that is going on outside the small group gathering where soulful communication and drinking occur). Sitting and drinking is described as happening in some sort of a time and space capsule where the outside world is not meant to interfere and set the rules. The power relations of the outside world are undermined and often demonstratively neglected or challenged through drinking. Data show that the power relations defied by drinking could be anyone or anything imposing

¹⁸ Reis does not provide a clear definition of what exactly she means by “alcoholism.” While calling it a “bio-medical/social phenomenon,” she also says that it is a “performative/narrative phenomenon” (p. 69). We assume here that by “alcoholism” Reis means excessive and harmful alcohol consumption, or both “to drink” and “to get drunk” as discussed in Chapter 6, which is devoted to folk terms for problem drinking.

rules and regulations – parents, spouses, government, or any other authority that “не дает душе развернуться/ne daet dushe razvernut’sia” (prevents one’s soul from unfolding).

Sometimes such resistance to letting the outside world set the rules and limits leads to defiant and very often unreasonable and even dangerous behavior. For example, in the data from a movie episode from “The Irony of Fate or “Enjoy your Bath!” discussed in the next chapter, four men drink in defiance of the orderliness of another ritualistic celebration, New Year, which usually happens inside families and (at least starts) in a more or less sober mode. The men almost purposely ruin the family holiday through getting together, “sitting” in their small group, drinking before the family celebration, and getting in trouble as a result of their collective alcohol consumption. They prioritize the sacred idea of gathering with friends in the sauna where they can celebrate their immediate communion and solidarity through drinking (“sitting”) together. The interview respondents came up with quite a number of stories describing “crazy” behavior of people when they got drunk as they “sat together well.”

It is important to note that depending on the group of “sitting” participants, drinking does not have to go to the extreme end of the “defiance” spectrum where social rules and norms get broken to undermine some authority. Most often just being together, talking, and experiencing belonging to the immediate communion of all those gathered creates a sense of being separated from the rest of the world together.

The third layer of the sacred idea of the “sitting” ritual is reaching “понимание/ponimanie” (roughly “understanding”) through “soulful” connection. Reaching “understanding” is a sacred idea of the ritual and an ultimate end of good and enjoyable “sitting” together. “Understanding” should be a mutual moral investment, and if it is not achieved, “sitting” is not considered successful:

What can ruin *sitting* well? Not *understanding* each other, perhaps, when the person you talk with doesn't *understand* you. When the conversation is one-sided. When you see that the person is not interested in what you say, what you think. So, you get tuned into a different kind of a conversation, a different mood. I think such *sitting* together is not beneficial, there are only negative (emotions) left²² (man, 45).

"Understanding" here is more than "getting" the contents of a conversation.

"Understanding" in this context is connecting to the other people (or the other person) in the "sitting" group on a level beyond words.

Sometimes the importance of "understanding" is mentioned in the toasts and in the participants' evaluations of the event. More often, though, it is not verbalized in the context of "sitting" because it is something that gets accomplished through "душевное общение/dushevnoe obshchenie" (soulful communication) and interpersonal connection on an intuitive level. Alcohol is said to facilitate "расслабление/rasslablenie" (relaxing, loosening up), "открыться/otkryt'sia" (opening up), talking "откровенно/otkrovenno" (without holding anything back), and attaining the "душевность/dushevnost'" (soulfulness) of the event, and through all this reaching "understanding." Participants who are not drinking at the same pace as the others are thought to be afraid to relax and loosen up because they may be "что-то скрывают/что-то skryvaiut" (holding something back).

As discussed above, in the literature review for this study, the Russian "душа/dusha" (soul) plays a key role in achieving "understanding" through the ritual of "sitting." Wiezbicka (1992) described the folk concept of a Russian "dusha" as closely connected to the "moral and emotional core of the person," and a person's "hidden inner world." Based on her ethnographic work in Russia, Pesmen (2000) broadened this cultural essence of "dusha" and talked about it as an organizing principle that can be used to examine and understand many aspects of Russian culture and life. Dusha was explored by Pesmen as "condensed Russianness, Russian history, and mystical, social, and philosophical notions of self, soul, identity, and personhood,

interwoven with ritual and sentiment” (p. 18). The role of “dusha” in Russian cultural discourse was explored by Carbaugh (2005), who discovered that the symbol of “dusha” activates certain feelings and actions in Russian cultural discourse. “Разговор по душам/razgovor po dusham” (soul talk),” a Russian communication ritual, “involves a deeper morality of a common life, a transcendental quality of humanness, with this being predicated to a collective agent” (Carbaugh, 2005, p. 123).

The data for this study show that opening or “обнажение/obnazhenie” (baring) of “dusha” happens in communion with others at a certain point in time through drinking and talking, and it leads to “understanding” among the ritual participants:

I think such a gathering involves people who you can have a *soul talk* with, I mean, talk without holding anything back. Without holding anything back, when you don’t need to choose your words in order to hide something, and you can just talk openly, talk and communicate. You can get enriched by this and maybe somebody will learn something from you²³ (man, 45).

The “soul talk” as a ritual often co-occurs with “sitting” and activates Russian premises about cultural identity: we are Russians and we can tune into a person who has a similar understanding of “dusha” and beliefs about our cultural uniqueness. Our Russianness is in the ability to recognize and interpret “dusha” performance in various forms of communication, including the rituals of soul talk and “sitting.” We know how to use the means and meanings of proper acting during communication forms guided by “dusha,” and we, as Russians, keep to certain morals and have an understanding of what the norms are and how they should not be violated (Khatskevich, 2002).

The “ends” or “sacred object” of “sitting” are complex and multi-layered. The “ends” are built on the issues and values important to the members of a particular group at a certain place and time. Another layer of “sacredness” is to get separated from the world existing outside the

event of “sitting” and very often challenging that world. The third ultimate purpose of “sitting” is becoming emotionally, “душевно/dushevno” (soulfully) close to those gathered together and reaching “понимание/ponimanie” (understanding).

3.10 Conclusion

The analysis above revealed that the ritual of “sitting” is a cultural form of communication. This ritual has a patterned sequence that develops in a way that ensures escalation of bonding among the participants, very often at the price of individual interests and in defiance of the outside world. The ritual sequence is accomplished by the participants, who presume, re-create, violate and re-affirm cultural norms. The participants also orient their actions toward achieving the ends and celebrating the sacred object of the ritual. The sacred object of the ritual is complex and not always verbalized. The main idea is to do things for the sake of “understanding,” a soulful connection that is believed to be intuitively felt and revered by all the participants. Ritualistic events of toasting and drinking involve the highest level of communal bonding and solidarity when an individual dissolves in the others present, opens his or her soul, and experiences the liminal state when “the social flow bends back on itself, in a way does violence to its own development, meanders, inverts, perhaps lies to itself, and puts everything so to speak into the subjunctive mood as well as the reflexive voice” (Turner, 1988, p. 25).

Notes

¹ Мы так давно с девчонками (сотрудницами) не сидели здесь в поликлинике. Такое ощущение, что чего-то не хватает. Надо что-то придумать.

² Как? Вы уже уезжаете? Так быстро! У нас даже не получилось посидеть в этот раз. Я думала, вы зайдете сегодня вечером, и мы посидим.

³ У нас, у русских, говорят, что пока вы с нами за столом не посидели и не выпили, вы не можете называться нашими друзьями. Ну, давайте выпьем за настоящую дружбу!

⁴ Мы все стояли с бокалами и разговаривали, и как-то странно было все это. Ну, мы придвинули стулья к столу и сели. Так хорошо посидели, пообщались со всеми. Уходить не хотелось.

⁵ В одном (доме) посидели, поплясали, попили, погуляли, все. “Ну все, собирайтесь, я пошла домой. Я сейчас там на стол”, - хозяйка говорит. “Ну ладно, хватит. Пойдемте скорее...” И мы так пять домов прошли.

⁶ Они не хотят с нами выпивать, им не нравится. Почему? Они не могут войти вот в то душевное состояние, почувствовать это спинным мозгом, ту истину, которую мы обсуждаем. Она и так всем понятна. За счет полета фантазии пытаемся какие-то более тонкие, более узкие сферы, более узкие какие-то стороны, чтобы почувствовать их. Не понять, они и так понятны, почувствовать. И это вот ощущение, оно порождает единство. И ты начинаешь лучше чувствовать человека.

⁷ Ну, лично я, если я не хочу вообще выпивать, я обычно тогда и не иду. Потому что, как правило, напрягает, если в компании все сидят выпивают, а кто-то тянет водичку или сок, ну как бы это... кажется странным. Ну что человек сидит один. Вроде как все уходят на какую-то свою волну, а он остается где был. Ну, я считаю, что лучше просто в такой ситуации не оказываться, чтобы не мешать ни себе, ни другим.

⁸ На самом деле, если говорить об отношении алкоголя к “плохо посидели,” то отрицательно на это влияет присутствие непьющих людей. Потому что, когда все нажрется и начнут развязывать языки... ну, в общем, если при этом будет непьющий человек, то на утро будет стыдно смотреть в глаза ему. А остальным нормально. Вот этот непьющий человек он портит все “посидели.”

⁹ В отпуске сидим с моей семьей. Заходит дама. Вот мы, в этой группе, ее никто не знает. Оказывается она одноклассница моего старшего брата. Ну, разговаривать нам не о чем. Вот она сидит и сидит. Рюмку одну налили, вторую налили, третью налили. И не уходит человек. Уже как бы свой. (смех) Она думает, что свой... А она нам не нужна. Надо бы предложить ей уйти, а человек не уходит. ...Ну, как выгнать ее? Даму?

¹⁰ Если почерпнули для себя что-то. И эмоции главное чтобы хорошие остались на следующий день. После этого вечера, естественно, я скажу - вот вчера я хорошо посидел.

¹¹ Ну, опять же, это эмоциональная, да, какая-то составляющая. Много зависит. Может быть потрясающая мужская компания, да, мне как девушке незамужней это интересно и актуально, но вот эмоционального комфорта ты не испытываешь, да, там не складывается разговор, ну, в общем, нет. А иногда бывает, что собираешься с девчонками, и так хохочешь с ними и веселишься, что, в общем, замечательно посидели, можно сказать – да, вчера хорошо посидели.

¹² Какая [обстановка] сложилась? Ну не знаю, вообще это спонтанно так происходит все время. Вот именно. Мы вот друзья, да, конечно. Но можно сказать, что и с совершенно незнакомым человеком можно хорошо посидеть. Вот. Как-то я даже не знаю, все зависит от случая.

¹³ И я очень дорожу, что мы встречаем вот так вместе с семьей, потому что если вы заметили, мы чаще встречались в этом году, чем во все остальные, другие годы. Мы делали много необычных вещей, которых мы никогда не делали. Мы там обедаем, ужинаем, ходим во всякие места. И я хочу сказать, что я в этом году очень горд всеми вами, я вас очень всех люблю.

¹⁴ Для меня это очень важно, та атмосфера, то, что нас соединяет, объединяет. Как бы это дико приятно, это очень важно. Я извиняюсь, я стесняюсь.

¹⁵ Те, кто меня видит в данный момент, я хочу вам сказать – любите эти горы, уважайте эти горы, уважайте... бойтесь их. Потому что они могут такие сюрпризы преподнести. Не каждый даже увидит, что они могут. Я хочу выпить... Это самое натуральное природное лекарство, которое только здесь, только в данном моменте, в данной секунде и вот тут. Я вам всем желаю, чтобы всегда это вокруг себя ощущали то, что я сейчас ощущаю, я делюсь этим с вами.

¹⁶ И я хочу такой тост сказать – вот выпьем за дружбу. Потому что сегодня дружба – это одно очень важное вообще качество каждого человека. Потому что друг познается не только в радости, но и в беде. Вот. Таких друзей у меня мало. Поэтому я очень рада, что у меня... я очень рада, что моя группа – это здесь собрались те самые близкие люди, которых я хотела видеть... Давайте выпьем за дружбу!

¹⁷ На празднике сидят люди и, ну праздник, это же не только сидеть за столом и выпивать, вот какие-то мероприятия, конкурсы проводятся. Ну, если человека это ничего не интересует, он просто сидит, пьет без закуски, может быть у него уже есть проблемы (с алкоголем).

¹⁸ Они начинают вперед все опрокидывать рюмки, не дожидаясь ни тостов, никого, ничего. Вот мы если выпили, тост сказали, выпили рюмочку, мы разговариваем. Либо поем, либо танцуем, либо вообще беседуем, как говорится, общаемся. Хорошо сидим. А

эти люди – уже все, им ничего не нужно. Ни общения, ничего, так – одну за одной только опрокидывают.

¹⁹ Хорошо посидеть – это не то, что напиться там, что не помнить наутро ничего. Просто в хорошей компании хорошо посидеть. Потанцевали, посидели хорошо, пообщались. Вот я считаю так – что это хорошо посидели.

²⁰ Для чего выпивается? Для поддержания разговора там. Общения какого-то и прочее. И чтобы там настроение поднялось. А если нажраться, набухаться – ну какой смысл тогда вообще?

²¹ И если в компании все такие, без проблем с алкоголем, то, в общем-то, они выпьют не очень много. Они будут пить ровно настолько, насколько достаточно для того, чтобы было всем чуть-чуть веселее и как бы интереснее. А если, как бы, начинается такое немотивированное употребление алкоголя, да, когда в общем-то уже хорошо и весело, и человек продолжает и продолжает пить, ну, как бы непонятно зачем, то тогда вот этого человека уже станет заметно. Он будет заметен тем, что, мне кажется, отключится от общей беседы, уйдет в себя или в свой стакан.

²² Помешать посидеть хорошо что может? Непонимание, наверное, друг друга, собеседника непонимание. Когда получается как – односторонний идет разговор. Когда видишь, что человеку, ну, или неинтересно твое какое-то высказывание, твое мнение неинтересно. То это конечно и самого тебя настраивает на другой разговор, на другой лад. Я думаю, от этих посиделок плюсов нет, одни негативы потом остаются.

²³ Думаю, что это собрались люди, с которыми можно было пообщаться по душам, то есть, пообщаться откровенно. Откровенно, от кого не надо искать каких-то слов, чтобы что-то скрыть, а открытым текстом разговаривать, разговаривать и общаться. Что-то почерпнуть для себя, может быть от тебя кто-то что-то новое узнает.

CHAPTER 4

REFUSAL TO DRINK AS RUPTURE OF THE "SITTING" RITUAL

4.1 Introduction

When I was just six weeks pregnant with my first son, I went to Russia to collect data for this research and participate in a conference. As it always happens on my Russian trips, I visited with my good friends to catch up with what had been going on in my and their lives since my previous visit. I was not planning to tell anybody about my pregnancy because it was at such an early stage. As soon as we sat at the table, the glasses with wine were raised to celebrate my arrival to Russia: "We missed you! It's always great to have you back!" I could not join my friends and have a drink with them. My friends raised their eyebrows and looked at me quizzically: "You don't want to have a drink with us?" They knew I would always support the flow of "sitting" and never refuse to participate unless there was a serious reason. I either had to accept a drink and keep the "sitting" going, or explain what was happening. I knew alcohol was dangerous for my pregnancy, so drinking was out the question. I had to come up with some legitimate reason for not accepting a drink in that situation. Otherwise, my friends would have thought that I was either sick, or did not want to be a part of the "sitting" with them. The whole experience of "sitting" was threatened. I finally had to give up and open my little secret.

This chapter looks closely at what happens when one refuses to drink with everybody else during a "sitting" ritual. There are two reasons to pay special attention to refusals to drink. First, interruption of the key act in a communication ritual sequence creates a critical situation and brings to the surface cultural values that may otherwise be taken for granted and not openly discussed (Goffman, 1967; Turner, 1980; Philipsen, 1987). Second, anti-alcohol

campaigns very often urge people to refuse to drink, especially under social pressure. Cultural discourse analysis of what happens when people refuse to drink with those who pressure them into it should provide important cultural knowledge for strategic planning of messages in public health communication.

The example at the beginning of this chapter and other instances of attempts to refuse to drink when “sitting” with others bring to the surface layers of the “sacred idea” of the ritual discussed in the previous chapter. When somebody refuses to drink, a lot of things are put in question: being a part of an immediate group that got together to “sit,” celebrating issues important to the participants, getting separated from the outside world together, and reaching the unity of “souls” to achieve “understanding.” When one of the ritual participants does not drink and verbally refuses to accept a drink, other participants start questioning the person’s motives. You don’t want to drink with us? Is something going on? The group has to handle the situation, resolve the problem of someone disrupting the ritual sequence, and restore the equilibrium when everyone drinks at the same pace together celebrating the “sacred object” of the occasion. The group needs to enact what was described in the theoretical stance as a “ritualistic corrective sequence.” CuDA in this chapter demonstrates that in the Russian “sitting” ritual, such a sequence is directed at saving what seems to be not the individual face of each “sitting” ritual participant, but the collective face of the group.

This ritualistic corrective sequence is highly structured, just like the “sitting” ritual and the focal rituals of toasting and drinking that constitute “sitting.” The sequence is a framework based on the concept of “social drama” introduced by Turner/Philipsen (Turner, 1980; Philipsen, 1987) and a framework of “corrective process” for “face saving” developed by Goffman (1967). The ritualistic corrective sequence starts with a “breach,” and is followed by a stage of “crisis”

when attention is called to misconduct through a “challenge.” The second stage of redressive action includes a dialogic interchange of “offering and acceptance/rejection.” The final stage of the sequence is “reintegration” or “schism.” It is important to use “ritualistic” when referring to the sequence because it is based on recognizable and meaningful symbolic resources, and it is performed to celebrate several layers of sacredness, one of which is the group’s face.

To explore the deep meaning behind the negotiation of a drink refusal, this chapter looks closely at the appeals expressed by the ritual participants in the redressive action of the corrective sequence that ensues after one of the group members refuses to drink. The appeals used by the group members and the non-drinker are assumed to be based on motives, which serve as strategies for action if we look at them using Mills’ theory of “vocabularies of motives” (Mills, 1940). Exploring these motives provides access to understanding social functions that coordinate actions in making decisions regarding refusing or accepting an alcoholic drink at a “sitting” ritual.

Participant observation of drinking instances and refusals to drink is the major source of the primary data for this chapter. Ten occurrences of this rupture during “sitting” were observed and described for this research.

Another source of primary data that is used here to demonstrate exactly how the ritualistic corrective sequence occurs is popular Russian movies. The three instances analyzed here are from two films popular in Russia. Two instances are taken from “Moscow Does not Believe in Tears” (the full transcript of both instances is in Appendix F). In the first episode, a group of young people who do not know each other well are sitting at table in a Moscow apartment. One of the participants (Serëzha) is asked why he is not drinking. He says that he is an athlete and he is not supposed to drink. Another participant recognizes a famous hockey

player in him, and suggests drinking to his success. Serëzha refuses again. The second instance from the same film features close friends at the table celebrating the birth of a child. When a toast is proposed to the baby, the same athlete refuses to drink, but all the people at the table urge him to have a drink, and he succumbs to the collective pressure. The third instance is from film “The Irony of Fate or “Enjoy your Bath!” (full transcript of the instance is in Appendix G). Four friends get together at a sauna on New Year’s Eve. One of them (Zhenia) is about to get engaged. After a suggestion to have a drink, Zhenia refuses because he is planning to celebrate the New Year with his fiancée and he wants to be sober. All the friends urge him to drink. Eventually everybody gets drunk. The respondents in the interviews for this study were asked whether they thought that these three scenes were realistic. The response was overwhelmingly affirmative.

The secondary data come from personal interviews conducted with native Russians for this dissertation (the interview guide is provided in Appendix A). The respondents were asked such questions as: Is it difficult to refuse to have a drink when you “sit” with other people? Why? What do you usually say if you want to refuse to have a drink? What do people usually say if you refuse to have a drink with them? One hundred and one instances of answers to these questions were collected, analyzed, and used to arrive at the findings in this chapter.

Research questions for this chapter are the following:

1. What is the ritualistic corrective sequence that occurs when one refuses to drink with everybody else during a “sitting” ritual?
2. What individual and collective motives are brought up to strategize the action when a participant refuses to drink?

4.2 Ritualistic Corrective Sequence: Saving the Group's Face

The data collected for this study demonstrate that there are consistent and structured responses to one's refusal to drink with everybody else in the Russian toasting and drinking ritual. These responses are explored as a ritualistic corrective sequence aimed at saving the group's face, which comes up as a layer of "sacredness" in the ritual of "sitting."

The first move in the ritualistic corrective sequence is a "crisis" that happens after the "breach" when someone does not drink/refuses to drink, and everyone else in the group notices the refusal. The "crisis" includes a "challenge," when the participants call attention to the misconduct. In the three data instances from Russian films, the "misconduct" is an act of not drinking or a verbal refusal to drink. For example, this is how a "crisis" with a "challenge" happens in the first data instance (Appendix F):

1. L: Ах, Серёжа, я смотрю рюмка у вас совсем не тронута! Так нечестно!
Oh, Serëzha, I see that your glass hasn't not even been touched! It is not fair!
2. S: (смущенно) Нельзя мне.
(shyly) I am not allowed.
3. G1: Больны?
Sick?
4. S: Ну почему больны? Тренер не одобряет. Спортивный режим.
Why sick? The coach disapproves. Athletic regime.

The female host draws the group's attention to the fact that Serëzha has not taken a drink (1). In this way, she challenges the non-drinker and states that it is not fair to the whole group that he is not drinking. A possible threat to the group is that there is somebody who is not playing according to the rules, not participating in what everyone else is doing, and not following the communal expectations. The non-drinker has to explain his behavior by saying that he is not allowed to drink (2).

In the second data instance (Appendix F), Nikolai (who is charged with pouring the wine in glasses), exclaims: “Hey, Serëga¹⁹, wait!¹” (18), again drawing the group’s attention to the fact that Serëzha’s glass is not filled, and he is breaking the ritual sequence. In the third data instance (Appendix G), Zhenia refuses to drink each time before the glasses are filled. He challenges the group himself, declaring that he is not going to drink: (shaking his head) “No, I will not, not, not have it. I cannot, not!²” (11); (in response to a suggestion to drink to his fiancée) “Huh? No, no!³” (49); and then in another instance: “I absolutely refuse to drink!⁴” (66).

The stage of “challenge” might take two directions. The first is when the number of participants is large and diverse, and the host, or somebody who pours drinks, draws attention to the person who is not drinking and points out that this is against the communal values (first and second data instances). The second direction (usually in small intimate homogenous groups, similar to the third data instance) is when the participant himself or herself declares his or her decision not to drink. The interview respondents almost unanimously said that when “sitting” and drinking with others in a group, it is very difficult to demonstratively refuse to drink unless there is a legitimate reason:

At our gatherings it is better not to refuse. Don’t say anything. As soon as you say that you won’t drink, they won’t leave you alone. All attention to you⁵ (woman, 53).

Refusing to drink is indeed a challenge followed by substantial group work aimed at bringing the person back to the drinking practice with everybody else.

The second move in the ritualistic corrective sequence is the “offering,” when “a participant, typically the offender, is given a chance to correct the offence and re-establish the expressive order” (Goffman, 1967, p. 20). This move is dialogically interwoven with the move of

¹⁹ Serëga, like Serëzha, is a derivation of the full name Sergei.

acceptance/rejection, where “the persons to whom the offering is made can accept it as a satisfactory means of re-establishing the expressive order and the faces supported by this order” (p. 22). The data show that in case of the Russian “sitting” ritual and dealing with a refusal to drink in a remedial way, the participant can also reject the offering and come up with a reason for not accepting the invitation to drink (Appendix F, second data instance):

19. Serëzha: Не, не, не мне нельзя. У меня режим.
 No, no, no, I am not allowed. I have a regime.
20. Nikolay: Сегодня ты обязан выпить!
 Today you are obliged to have a drink.
21. Serëzha: У меня режим. Да нельзя мне, ребята. Да не люблю я.
 I have a regime. And I am not allowed, guys. And I don't like it.
22. Woman (elderly): За ребенка выпить – святое дело! Одну рюмочку.
 Drinking to a child is a sacred thing. One shot glass.

A participant offers justifications for his refusal to drink (19, 21), and the group comes up with refutations (20, 22) of the non-drinker's appeals. The negotiation work done in the offering-acceptance stage demonstrates an interplay (or rather a conflict) of various individual and communal values and appeals. The next part of this chapter looks more closely at the motives and how they act as culturally constructed rationalizations and a strategy for communicative action at this stage of the refusal to drink.

The last move in the ritualistic corrective sequence is reintegration, which could include “thanks,” where “the forgiven person conveys a sign of gratitude to those who have given him the indulgence of forgiveness” (Goffman, 1967, p. 22). In this case, the act of drinking is usually accompanied by the participant saying something meaning that he or she “gives up.” In the second data instance, for example, Serëzha says: “Ah, devils, I am so tired of fighting with you!”⁶ (23); in the third instance, Zhenia joins the group, saying that “за это надо выпить/it is necessary to drink to this” after the toast is made to his happiness with his fiancée (36); next time, Zhenia reproaches his companions, saying that they are “мерзавцы/merzavtsy” (rascals)

(51); third time Zhenia says “it was the devil’s work to go to the sauna with you!” (68).

Interestingly, in two data instances the participants make a reference to the devil, as if saying that there is nobody to blame for their getting intoxicated because it is all the devil’s work.

Alternatively, the last move can be “schism,” which results in a person’s alienation from the group if he or she insists on not drinking. Such “schism” is described by a respondent in the following data instance:

1. P: Я была в компании, мне тогда просто нельзя было пить.
I was in a company (with others), I just couldn’t drink then.
2. И меня заставляли до тех пор, пока я оттуда не ушла.
And they were forcing me (to have a drink) until I had to leave that place.
3. I: А как они заставляли? Обычно как?
And how did they force you? How does it usually happen?
4. P: “Давай выпьем”. Я говорю, “Нет, не хочу”.
“Let’s have a drink.” I say, “No, I don’t want.”
5. “Все пьют, а ты сидишь одна, ты не в теме”
“Everyone is drinking and you are sitting alone, you are out of step.”
6. Вот, я говорю, “Я не хочу просто пить”.
So I say, “I just don’t want to drink.”
7. “Ну, давай, сейчас все напьются,
“Well, come on, everyone will get drunk
8. будем на своей волне, а ты одна сидишь”.
and we’ll be on the same wavelength, and you are sitting here alone.”
9. “Не буду!” Заставляли, заставляли, пришлось просто уйти.
“No, I won’t!” The forced me and forced me, so I just had to leave.
10. Они до последнего, то есть, не понимают, что ты не хочешь и не можешь.
They wouldn’t get it that you don’t want to do it and you can’t do it (woman, 18).

This data instance demonstrates that people in the group feel uncomfortable if there is someone among them who is not drinking (5, 7, 8), even if the person has a reason for not consuming alcohol. A person is assumed to be unable to share everyone’s experience if he or she refuses to drink (5, 8). The respondent in the instance above chose not to participate in the event where everyone was supposed to drink, and she had to split from the group (2, 9).

As we can see in the data instances above, a refusal to drink often means a refusal to participate in the ritualistic event of toasting and drinking that is a focal part of the “sitting” ritual sequence. If that happens, the “sitting” participants don’t try to save the face of the person who refuses to drink (trying to get him or her back as a ritual participant), but start working on saving the face of the immediate group that is drinking to celebrate something sacred and uphold common celebration of the ritual’s sacred object. The participant who refuses to drink tries to offer various reasons for not drinking that would uphold the group’s face. This is how a respondent explained why people try to force others to drink with them:

1. P: Чтобы поддержали их компанию. Чтобы вместе как-то,
So that they could support the company. So that they could be together,
2. чтобы может быть в одной кондиции, скажем так.
somewhat in the same state of mind, let’s put it this way.
3. Лучше понимать друг друга.
Understand each other better.
4. I: Понятно. То есть, когда выпьют, лучше понимают друг друга.
I see. So, when they have a drink, they understand each other better.
5. P: Ну, в смысле, когда все выпьют.
Well, I mean when everyone has a drink.
6. А когда кто-то выпьет, кто-то не выпьет, может потом кого-то не понять.
And when one doesn’t have a drink, (that person) may fail to understand someone (woman, 20).

We see here that a primary expressed purpose of having a drink together is to uphold what is going on at the gathering (1-3). The participants drink to experience a “state of mind” (в одной кондиции/v odnoi konditsii) simultaneously (2), or be “on the same wavelength” (на одной волне/na odnoi volne), as the respondent in the previous data segment said. This is necessary to achieve “understanding” (3, 6), which was identified as an ultimate goal of the “sitting” ritual in the previous chapter. “Understanding” is only possible when everyone drinks (5). So, urging the participants in a ritual to participate equally in alcohol consumption serves the sacred object of the ritual – being together in a “soulful” way and trying to reach

“understanding.” Anyone who refuses to have a drink with the others undermines the sacredness of the occasion and puts in question the group’s integrity.

Very often, ritual participants save the face of the group and themselves as members of this group through deliberately destroying the face of the person who refuses to drink:

They say that if you gave up drinking, you need to get rid of your friends first. Because in a company they (say) – what, you are not drinking? Are you weak, not strong enough? So they begin⁸ (man, 25).

In the instance above, a male respondent describes group pressure and mentions a very common phrase for challenging someone (especially among men): “тебе слабо?/tebe slabo? (are you weak, are you not strong enough to do this?). Such a challenge contributes to undermining a person’s face if the person refuses to drink.

The person who refuses to drink usually tries to save his or her face either through coming up with a group-approved reason for refusing to drink (“I need to drive,” “I am on medication,” etc.) or rejoining the group and accepting the drink²⁰. Another option for an individual is to refuse to drink without a reason accepted by the group and lose his or her face through splitting from the group. If this happens, the person who refuses to drink may bear responsibility for ruining the group’s integrity.

The ritual participants work hard to maintain the solidarity of group members against a threat to their collective face: all of us drink and participate in the ritual, but one person refuses to do this, so our being together is questioned and endangered, and we, as a group, do not seem to be united and strong anymore. There is a gap, somebody who is here, but at the same

²⁰ Respondents mentioned that pretending to drink or filling a glass with a non-alcoholic substance is the best way to avoid social pressure when the group urges a person to drink on par with everybody else.

time not with us, somebody who challenges our values by not drinking with the group. The individual who is refusing to drink has a tough task to save his or her own face and come up with a legitimate reason that would also save the group face carefully constructed through a “sitting” process. Sometimes the individual has to sacrifice his or her face for the sake of the group’s solidarity and uphold common values.

4.3 Refusal to Drink: Motives as Strategies for Action

This part of the chapter looks closely into the motives expressed by the ritual participants in the offering and acceptance/rejection stage of the ritualistic corrective sequence when one of the group members refuses to drink.

Verbally expressed motives here are “strategies of action” or justifications of acts with the possibility to control conduct (Mills, 1940). For example, if a person says that he or she does not want to drink for some individual reasons, the group members may interpret this as disrespectful to this particular group of people and the “sacred object” of the occasion. The collective face of the group is threatened. It is better for the individual to come up with a reason that does not reflect a personal desire or choice not to drink, such as, for example, “I am sick,” or “I have to drive.” The person may as well just have a drink (even if he or she is sick or has to drive) just to avoid drawing the group’s attention to himself or herself and having to come up with various reasons not to drink.

Considering that “the only source for a terminology of motives is the vocabularies of motives actually and usually verbalized by actors in specific situations” (Mills, 1940, p. 910), the

three instances from the films are used here to illustrate which motives are brought up by the participants in the ritualistic corrective sequence within the ritual of toasting and drinking.

In the first data instance (Appendix F), Serëzha refuses to drink – “I am not allowed” (2) – and he is immediately offered a justification by another participant: “Sick?⁹” (3). This demonstrates one of the grounds for the community to explain the actions of a non-drinker – a person does not drink when he or she is sick. However, not being able to drink because of sickness in Russia is a serious challenge to masculinity and a sign of weakness. It also may suggest that the person has been undergoing a treatment for alcoholism or has problems with alcoholism in the family, which is highly stigmatized in the Russian society.

Serëzha’s “offering” for the community to accept him is his being an athlete and having a “regime”: “Well, why sick? The coach disapproves. Athletic regime.¹⁰” (4); “ No, no, no, I am not allowed. I have a regime.¹¹” (19); “I have a regime. And I am not allowed, guys.¹²” (21). He states several times that “we are not allowed to drink¹³” (19) and “I am not allowed¹⁴” (2, 17, 19). By saying “we” (meaning his fellow athletes) and saying “нельзя/nel’zia” (which means non-agentive “not allowed, prohibited by some external rules”), the participant is trying to appeal to an external authority and say that his not drinking is a norm or rule imposed on him by somebody else. His second level of “offering” is “не люблю я/не liubliu ia” (I don’t like it) (16, 21). This “offering” shows his own agency after failed attempts to appeal to someone else’s control over his behavior.

The communal response to Serëzha’s appeals is not a direct reply. The party seems to accept his “offerings” without specifically trying to refute them, but insists on drinking anyway, appealing to a small amount of alcohol he can drink, and to the sacred object of the “sitting” ritual: “Well, you can have one little shot glass to yourself¹⁵” (15) and “Drinking to a child is a

sacred thing, one little shot glass¹⁶” (22). Both times the message is enhanced by the fact that it is delivered by older members of the group, who may feel the responsibility to “permit” drinking when it is not allowed by some external circumstances.

The dialogic interplay between the “offering” and “acceptance” moves in the third data instance offers a great opportunity to analyze the motive texture and sequence, since we can watch an extended drinking ritual with five rounds of drinks and elaborate appeals to drinking. The full transcript of the third data instance is in Appendix G. First, Zhenia refuses to drink, explaining it as his personal will: “I will not, not, not have it. I cannot, not¹⁷” (11). His companions try to reintegrate him into the ritual, accept his unwillingness to drink, and save their own faces as a community by announcing that their intention is not to get drunk because “We all need to be in a good shape¹⁸” (13) and appealing to the small amount of alcohol to be consumed: “Guys, we’ll each have one shot!¹⁹” (12).

Zhenia’s second attempt to avoid drinking (even though the nonverbal behavior of his companions shows that they are not going to stop – they immediately open a bottle, pour vodka, look excited, face each other), is his suggestion to postpone the drinking session till the next day (14). He also points out how he treasures their “getting together” and that they don’t do it so often (15). This can be interpreted as his “offering” of acceptance and respect for the communal value of “being together.” Pevl responds to Zhenia’s “offering” directly by saying that he won’t be in town tomorrow (16). This is a move that emphasizes the importance of every participant in the ritual at this very time at this place. You cannot interrupt the ritual and postpone it, especially if next time somebody who is an important part of the ritual will not be around. Besides, next time it may not be possible to recreate the spontaneous atmosphere of togetherness and “душевность/dushevnost’” (soulfulness) that everyone is enjoying right now.

Zhenia's next attempt is to appeal to his physical state of tiredness and his susceptibility to intoxication as a result of that: "It is horrible – vodka after beer. I had a night shift, a hundred patients²⁰" (18-19). This "offering" is accepted as valid, and one of the participants finds a remedy: a chocolate bar which serves as "zakuska" (20). The next appeal to drinking is a toast when one of Zhenia's friends proposes to drink to him and his happiness: "Zhenia, seriously, as friends, be happy! Be happy, Zhenia!²¹" (34, 35).

Toasts are the strongest appeals and motivation to make the person drink and contribute to the face-saving of the group. As we saw earlier in the previous chapter, toasts express an important layer of the sacred object of the ritual – the group's face. It is convenient to use the toasts as communal appeals to coerce a ritual participant to drink to something that is important for everyone in the group. The other toasts that turned out to be effective in the third instance included drinking to Zhenia's fiancée Galia (48, 50), to Galia and Zhenia's health (59), to bachelorhood (76, 77), and to friendship (84). As drinking progressed, Zhenia's offerings of excuses not to drink gradually faded away until at the end he offered a toast: "Guys, let's drink to our friendship!²²" (84).

The data above demonstrate an interaction between the motives used by the group and the individual to negotiate the face. Personal interviews and participant observation done for this study helped to supplement the data for identifying two groups of motives – those of an individual and the group. The two types of motives are used in the ritualistic corrective sequence initiated when a ritual of toasting and drinking is disrupted by someone's refusal to drink. The table below reflects this analysis and shows individual motives on the left with communal motives on the right.

Table 1: Individual and Communal Motives in Offering/Acceptance Stage of the Ritualistic Corrective Sequence (Continues on the next page)

Individual motives	Communal motives
<p>Physical condition “Я болею/I am sick” “Я устал(а)/I am tired” “Я беременна/пытаюсь забеременеть/I am pregnant/trying to get pregnant” “Я вчера так напился(напилась), что не могу больше пить/I got so drunk last night, I can’t have anymore” “Я принимаю лекарство/I am on medication”</p>	<p>Mitigating possible consequences of drinking through appealing to small amounts of alcohol to be consumed “Немного выпьем/We’ll have just a little” “Пригуби/Just take a sip” “Немного можно/It is allowable to have a little bit” Having food (zakuska) to dilute alcohol in the body “Вот шоколадка/Here is a chocolate bar for you” “Поешь хорошо, и все будет нормально/ Eat well, and everything is going to be ok”; Claiming that alcohol is good for one’s health “Выпей, и все пройдет/Have a drink, and it will all pass”</p>
<p>External requirements or rules imposed by an outside authority or conditions “Тренер не одобряет/My coach doesn’t approve” “Мне надо рано вставать на работу завтра/I need to get up early to go to work tomorrow” “Моя(мой, мои) жена/муж/родители будут ругаться, если я выпью/ My wife/husband/ parents will be mad if I drink” “Я за рулем/I am driving”</p>	<p>Appealing to being in the same situation and having the same concerns “Всем надо новый год встречать/We all have to see the New Year in” “Нам всем на работу завтра/We all have to go to work tomorrow” Suggestion to accommodate the concerns or circumvent the requirements/rules “Можешь здесь переночевать/You can sleep over here” “Езжай по задворкам, и они тебя не поймают/Drive the back streets and they (the police) won’t get you” “Он/она/они не узнает(ют)/ He/she/they will not find out”</p>
<p>Losing face outside this particular community if he/she gets drunk “Она подумает, что я алкоголик/She will think I am an alcoholic”</p>	<p>Appealing to the sacred object of the ritualistic event of drinking “Выпить за ребенка – святое дело!/Drinking to a baby is a sacred thing!”</p>
<p>Postponing drinking to some other time “Приходите ко мне завтра!/Let’s get together tomorrow at my place!”</p>	<p>Appealing to the immediacy of the situation and uniqueness of bonding at this particular time “Завтра меня не будет/Tomorrow I will be away” “Это уже не то/It’s not the same”</p>

	“Очень сложно всех собрать вместе опять/It’s hard to get everybody together again”
Personal decision “Я не хочу пить/I don’t want to drink” “Я не буду пить/I will not drink”	Appealing to community values and solidarity with those present “Ты с нами?/Are you with us?” “Ты меня(нас) уважаешь?/Do you respect me(us)?” “Мы не можем без тебя пить/We can’t drink without you!” “Здесь все свои/Everyone knows each other well here, everyone belongs together”

This table is not meant to be an exact algorithm of how Russian people refuse to drink and what kind of responses they get from their companions. Very often, a communal response to any kind of individual motive will be an appeal to community values or the sacred object of the drinking ritual. The exact response usually depends on a particular situation and on what these particular ritual participants consider important. What this table demonstrates is a relational interplay of motives that may be implemented when somebody refuses to drink.

Another important note is that this sort of a “motive battle” usually happens during a “sitting” ritual when the participants have established a certain relational base, have performed the ritual sequence, and are bound to uphold the sacred idea of the ritual. They have all worked on constructing their collective face, which is recognized and valued by all those present. In cases when one or several of the ritual components are missing, refusing to drink could be much easier, because a participant who refuses to drink might not consider himself or herself to be “sitting” with the people who are urging him or her to drink. For example, some interview respondents pointed out that it is very easy for them to say “I don’t want to drink” when offered a drink by somebody lower than they are in social status, or not connected to them in any other significant way. An example of this is when, in the first data instance above, Serëzha was at the

table mostly with people whom he was seeing for the first time in his life, and the situation was more formal than it would usually be in a “sitting” ritual. In that case, he was able to refuse a drink and put his glass down. In the second instance, Serëzha was at the table with close friends celebrating the birth of a baby. At that point, relationships among the participants were very close, and communal motives appealing to the sacred object of the ritual – a baby’s birth – were strong. Serëzha’s individual motives of being an athlete and not liking alcohol did not work against the communal motives, and he had to give in and accept a drink.

The analysis of individual motives demonstrates that the most effective ones for a person to avoid drinking are those that bring in external circumstances, something that a person does not have any control over. These could be health conditions and rules imposed by someone outside the situation of drinking. Very often, demands to drink will stop right after the person comes up with a motive related to external circumstances. The weakest individual motives would be ones reflecting a personal decision not to drink. In terms of communal motives, the strongest and most effective ones are those that appeal to community values and solidarity, reproaching the participant for separation from the group.

It is also important to note that sometimes individual motives that are based on external circumstances may not appeal to certain groups. For example, an individual motive that is constructed on one’s concern about his or her health may fail to work for a group of people who do not believe that alcohol is harmful for one’s health. The group will ignore the health concerns and keep coming up with different collective motives to persuade a person to have a drink. A respondent described this in the following example:

A young guy was in our company, he was older than all of us – “Look, I am drinking and what? I am alive and healthy. I drink.” I say: “Well, this is you and this is me. I will need to have kids at some point.” “So what – you’ll have kids, God, everyone has kids.”²³ (Woman, 18).

This example shows how a young woman who is concerned about how alcohol may impact her reproductive health is confronted by a man's argument that "everyone has kids" and that people who drink are "alive and healthy." In this case, the woman has a choice to either split from the group based on her personal convictions, or accept a drink and conform to the group values.

What we see above are "situated motives" expressed by the ritual participants in the context of offering and acceptance/rejection in the ritualistic corrective sequence that very often becomes a focal point in the "sitting" ritual in Russian culture. These motives are verbalizations leading to certain behavior choices during alcohol consumption. If an individual knows that his or her refusal to drink is going to be confronted by strong communal appeals from the group, he or she might try to deceive all those in the group (pretend to drink, pour the drink out), leave the group (and possibly undermine the value of the ritual for everyone), or most probably choose to accept the drink, sustain the ritual, and celebrate its sacred object. The "question situation" (Mills, 1940) of refusing to accept a drink helps to identify individual and collective motives.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter explored what happens if a person refuses to drink with everyone else during a "sitting" ritual. The ritualistic corrective sequence initiated when a participant refuses to drink is an important form of cultural communication demonstrating a sociocultural process where the group works on saving its face and affirming mutual solidarity. It is a prominent moment when community and individual values clash with each other. The clash results in a

process of negotiation that brings to the fore an opposition between the faces of the group and the individual. The group's face becomes a sacred object of the ritualistic corrective sequence. The face of the individual only matters and becomes valuable if it conforms to the group and contributes to sustaining a collective facework process. The facework negotiation vividly demonstrates the importance of community values for the communicative conduct of each individual, and the significance of individual conduct for the affirmation of the community. In most cases, the communal forces are much stronger than those of the individual.

Notes

¹ Ой, Серега, подожди!

² Нет, ну я не-не-не буду. Не-не могу!

³ А? Не-не!

⁴ Я категорически не буду больше пить!

⁵ В наших компаниях лучше не отказываться. Не говорить ничего. Только скажешь, что не буду – от тебя не отстанут. Все внимание на тебя будет.

⁶ Эх, черти, надоело мне с вами бороться!

⁷ ну, черт меня дернул пойти с вами в баню!

⁸ Я слышал выражение, что бросил пить - надо в первую очередь избавиться от друзей. Потому что компания там - а что, ты не пьешь? Тебе слабо? Начинают.

⁹ больны?

¹⁰ Ну почему больны? Тренер не одобряет. Спортивный режим.

¹¹ Не, не, не, мне нельзя. У меня режим.

¹² У меня режим. Да и нельзя мне, ребята.

¹³ да и нельзя нам

¹⁴ мне нельзя

¹⁵ Ну-ну одну-то рюмочку за себя можно.

¹⁶ За ребенка выпить – святое дело. Одну рюмочку.

¹⁷ Нет, ну я не не не буду. Не не могу!

¹⁸ Всем надо быть в форме.

¹⁹ Ребята, ну по одной!

²⁰ Это ужасно, водку после пива. У меня ночное дежурство было, сотня пациентов.

²¹ Жень, сейчас серьезно, как друзья, будь счастлив! Будь счастлив, Женя!

²² Ребята, давайте выпьем за нашу дружбу!

²³ молодой человек был у нас в компании, он был старше всех нас - «Ну, смотри, я же пью, и что? Я жив, здоров. Я же пью». Я говорю: «Ну это ты, а то я. Мне как бы детей еще рожать». «Ничего, родишь, господи, все рожают».

CHAPTER 5

CULTURAL MEANINGS OF “SITTING”

5.1 Introduction

This chapter further explores the communication ritual of “посидеть/posidet” (sitting) and interprets cultural meanings implied when Russians participate in the ritual and refer to an event as “sitting.” Chapter 3 provided a detailed analysis of what happens when the ritual of “sitting” is performed by Russians. Chapter 4 explored the ritualistic corrective sequence that ensues if one of the focal events of “sitting” gets disrupted when someone in the group refuses to drink. This part of the cultural discourse analysis focuses on formulating cultural propositions and developing cultural premises of the “sitting” ritual. The meta-cultural commentary that gets communicated through performing or talking about “sitting” provides access to deep cultural meanings associated with alcohol consumption that is normal, enjoyable and desirable for representatives of the Russian culture.

This chapter looks specifically into the key cultural terms connected to the communication ritual of “sitting.” These terms come up when Russians participate in the “sitting” ritual or discuss its importance. These key cultural terms are put together to formulate cultural propositions. The cultural premises capture the “sitting” participants’ beliefs about what is happening and its significance. The premises are expressed in the communication practice of “sitting” through its highly structured sequence, norms, sacred object and other important ritual components discussed in the previous chapters. Cultural premises are also “a condition” for a communication practice to occur (Carbaugh, 2007). This chapter identifies cultural premises based on the radiants of meaning about personhood, interpersonal relationships, feelings and

emotions, proper actions, and location in the nature of things as they are related to the practice of “sitting.”

The cultural premises of the “sitting” ritual are formulated based on the findings about the Russian cultural experience of “sitting” through ethnographic description and interpretation in the previous two chapters. The data for this chapter are the same as the data analyzed for chapters 3 and 4.

The research question for this chapter is: What radiants of meaning about personhood, interpersonal relationships, emotions and feelings, proper actions, and location in the nature of things are expressed through the communication ritual of “sitting” and serve as a condition for its correct performance?

5.2 “Sitting”: Personhood and Relations among People

5.2.1 Cultural Proposition

There are several key native terms that describe personhood and relations among people as they are expressed through the “sitting” ritual. Those who have a positive experience of “sitting” are “все свои/vse svoi” or become “vse svoi” through a communal experience of being together. “Vse svoi” means literally “all our (people),” or those who are near and dear, but not necessarily by being related to one another. These people belong together because they have had common experiences. They “чувствуют/chuvstvuiut” (feel) and “понимают/ponimaiut” (understand) each other. “Vse svoi” are close in spirit, they have a soulful connection, and they are all comfortable around one another. They are comfortable

about what they might say and how they might behave even under the influence of alcohol. This closeness, connection, and level of comfort usually develop through having had “soulful” experiences while communicating with one another.

In order to “sit,” people get together in a “хорошая компания/khoroshaia kompaniia” (good company) and become “часть/chast” (part) of that “good company.” “Good company” includes people who like having fun in a similar way, and they know how to do it. It is important to note that the good company’s behavior and what is acceptable among its members can differ from one group to another. This relates to the way people have fun as well as the amount and pace of their alcohol consumption. Becoming a part of such a “company” gives one a membership that requires following rules and norms existing in the group and performing the ritual “как все/kak vse” (like everyone else in the group). If somebody “выделяется/vydeliaetsia” (sticks out) and refuses to fulfill the group’s expectations (for example, drinks too much or too little, or refuses to drink for no legitimate reason), it may mean that he or she is not “like everyone else in the group,” and everyone’s experience during “sitting” may be in danger.

The “sitting” participants should be “открыты для общения/otkryty dlia obshchenia” (open for communication). This means that the key bonding activity during “sitting” is “общение/obshchenie” (communicating), and no participant should hold things back, or demonstrate openly that he or she holds things back and withdraws from “open communication” with the others. If any of the participants refuses to drink for a reason that is not found legitimate by the group members, this may mean that he or she is afraid to loosen up and does not feel relaxed enough in the group, where everyone is supposed to be “vse svoi.”

All the group participants should “понимать/ponimat” (understand) one another. This means not only connecting on an emotional level, but also accepting everyone the way they are. “Understanding” extends mostly toward communication and “soulful” connection. However, “understanding” does not encompass accepting someone’s desire to stick out and behave differently from what is seen as “normal” among the group members when they “sit.” For example, the “sitting” group members will “understand” and accept someone when he or she complains about the boss or unrequited love and would like to drink to this, but they will not “understand” if that same participant decides not to drink when they all have a drink, unless, of course, that participant comes up with a very legitimate reason for not drinking. But then the question might be, why did you come to “sit” with us if you can’t fully participate?

The cultural proposition about people’s personhood and relationships in the “sitting” ritual is that when “all our people, those who are near and dear” get together to “sit” in “good company,” they should be “open for communication” and make every effort to “understand” one another.

5.2.2 Cultural Premise

The key orientation for social interaction in the Russian “sitting” ritual is that a person should strive to be an integral and organic part of the group. One can earn membership in the group by following the group’s norms that regulate how things should be done together with the others in a similar way. One’s membership in the group is earned, sustained and affirmed by bonding through participating in jointly performed rituals, opening up in communication, and verbally and nonverbally demonstrating solidarity with the group. The group’s acceptance and celebration of the ritual’s sacred ideas is carried out at the expense of individual desires and aspirations. The group’s expressed motives for social action prevail over individual motives.

Demands of the larger community (outside the immediate group that is “sitting”) are very often given up for the sake of what is going on in the group at this particular place and at this particular time. The main premise is that to successfully perform a communication ritual of “sitting,” one needs to earn group membership by participating in the group’s joint activities and prioritizing the group’s values over individual and out-of-the-group ones.

5.3 Action

5.3.1 Cultural Proposition

Native terms conveying messages about action draw attention to proper ways of doing things when Russian people “sit.”²¹ When people “собираются/sobiraiutsia” (get together) to “posidet” (sit), they need to have a “повод/povod” (a reason, excuse to have a drink). “Povod” justifies drinking and having a good time together while “sitting.” “Povod” is usually something that is known and agreed upon before “sitting,” but it could also be spontaneously formulated. People who get together to “sit” will get to “выпивать/vypivat” (have a drink), which is a milder description of alcohol consumption, meaning “drink little by little” (as opposed to “пить/pit” (drink), which means regular drinking with a connotation of alcohol-related problems and “напиваться/napivat’sia,” which means “to get drunk”). If people have drinks, they participate in a ritual of toasting and drinking when they collectively and simultaneously consume alcohol for the “reasons” important to all those gathered.

²¹ When I introduced the term “sitting” at the beginning of Chapter 3, I said that most of the time the event of “sitting” involves alcohol consumption. This was confirmed by the interview respondents and other data sources.

A key activity during the “sitting” ritual is “общение/obshchenie” (communication) which usually escalates to “душевное/dushevnoe” (soulful) communication that brings people to “открыть души/otkryt dushi” (open up their souls) and bond this way. “Obshchenie” is enhanced by drinking because it allows people to “расслабиться/rasslabit’sia” (relax). At the same time, if drinking becomes a sole goal and the main activity during “sitting,” the ritual turns into a “пьянка/р’ianka” (drunken party), with “getting drunk” as the main purpose. Most of the time, “р’ianka” would not be considered to be a positive and valuable cultural practice.

If somebody does not perform the act sequence of the “sitting” ritual in the way that is expected in the group, such people “все портят/vse portiat” (ruin everything). If this happens, all the ritual participants may end up having a bad aftertaste from the “sitting” experience, which will cause “плохие воспоминания/plokhie vospominaniia” (bad recollections) about the time when “не удалось хорошо посидеть/ne udalos khorosho posidet’” (it didn’t work out to sit well). Recollections are important in the “sitting” ritual when they happen days after it. They help the participants bond even more and look forward to “sitting” together in the future.

The cultural proposition about actions during “sitting” is that “having drinks” with a clearly identified “reason, excuse” enhances “soulful communication” during “sitting” unless there is someone who “ruins everything” by refusing to participate in the ritual “like everyone else.”

5.3.2 Cultural Premise

Most of what is happening during the ritual falls within a certain cultural sequence. The sequence is ensured by all the participants following collective expectations and norms. The

action is usually performed collaboratively, and the ritual's success depends on each participant contributing to celebrating the sacred object of the ritual. The ritual has a beginning that is followed by ritualistic events of toasting and drinking. Talking, dancing, and singing serve as fillers in between. The action develops in a spiral way when ritualistic events and symbolic acts are built on the successful performance of the previous ones. For the ritual to be considered successful, the sequence should not be interrupted by outside circumstances and individual desires of the participants. Ruptures in the symbolic structure of the ritual usually evoke a ritualistic corrective sequence that facilitates repairing the structure or results in a negative outcome. The main premise about action in the ritual of "sitting" is continuity of action and synchronized collaborative performance of that action by all the members of the group gathered together for "sitting."

5.4 Emotions

5.4.1 Cultural Proposition

Emotions are a key driving force for the "sitting" ritual. In a way, positive emotions serve as a cultural fuel that provides for the energy and sustainability of what is happening when people "sit" together. Emotions are not usually discussed throughout the event, but they are felt and can be verbalized more easily when people become inebriated. The ritual is said to be successfully performed when participants feel that "нам хорошо вместе/nam khorosho vmeste" (it feels good for us to be together). The impersonal adverb "хорошо/khorosho" (or it "feels good") means a state of feeling good collectively without necessarily having any particular

and clearly identified source for this emotional state. The participants experience “душевная связь/dushevnaia sviaz” (or soulful bond, connection) that “объединяет/ob’ediniaet” (brings people together, helps to bond).

In the literature review and discussion of the sacred object of the “sitting” ritual, I noted the potency of the symbol of “душа/dusha” (soul) in Russian culture and communication. The symbol of “dusha,” with its derivatives, not only has a deep cultural meaning, it structures communication and gives it a moral value recognized and used by Russians. If all the cultural requirements of the “sitting” ritual are performed correctly, a “soulful bond, connection” among the participants should create “душевность/dushevnost” (soulfulness) in the ritual. The “soulfulness” enhances positive emotions of being connected to the others in the group and rejoicing in that opportunity. The ability to open up and connect to other people on a “soul” level is a valuable quality, but it requires specific circumstances, such as people who are close to you, an environment where everyone feels comfortable and not threatened by the outside world, and a continuous, predictable sequence of events when everyone collaborates. The “soulfulness” of the event is not static; it increases as people get closer through drinking and talking together. Only unfolding “dushevnost” throughout the event helps to reach the ultimate goal of “понимание/ponimanie” (understanding).

The cultural proposition about emotions is that “it feels good” to be together for those who are “sitting” because of their “soulful bond, connection,” and the escalating “soulfulness” of the event contributes to reaching “understanding.”

5.4.2 Cultural Premise

The main cultural premise regarding emotions in the “sitting” ritual is that people should experience feelings of emotional closeness and connection to those around them. Closeness and connection are expressed through opening up in conversation and bonding. Mutual bonding is something that is co-created by the participants when they tune into each other through various means of communication. As bonding progresses, the feeling of soulfulness unfolds and escalates. The escalation of soulfulness to the point where the participants reach understanding is a necessary condition for the correctly performed “sitting” ritual. The emotional bond gets to be so strong, it is almost palpable.

5.5 Location in the Nature of Things

5.5.1 Cultural Proposition

The usual location for the “sitting” ritual is “за столом/za stolom” (at the table), where participants create a space for close “общение/obshchenie” (communication) and drinking. A table, or anything that replaces it, serves as a focal point for the most important things happening during the ritual. “Здесь/zdes” (right now and right here) is when and where the ritual unfolds, and this timing is significant. The participants need to ensure and value the immediacy of the interaction in the small and unique world that they create during “sitting.” What is happening “right now and right here” cannot be postponed and reproduced elsewhere at some other time because the circumstances and emotional value are unique for these particular participants and the solidarity that they manage to develop. This does not mean that

another successful “sitting” event can’t be recreated with the same participants at some other time and place. However, that is a possibility in the future, and nobody can guarantee it, so it is better to enjoy it “right now and right here.” The place and scene should be arranged so that “ничто не мешает/nichto ne meshaet” (nothing interferes). Nobody and nothing should stand in the way of communicating and bonding.

The cultural proposition about the location in the nature of things for the “sitting” ritual is that collective efforts are taken to make sure that “nothing interferes” so that “communication” among the group happens “right now and right here.”

5.5.2 Cultural Premise

The main premise about the location in the nature of things in the “sitting” ritual is that the place is more virtual than physical. It is something created and maintained by the participants for just this particular time and location. This small and unique world functions according to the norms and rules of the tight group of people who got together to “sit.” The small world is separated from the outside world, and often functions in defiance of what is going on outside the immediate gathering.

5.6 Conclusion

The description and interpretation of the communication ritual of “sitting” in Russian culture brought to the surface important cultural meanings. The “sitting” ritual facilitates “soulful” communication experiences among the group’s members. Such communication further brings the participants closer together so that they reach mutual “understanding.”

“Sitting” participants create their own small and unique world separated from everything happening outside of what is going on “right here and right now.” The experiences of group membership and positive communication in the “sitting” ritual become possible when the participants give up or temporarily neglect their individual preferences and the demands of the community outside the immediate group. Everything that happens during the “sitting” ritual is structured and synchronized, and is carried out according to what is considered normal and acceptable in this particular group: pace of drinking, quantity and pattern of alcohol consumption, other activities (such as dancing, singing, etc.), how the ritual ends (whether the participants just disperse or whether it is followed by going out and doing something else after everyone gets drunk) and other.

It is important to note that CuDA of the “sitting” ritual has demonstrated that one’s individual choices and the demands of the community external to the group have very little influence on the structure and sequence of alcohol consumption. One’s personal decisions are mostly valued and appreciated when they align with the requirements and expectations of the immediate group and enhance the group spirit of the event. Each group becomes an entity with its own expectations regarding normal and enjoyable drinking patterns and ways to do things. A common thing for different groups is that they all need to have a synchronized sequence of drinking that is carried out collectively to pay homage to the ultimate sacred object – maintaining the “soulfulness” of the event and reaching “understanding.”

I come back to the communication ritual of “sitting” and its deep cultural meanings toward the end of this dissertation, in Chapter 10, when I summarize the findings and explain the study’s implications.

CHAPTER 6

RUSSIAN FOLK DISCOURSE ON PROBLEM DRINKING

6.1 Introduction

The previous three chapters described and interpreted drinking practices that are considered normal, acceptable, desirable, and enjoyable by representatives of Russian culture. In this chapter, I explore Russian folk discourse to understand what kind of drinking is believed to be problematic among Russians.

When two Russian women were interviewed for this study, they were asked how they thought problems with alcohol could be overcome in Russia. In response, the following exchange occurred (P1 – participant 1, P2 – participant 2; I – interviewer):

1. P1: Взять себя в руки и все. И бросить и не пить.
Get hold of yourself and that's it. To give it up and not to drink.
2. I: Как?
How?
3. P1: Ну как? Надо силу воли иметь. Силу воли.
Well, how? It is necessary to have willpower. Willpower.
4. P2: Это уже алкоголики так. Силу воли надо.
This is for alcoholics. It is necessary to have willpower.
5. А мы что пьем каждый день? Нам-то не надо.
And do we drink every day? We don't need it.
6. P1: Нет, чтобы как? Которые вот пьют-то вот силу воли взять вот эту вот,
Well, no, how? Those who drink, they need to get that willpower
7. чтобы этого ничего не было.
so that nothing like that happens.

(women, 72 and 51)

This exchange is important for understanding the perception of problems with alcohol among Russians. One of the ways to describe people who have problems with alcohol is to refer to them as people who “пьют/p'iut” (drink) (6). They drink regularly, sometimes every day (5). Their alcohol consumption acquires a certain pattern. One of the reasons they cannot stop

drinking is that they have permanently lost control of their “selves.” They do not have the necessary “willpower” (3, 4, 6) to regulate their alcohol consumption or give up drinking altogether. Another important issue in this exchange is that it reflects a general reaction of Russian people to questions about alcohol problems (4, 5): “That’s not me! I don’t drink every day, so I don’t have problems with alcohol. I don’t need to do anything about this or relate this kind of description to my personal experiences.” Russian people interviewed and observed for this study were quick to separate themselves completely from those who “drink,” those who are referred to as “drunkards” and “alcoholics.”

This cultural discourse analysis of Russian drinking is guided by the assumption that when Russian people discuss alcohol consumption, or participate in it, they “engage in meta-cultural commentary” and express rich cultural information about their personhood, relationships with other people, what they do, and where they are situated in the nature of things (Carbaugh, 2007). To understand what Russians mean by problematic alcohol consumption, this chapter focuses on the recurrent and potent cultural vocabulary, or key cultural terms, that Russian people consistently use to describe and make sense of experiences connected to problem drinking. CuDA offers an interpretive tool, the “cultural proposition,” that helps to put key terms into associational clusters and formulate statements built on folk terms and folk logic. This brings the analysis close to the “cultural ground” (Carbaugh, 2007, p. 177).

Cultural propositions are based on key terms through which problem drinking is defined and made sense of. Clusters of such key terms are socially constructed and provide access to symbolic recourses with deep cultural meaning. Decoding symbolic meanings of the term clusters about problem drinking in this chapter helps to interpret the Russian people’s meta-cultural commentary about problematic alcohol consumption.

Interpretation of the term clusters' meta-cultural commentary becomes possible in part through identifying communication norms that regulate cultural meanings of the key terms and their strategic placement in discourse. As elaborated by Carbaugh (1990a), such norms are built on code rules and normative rules. Code rules are formulated as "in context C, X counts as Y." These rules abstract and explain systems of cultural meaning that provide for common understanding and coherence of communication action. Normative rules are formulated as "if X, one should (not) do Y." They regulate the discourse sequence (or how communication forms are structured) to ensure correct communication action. Interpretation of deep systems of meanings embedded in the cultural term clusters and implied in the communication norms brings this study to formulating Russian folk premises about problem drinking. Such premises reflect the meta-cultural commentary that is at the core of the term clusters.

The data for this chapter came from personal interviews with 77 representatives of Russian culture belonging to different age groups, sociocultural backgrounds, and geographic areas of Russia. Key questions that were asked to understand what problem drinking means to the respondents were: "How would you identify a person who does not have problems with alcohol, how does that person drink?" "When would you say a person has problems with alcohol consumption?" "What kind of consequences may problematic alcohol consumption lead to?" "Why do people have problems with alcohol?" "If you look at a person, would you be able to see if he or she has problems with alcohol?" "How would you describe an alcoholic?"

While the interviews presented a more focused discussion of the research themes, personal participant observations served as an invaluable resource for corroborating the evidence and verifying the findings.

Research questions for this chapter are the following:

1. What key cultural terms constitute the term clusters for problematic alcohol consumption in Russian folk discourse?
2. What communication norms structure the term clusters for problem drinking?
3. What deep cultural meanings underlie the term clusters for problem drinking in Russian folk discourse?

6.2 Problem Drinking: To Get Drunk and to Drink

When the data were searched for clusters of terms referring to “actions,” or what people do when they consume alcohol in a problematic way, two key clusters of terms that describe two ways of having problems with alcohol stood out quite prominently. One of these clusters was connected to the verb “напиться/напит’ся” (to get drunk, to get heavily intoxicated)²², and the other cluster was tied to the verb “пить/пит’” (to drink in a habitual, regular way).

“To get drunk” was consistently used to describe a one-time event when a person consumed large quantities of alcohol at one sitting and lost control of his or her behavior:

Well, some sort of a deep sorrow/distress/grief. They drink a lot, *get drunk*. They can *get drunk* to the point of losing their consciousness. In order to forget everything. And not to remember all that ... They *get drunk* in the same way for joy¹ (woman, 74).

Such inebriation caused a scope of behavior problems that could be sometimes extremely dangerous (even fatal) both for the drunken person and those around him or her:

A guy, my neighbor in our apartment building ... He drove to a club and *got drunk* there ... , came home and fell asleep in the garage in the car. Forgot to turn off the car and got poisoned (by carbon monoxide)² (woman, 21).

Further analysis of the term cluster associated with “getting drunk” revealed rich cultural descriptions about what kind of people “get drunk,” what relationships they are in with

²² This verb has numerous synonyms in slang and derogatory Russian. A collection and study of such synonyms would require at least another dissertation.

others, what emotions they cause and experience, and where they are situated in the nature of things.

The analysis demonstrated that when someone “got drunk,” the description of his or her cultural way of being and acting was very different from somebody described as “он(а) пьёт/он(а) п’ёт” (he or she drinks). If a person was referred to as “he or she drinks,” this immediately connoted some regularity and a pattern in alcohol consumption. Alcohol became an indispensable part of that person’s life. The person got involved in “пьянство/р’ianstvo” (regular drunken binges) and “спивается/spivaetsia” (succumbing to alcoholism, drinking himself or herself into oblivion). Such people turned into “пьяницы/р’ianitsy” (drunkards) or “алкоголики/alkogoliki” (alcoholics), those who suffer from alcoholism or severe alcohol dependency. This cluster of terms implied regular problematic consumption, an important part of which was alcohol dependency that inevitably brought a person to alcoholism:

Alcoholism and alcohol consumption in general, are the laziest and the most passive way to feel good about oneself And desperation, perhaps, many people *drink* because of desperation. And desperation comes from lack of desire to fight. It seems to me that strong people *won't drink*³ (woman, 21).

Interestingly, if one “got drunk” with all the ensuing behavior consequences and problems, he or she did not have to be an alcoholic, or somebody who “drinks” regularly. This person just happened to consume a lot of alcohol and get inebriated. This may have happened because of a set of circumstances, some legitimate excuse. However, people who “drink” regularly and suffer from alcohol dependency can “get drunk.” But they “get drunk” on a regular basis and for no particular reason. “Getting drunk” becomes an indispensable part of their lives.

Having made this necessary distinction between “to get drunk” and “to drink,” I will look more deeply into the essence of both of these terms and the clusters associated with them to see what the two problematic ways of alcohol consumption imply about who drinks, his or her

relationships, how the person acts, under what circumstances, and what feelings and emotions accompany such alcohol consumption.

6.3 Getting Drunk: When the Sea Becomes Knee-Deep

Key terms about who “gets drunk” consistently cluster around a general idea of a person “losing control” over his or her “self”:

Got drunk, got into a fight, broke a tree.²³ Or gave lip, talked rude to somebody, or pushed somebody, it is easier to do something like that for a drunken person. He sort of *controls himself less*. It is just that all the problems are connected to the person *losing control over himself*^A (woman, 35).

A person who got drunk is said to “потерять контроль/poteriat kontrol'” (lose control) over his or her “себя/sebia” (self), or “не совладать собой/ne sovladat' soboi” (not get hold of or restrain one’s self). Normal and socially acceptable human behavior usually means that one can engage in communication with others, understand the situation, and act based on such understanding. Inability to control one’s “self” as a result of “getting drunk” makes a person’s behavior less human and more animalistic or beastly. The terms describing a drunk “self” are “как свинья/как svin'ia” or “по-свински/ro-svinski” (like a swine, pig), “до поросячьего визга/do porosiach'ego vizga” (to the point of squealing like a pig). One’s “self,” one’s human side, is gradually (but temporarily) lost in the process of getting drunk. As a result, one’s “self” may not be responsible for what happens when one is “под влиянием/rod vliianiem” (under the influence) of alcohol.

Getting drunk “зависит от человека/zavisit ot cheloveka” (depends on the person) and the strength of his or her physical body and psychological set-up. One may inherently have

²³ This is a phrase from one of the famous anti-alcohol propaganda posters from the Soviet times. The poster says “Got drunk, got into a fight, broke a tree” and shows a seemingly normal man regretting what he had done the night before under the influence of alcohol.

“слабая воля/slabaia volia” (weak willpower), “не умеет пить/не умеет pit” (lack the skill to drink), and not know one’s own “мера/mera” (limit):

It’s different for each person. There are people who can drink quite a bit ... and feel adequate, and in general nothing influences them. And there are people who have half a shot, and that’s it. As they say, such people are (drunk and) all over the place. And it seems to me that it is absolutely impossible to identify a certain *limit* for all the people because of these particular qualities. But when a person remains adequate, when he can control himself and make some decisions, it seems to me that this is a normal state⁵ (woman, 22).

Knowing one’s “limit” is being able to drink and keep one’s self “in control” of the situation and behave adequately. Everybody has his or her own “limit” that depends on the person’s tolerance for alcohol. Such a “limit” can be identified by the person himself or herself in the process of experimenting with drinking. When one does not know his or her “limit,” or knows it but disregards it, he or she drinks “without a limit” to the point of “getting drunk.”

One may “get drunk” because of his or her lack of skill to drink according to the personal “limit.” However, one may have an intentional desire to drink beyond one’s personal “limit.”

Then one “gets drunk” on purpose for emotional reasons:

Maybe he is in such a mood? Maybe he wants *to get drunk* today, and that’s it – so that this day goes by faster. Maybe there are problems at home. Maybe there are problems at work. Maybe a person just came with a specific purpose *to get drunk*. But he is not an alcoholic. Yes, he will be sick tomorrow, he will feel bad. And he will regret that he drank. But that day went by, and that’s it⁶ (woman, 45).

The key terms clustering around emotions connected to “getting drunk” are those describing “обстоятельства/obstoiatel’stva” (a set of circumstances, environment) that influence one’s “состояние/sostoianie” (state of mind) and lead to “getting drunk.” One can be “в настроении/v nastroenii” (in the mood), and have a “желание/zhelanie” (desire, want) to get drunk because of the things happening in one’s life. Such things could be extreme joy when one “отмечает/otmechaet” (marks, celebrates) something happy (such as a father celebrating his newborn child’s arrival). This could also be sad circumstances caused by all kinds of life

problems, when one is said to need to “get drunk” in order to “забыться/zabyt’sia” (forget oneself). One-time emotional (both positive and negative) events in one’s life may lead to “getting drunk” for an excusable reason generally approved by the community. Sometimes such “getting drunk” is even considered necessary for a person to be able to get over the troubles in his or her life.

“Getting drunk” incurs risky and very often unruly behavior. Very often, strange and socially unacceptable actions are interpreted as, “Well, he got drunk, what can you do now?” (Напился, что теперь поделаешь?). This is usually the first explanation of a socially unacceptable behavior, for example, if one is seen sleeping on the ground in the street. Daring behavior and dangerous actions under the influence of alcohol are explained as “пьяному море по колено/p’ianomu more po koleno” (the sea is knee-deep for a drunken person). This means that when one gets drunk, his or her sense and judgment about what actions are dangerous and socially inappropriate is significantly altered. It also means that a person who got drunk can get away with risky behavior even when sober people performing the same dangerous acts could seriously hurt themselves.

Drunk people are said to seek dangerous behavior and cause numerous troubles to everyone around. One’s drunken behavior also “depends on the person,” and their “предел, предельная планка/predel, predel’naia planka” (behavior boundaries) may vary:

The *boundaries* are different for each person, it all looks differently. One person may fall asleep. Another may get all violent. A third needs to get behind the wheel, and he wouldn’t listen to anyone, he wants to drive around the city at night. A fourth gets into a fight. You can’t say in general that’s it – these are the *boundaries*. [One] may fall into the salad with his mug. That’s it, the person reached the *boundaries*⁷ (Woman, 40).

The dangerous actions of a drunken person are very often attributed to the influence of those drinking with him or her. Usually the way people behave when they are drunk is explained by what is accepted as customary drunken behavior in the immediate social environment. The

data demonstrate stories about how guys in villages get into fights when they get drunk simply because this is what you do there under the influence of alcohol. The same guys would behave differently if they got drunk at a party with their friends in the city, which is a different, “more civilized” social environment. There were stories of men and women getting into risky sexual relationships (adultery, unsafe sex) when they got drunk. It seems that the kind of “sea” that becomes “knee-deep” depends on what kind of drunken behavior is expected among the majority of those who surround the person. Sometimes there is a gathering of people with different expectations of how far one can push the “boundaries” when one “gets drunk.” In such cases, more dangerous behavior may be stopped, or permitted – depending on who is in the majority or has more authority. That is why what one does after “getting drunk” is often not blamed so much on the person (he or she “lost control” of his or her “self” and could no longer make conscientious decisions), but on the “company,” on those who were around the person as he or she was getting drunk.

However, those who “lose control” because they do not know their “limit” may get drunk faster than the others in the group. Premature drunkenness before everybody else is judged as inappropriate because it makes one behave like a fool or like a pig when the others are still more or less sober. Being more or less sober when everyone else is drunk is also considered inappropriate. In this situation, those who drink may feel uncomfortable because a sober person among them may potentially judge what they say and do.

Key terms that cluster around descriptions of the practice of “getting drunk” are the following:

- “потерять контроль/poteriat’ kontrol’” (lose control)
- “(не) знать меру/(ne) znat’ meru” ((not) to know the limit)
- “предел/predel” (behavior boundaries);

- “(не) уметь пить/(ne) umet’ pit’” ((not) to have the skill to drink)
- “слабая воля/slabaia volia” (weak willpower)
- “компания/kompaniia” (company, people who drink with you)
- “под влиянием/pod vliianiem” (under the influence)
- “как все/kak vse” (like everyone else)
- “повод/povod” (reason, excuse to have a drink)
- “обстоятельства/obstoiatel’sтва” (circumstances)

Cultural propositions about “getting drunk” in Russian culture are that each person has a “self,” a human side that engages in “communication,” which leads to “understanding” the others when people get together to have a drink. When one “gets drunk,” one’s “human” self becomes more beastly or “swine-like,” through risky and nonsensical behavior without “boundaries,” leading to the point “when the sea becomes knee deep.” This happens because one “loses control” over one’s “self,” causing problems to “self” and “others.” One can “get drunk” because of one’s “own desire” to do so. Such a “desire” is a way to “forget about problems” or “mark down” happy events. Another way to “get drunk” is not to “have the skill” to drink and not to “know the limit.” In this case, one may have “weak willpower” and fall “under the influence” of “others,” who may have a different personal “limit” on how much they can drink to “get drunk.” “Getting drunk” makes one fail to make sound judgments about the current situation, make erroneous decisions, or get involved in risky behaviors that endanger the “drunk” person and others around him or her. In general, “getting drunk” is not considered problematic if it happens in sync with the “company,” “everybody else” who is drinking with you at an event and for a clearly identified “reason.” “Getting drunk” does not cause permanent damage to one’s personality and other aspects of life, unless, due to certain circumstances and because of unruly behavior, a serious accident occurs as a result of “getting drunk.”

6.4 Drinking on a Regular Basis: The Point of No Return

“Getting drunk” is problematic alcohol consumption that involves drinking large quantities of alcohol at one sitting and losing control of one’s self and one’s behavior. Another type of problem drinking is “пить/пит” (to drink) on a regular basis and turn into a “пьяница/p’ianitsa” (drunkard) or “алкоголик/alkogolik” (alcoholic). Russian folk discourse has a very distinct way to talk about those who are said to have reached the point of no return because they became alcoholics. Recurrent terms describe such people’s personality, their relations with others, what they do, the emotions they experience and cause, as well as circumstances around those who drink.

One of the key descriptions attributed to those who “drink” is “сразу видно/srazu vidno” (one can tell right away by the person’s looks and behavior). In extreme cases, “drunkards” are said to have trembling hands and a swollen face, very often with bruises. They look much older than their peers. They are usually unkempt, dirty, and smelly. “Интерес к жизни/interes k zhizni” (motivation, interest in life) is missing from their eyes and behavior. Very often they are drawn to alcohol because of their “предрасположенность/predraspolozhennost” (inclination, predilection), which is a part of their “наследственность/nasledstvennost” (inherited, in the genes) and family environment where they grew up: “всё из семьи идёт/vsë iz sem’i idët” (it all comes from the family). People are somewhat doomed to become alcoholics because they were born into certain biological or social circumstances that gradually bring them to regular alcohol abuse.

In the following data instance, a respondent summarizes personal qualities that make one “спиться/spit’sia” (succumb to alcoholism, drink oneself into oblivion):

Every person gets into a [difficult] life situation. Some can overcome it, some can't overcome it. Everyone has their own temper (nature, spirit). And each body takes it differently. Some are *weak*, some can withstand it, and for some – one shot glass and he falls down, as they say. So, he needed very little in order to *succumb to alcoholism*. And another person could be *stronger*. I think, this depends on the body, right? Secondly, on the temper (nature, spirit). To overpower yourself, set yourself up for it. All this comes from within⁸ (woman, 55).

Here we see that “drunkards” are people who not only have a “слабый организм/slabyi organizm” (weak body) susceptible to alcohol, but they are inherently “слабые/slabye” (weak) in their “сила воли/sila voli” (willpower), “характер/kharakter” (temper, spirit), and “дух/dukh” (spirit, heart). This means that they are missing certain inner strengths that could prevent them from “succumbing to alcoholism.” Their weakness makes them want to escape reality and deal with life’s difficulties through regular alcohol consumption. Their weak “организм/organizm” (body) gets used to alcohol fast and “требует/trebuets” (demands, requires) drinking on a regular basis. Their “self” does not have the power necessary to resist that urge from within. As a result, both physical body and “self” deteriorate and “succumb to alcoholism.”

When a person becomes an alcoholic, the terms identifying his or her relationships divide into two groups. One group consists of phrases describing one’s relationships that lead to alcoholism, and the other group consists of descriptions of what happens to one’s relationships as a result of the drinking problem.

A person’s will and spirit may be weak, so he or she can be easily influenced by other people when spending time in the wrong company:

Well, I think *weak spirit/temper*, (is) a person who can easily get under someone’s influence. So, he doesn’t have his own opinion. I mean now he is hanging out with normal guys, he behaves normally. He will get in a company with alcoholics, he won’t be able to resist them, so he’ll drink with them.⁹ (woman, 21)

A person who has a “предрасположенность/predraspolozhennost” (inclination, predilection) for alcoholism, will easily fall “под влияние/pod vliianie” (under the influence) of those who drink. As a result, getting into “bad company” could turn disastrous for someone with “weak willpower” and a “genetic predisposition” to become an alcoholic because his or her “self” cannot resist drinking. If a person is an alcoholic drinking with “normal” people, very often he or she would not be drinking “как все/kak vse” (like everybody else) at the table. In such a situation, a “drunkard” would either get drunk fast without showing any interest in the interaction at the table or would stay away from drinking with everyone, but get drunk on his or her own after leaving the table.

A phrase summarizing the devastating effects of “alcoholism” on one’s relationships is “всё пропил(а)/vsë propil(a)” (he or she drank everything away). In this case, “everything” is not only material values, but also relationships and social environments that are ultimately lost from a drunkard’s life. “Drunkards” not only lose people who used to be close to them, they also cause them “горе/gore” (trouble, grief, sorrow):

Many families fall apart because one of the family members, husband or wife, drinks. Children become orphans without parents who get into car accidents being drunk ... they forget about the family and work¹⁰ (woman, 19).

Families fall apart and children suffer because alcoholics choose drinking over normal human relationships. In this case, drinking becomes more valuable than what should normally be a priority for people: children, family, parents, friends, work, etc. Emotional connection and interdependence among “близкие/blizkie” (close people, near and dear) turn into endless suffering caused by those who drink.

Those who are “близкие/blizkie” (near and dear) experience a tough emotional burden of living with alcoholics, and those who drink are said to be emotionally detached from what is going on around them. They get to the point where they “don’t have any interest in life” (нет

интереса к жизни) and they “ничего не надо/nichego ne nado” (don’t need anything, don’t have any motivation). All they need is to get a drink and “escape reality, escape problems” (уйти от действительности, уйти от проблем) or “switch off from problems and concerns” (отключиться от проблем и забот). “Drowning their problems in alcohol” (заливать проблемы алкоголем) is their only way to deal with any kind of emotional burden or life problem.

In terms of emotions, normal alcohol consumption becomes “alcoholism” when one is dependent on alcohol not only physically but emotionally. Regular alcohol consumption replaces normal emotional outlets, such as getting together with close people, having a soulful conversation, or getting drunk for a good and clear reason once in a while but not doing it on a regular basis.

“Alcoholics” or “drunkards” are involved in a set of actions that distinguish them from those who drink normally, or those who “get drunk” from time to time, but are not dependent on alcohol. Those who “drink” have an urge or desire to drink and they cannot stop once they start drinking. This inability to stop applies not only to drinking at one sitting, but refers to “запой/zapoi,” which means drinking for days and weeks without any break.

“Drunkards” drink without a “повод/povod” (reason, occasion, excuse). They drink for the sole purpose of “getting drunk.” They feel good (“им хорошо/im khorosho”) after drinking because of the effects of alcohol on their “организм/organizm” (body), not because they enjoyed the drink, the company, the conversation, and the whole social situation of alcohol consumption. The circumstances surrounding such drinking spells are that alcoholics do not care about nice food or “закуски/zakuski” (hors-d’oeuvre, food that is used to chase drinks) or the “company.” Their ultimate goal in consuming alcohol is to get intoxicated. A key circumstance that would indicate someone is an alcoholic is when he or she drinks alone, or with people who are dependent on alcohol in a similar way.

The actions of those who drink on a regular basis are very often related through short narratives, or “life stories.” The interview respondents volunteered 16 such stories to illustrate what happens to a “drunkard” and his or her life as a result of drinking. Here is a story told by a respondent about a woman she used to work with:

The husband left her for another woman, she started *drinking*. She *drank and drank*. Walked on the street, fell down and died. So, because he left her for another woman, she began to *drink* and hang out (with men), all kinds of men would go to visit her. And that’s it. And she *drank* herself into oblivion. (She) used to be such a beautiful woman. Young¹¹ (woman, 68 y.o.).

In the story above, we see a woman who began to “drink and drink” because her husband left her. Her whole life went into a downward spiral, with unacceptable, publicly demonstrated promiscuous behavior and regular alcohol consumption noticeable by people whom she worked with. Eventually, she “спилась/спилас’” (succumbed to alcoholism, drank herself into oblivion), and her life ended tragically and disgracefully by death in the street. In many such stories, the tragedy is emphasized by the devastation and grief that one’s drinking causes to his or her friends and family. A key phrase in such stories is “и всё/i vsë” (and that’s it). Such a phrase indicates the point of no return. This is the point where the only possible outcome is a tragic event leading to death. In the data for this research, such tragic events are house fires, suicides, freezing to death in winter, bleeding to death after accidentally cutting oneself, being eaten by dogs, getting murdered, dying of organ failure, getting into a deadly car crash, drowning, etc. A “life story” like this is a recurrent form of communicating a downward spiral of regular drinking and its inescapable outcome.

Below are the terms that cluster around descriptions of personhood of those who “drink,” what relationships they have with other people, what kind of emotions and feelings they experience and cause, what they do, and under what circumstances they act:

- “пьяница/p’ianitsa” (drunkard)

- “алкоголик/alkogolik” (alcoholic)
- “сразу видно/srazu vidno” (one can tell right away by the appearance)
- “наследственность/nasledstvennost” (inherited in the genes)
- “предрасположенность/predraspolozhennost” (predilection, inclination)
- “слабый/slabyi” (weak)
- “ничего не надо/nichego ne nado” (doesn’t need anything, doesn’t care, doesn’t have any motivation)
- “всё пропить/vsë propit” (drink everything away)
- “запой/zapoi” (drinking for days and weeks without any break)
- “спиться/spit’sia” (succumb to alcoholism)

The following cultural proposition can be formulated based on this term cluster: people who “drink” have experienced terminal changes in their looks and behavior that are “seen right away.” Their self is permanently corroded because they are “weak in their spirit” and have an “inherent predilection” to “succumb to alcoholism” when they are pressured by the “company,” “desire,” or “life problems.” Alcohol is “more valuable” to alcoholics than relationships, family, friends, job, home, respect. Those who “drink” harm all of that and lose their relationships as a result of their drinking. They separate themselves from the life of the community because they “don’t need anything, don’t care, and have no motivation.” Alcoholics “escape reality” and everyday problems through “senseless drinking” because they are incapable of “normal” emotional outlets such as “communication.” Alcoholics’ actions are described as predictable, patterned, and regular. They “drink” until some tragic event brings them to an inevitable death.

6.5 Communication Norms: Drinking and Getting Drunk

Communication norms for understanding problem drinking in Russia focus on two key umbrella terms that define two different ways to be involved in alcohol consumption that leads to various kinds of problems in people's lives. Based on the analysis presented above, the two terms are "to get drunk" and "to drink."

Communication norms in this study are understood to be built on code rules and normative rules (Carbaugh, 1990a). Code rules give access to the folk beliefs and the system of shared cultural meanings underlying the coherence of the discourse. Normative rules explain and regulate culturally appropriate patterns for action and act sequences in various forms of communication. In the context of this chapter, it is important to understand how terms for problematic drinking are used in Russian discourse, and where they are appropriately and strategically located in the discourse. Normative rules here refer to correct placement of the terms from the two clusters describing problematic drinking in the discourse sequence.

The system of meanings underlying the term "to get drunk" involves a "self" that has temporarily lost control as a result of excessive alcohol intake for an explainable and recognized reason. The negativity of such inebriation is in the behavioral consequences that may ensue as a result of inability to function and make reasonable decisions regarding one's "self" and others. This term does not presume that the change in "self" and behavior is permanent and irreversible unless "getting drunk" is a part of a larger, more regular and predictable pattern of alcohol abuse. The code rule here is that in Russian culture, one-time consumption of large quantities of alcohol that temporarily changes one's self and leads to problematic behavioral consequences counts as "to get drunk."

A normative rule for the term cluster describing "getting drunk" regulates its use and placement in Russian cultural discourse. Here we see that people evaluate "getting drunk" (not

on a regular basis but for a clearly identified reason) as something incidental, happening for a reason, and excusable. When asked if they ever “got drunk,” the respondents would say: “well, it happened, we got drunk with friends for a holiday” (ну, бывало, напивались с друзьями на праздник). There was also a proud: “I got so drunk that time that I don’t even remember anything” (я так тогда напилась, что не помню ничего!). An unreasonable action, such as venturing outside when it is dark and unsafe, was explained as “we just got drunk there” (да мы просто напивались там).

As long as there is no regularity or any pattern in the experience described as “I/we got drunk,” it is quite acceptable to attribute the “getting drunk” term cluster to what happened to someone personally (most probably along with others) and discuss it. Respondents would admit that “getting drunk” can lead to various negative consequences, such as accidents, and temporary health problems, such as injuries or hangovers. At the same time, “getting drunk” is not something that people avoid and consider totally unacceptable. For something serious and fatal to occur as a result of “getting drunk,” there needs to be an additional set of events (besides one’s consumption of alcohol) that would contribute to the incident.

The normative rule for the term cluster “to get drunk” is that “getting drunk” cannot be acknowledged and verbalized as happening to oneself with a regular and clearly identified pattern. If it happens under certain social circumstances with other people and for a reason, one may use the “getting drunk” term cluster when referring to one’s personal experience.

“To drink” is the second term cluster referring to problematic alcohol consumption. It is assumed that people who “drink” have sustained permanent and irreversible damage to their self, body, and social relations because of some inner predisposition (hereditary qualities, weak will). Such damage is demonstrated through regular and patterned intake of large quantities of alcohol with no explainable reason or goal. The code rule for the term “to drink” is that in

Russian culture, regular and patterned consumption of large quantities of alcohol that permanently damages one's personality and sociocultural environment counts as "to drink."

The beginning of this chapter demonstrated an exchange between two women about those who "drink." One of the women was quick to emphasize that they did not need to be concerned about their alcohol consumption and have the "willpower" to overcome it because they (the interviewees) "don't drink." Drawing from this and other similar instances (there were 12 instances of this in the data), I, as an interviewer quickly learned to avoid attributing any terms implying regular alcohol consumption to the respondents during the interviews. The key term "to drink" and other terms from its cluster are extremely sensitive if they are assumed to be applied to one's personal experience.

The discursive force of the term "to drink" is mainly directed toward avoiding attributing this term and its cluster to one's personal experiences. In the data for this study, such instances came up when people openly protested having anything to do with the "to drink" term cluster:

1. I: Какое употребление алкоголя вы считаете нормальным?
What kind of alcohol consumption do you consider normal?
 2. R: Я вообще не пью.
I don't drink at all.
 3. I: То есть ноль, вообще?
You mean zero, at all?
 4. R: Ну, мы, может, ну как сказать,
Well, we, maybe, well, how do you say,
5. больше, наверное, 350 граммов не выпивал.
perhaps (I) haven't drunk more than 350 grams.
 6. I: Водки, да, вы имеете ввиду? То есть, вы выпиваете в компании.
You mean vodka, right? So you drink in company with other people.
 7. Вот для вас, например, вот это нормально.
For you, for example, it is normal.
 8. R: Ну, 350-400. Ну, это опять же не в течение полчаса,
Well, 350-400 (grams). Well, this is not in half an hour,
9. в течение там двух, трех, четырех, пяти часов.
(it is) during two, three, four, five hours.
- (Man, 39)

In this exchange, after being asked what is “normal alcohol consumption” (1), the respondent refuses to attribute “consumption” to his own experience, and reacts by saying that he “doesn’t drink at all” (2). At the same time, we further find out that he does consume alcohol, and his alcohol intake could be up to 400 ml²⁴ of vodka at one sitting (5, 8). The respondent’s reaction demonstrates that the more formal term “consumption” (употребление) here is attributed to the folk term cluster “to drink,” implying regular alcohol intake and alcohol dependency. This respondent refuses to be described as somebody who “consumes” or “drinks.” Further in the interview, the same man specified that normal drinking conditions have to include good food at a nicely served table and a conversation going on for several hours, without people getting drunk right away and ruining everything.

Another exchange occurred with a young woman:

1. I: Вот какое употребление алкоголя считается нормальным?
So, what kind of alcohol consumption is considered to be normal?
 2. R: Ну, в принципе, никакое как бы.
Well, in general, no (consumption) at all.
 3. Я не употребляю, я не знаю как бы, просто не понимаю.
I don’t consume, I don’t know, I just don’t understand.
 4. I: Вообще ни сколько?
Nothing at all?
 5. R: Нет, почему? Вообще, я употребляю, коктейли короче.
No, why? In general, I sort of consume cocktails.
 6. Well, maybe once ... Well, when I feel like it. Not regularly.
Ну может быть раз ... Ну, когда хочется. Не постоянно.
- (Woman, 23)

Just as in the previous instance, the young woman here quickly assumes that a general question about what is considered to be normal consumption (1) refers to her personal experience and means something negative. Her negative response (2) does not in fact mean that there is absolutely no alcohol intake in her life. She later specifies that she consumes

²⁴ The interviewer’s assumption in line 5 that the respondent is talking about vodka is based on a general measurement of strong liquor (mainly vodka) in grams among Russian people.

alcohol in small amounts, takes lighter drinks, and drinks without any regular pattern (5, 6). Interestingly, this instance demonstrates that Russian people avoid saying that they do not consume alcohol at all because this may indicate a problem as well: not being social, being treated for alcohol dependency, or not being able to control one's behavior even after consuming small amounts of alcohol.

These and other instances in the data bring to the fore a normative rule for locating terms from the "to drink" cluster in the Russian folk discourse sequence. The folk belief is that if one "drinks" or "consumes" alcohol, then one is a regular drinker and is inclined to suffer from alcohol dependency with all its negative changes in one's personality, relationships, actions, emotions, and life circumstances. The communicative action shaped by this belief is to avoid being referred to as someone who "drinks" by strategically locating the "to drink" term cluster in the discourse so that the term does not refer to one's personal experience. At the same time, the "to drink" cluster may be used quite extensively when it refers to other people who suffer from regular alcohol consumption and dependency. The normative rule for the "to drink" cluster is that one should not attribute any terms from the "to drink" cluster to one's personal experience if one does not want to be considered somebody who is suffering from alcohol dependency and permanent damage to one's self.

6.6 Comparison: To Drink and to Get Drunk

The analysis above has identified two key term clusters for talking about problematic drinking in Russian folk discourse: "to get drunk" and "to drink." Both indicate significant devastation and problems from a public health perspective. At the same time, in the folk discourse these two ways of problematic drinking are not attributed similar patterns of

consumption or consequences in terms of affecting people's personality, relations with others, the way people behave, their emotions and where they are situated in the nature of things. They also have different communication norms for the underlying cultural beliefs and meanings (code rules) and for being strategically placed in the discourse (normative rules). If we could imagine these two types of problem drinking graphically, then "getting drunk" would look like occasional (not regular) dips below the level of what is considered culturally acceptable human behavior and the normal life of any person in Russia. After such a "dip," people come back to regular life and relationships unless something tragic happens because of a set of circumstances. "Drinking" would look like a downward spiral with no way back to what is considered to be normal living in Russian culture.

The main difference between these two problematic kinds of alcohol consumption is that "to drink" means causing more permanent and irreversible damage to one's "self," people "close to you," your work, emotional security and other important aspects of life. When one "gets drunk," it may cause damage, and it could be quite dangerous if one gets in trouble while intoxicated. At the same time, if "getting drunk" has not become a regular pattern in one's life, it will not permanently change your "self" or your relationships with others, and it will not affect other important things in your life. In fact, "getting drunk" with other people may even solidify your friendship and bring the friendship to another level, for example, if you "got drunk" as a result of "sitting" with others. "Getting drunk" may also demonstrate the depth of one's emotions if it occurs as a result a sad or joyful event.

When a person "gets drunk," he or she "loses control" of his or her "self," which may make one's behavior unruly and dangerous. This loss of "self" happens because of some temporary circumstances, and it is usually reversible. However, when one "drinks," the loss of "self" is permanent, irreparable and noticeable even when the person is sober. When one "gets

drunk,” one may temporarily hurt relationships with other people, but someone who “drinks” severely damages relationships and eventually loses them permanently.

When those who “drink” consume alcohol, they do it solely for the purpose of getting intoxicated because nothing else interests or motivates them in life. Those who “get drunk” occasionally usually do it for a certain purpose or have an excuse accepted by the community as legitimate (“doesn’t know the limit,” “out of big joy,” “some tragedy happened,” and so on).

Those who “drink” are separated from the community, they are no longer an integral part of it. “Getting drunk” occasionally does not put one in danger of becoming a social outcast because there is a path to come back to normal life and explain “getting drunk” as an occasional dip below the level of what is considered normal living.

Communication norms for both term clusters explain strategic placement of the terms in the folk discourse. People avoid having their personal experiences described through the “to drink” term cluster. Being a person who “drinks” is stigmatized and is avoided. People can share stories about alcoholics and condemn “those who drink” or “drunkards,” but they will not attribute any of the signs of regular alcohol consumption to themselves. However, it is usually acceptable to describe one’s experience through the “to get drunk” term cluster and admit that “We get drunk when I go out with this buddy of mine,” or “I got so drunk once/a couple of times in the past/as a college student/when we partied with friends/when we were on a picnic.” In cases like this, getting drunk does not imply any pattern or regularity.

The cultural premise about problem drinking in Russian folk discourse is that it is dangerous and problematic to consume large quantities of alcohol at one sitting, but alcohol intake does not carry substantial long-term damage unless it acquires a regular, identifiable pattern and causes irreversible personal, relational, behavioral and emotional change noticed and verbally recognized by others.

6.7 Conclusion

Cultural analysis of Russian folk discourse about problem drinking identified two key terms and their clusters: “напиться/napit’sia” (to get drunk) and “пить/pit’” (to drink). Each cluster identifies what kind of people are involved in this particular kind of problem drinking, what relationships they have with others or fail to maintain, what emotions they cause or experience, how they act, and where they are situated in the nature of things. Both term clusters function in the discourse on the basis of specific communication norms. The norms identify the system of cultural meanings making the key terms distinct (code rules) and require them to be placed at certain discourse junctures to ensure correct cultural action (normative rules). The two clusters, their norms and their systems of cultural premises provide access to the meta-cultural commentary about problem drinking in Russian culture.

A large one-time alcohol intake resulting in intoxication and causing risky behavior (“to get drunk”) is considered problematic because it changes one’s conduct and may lead to negative consequences. As long as “getting drunk” does not become regular, patterned and verbally recognized as alcohol dependency, it is not considered to be dangerous and life changing. However, as soon as someone is described through the term cluster “to drink,” it means that his or her life is going on a downward spiral with no hope to get back to what is considered to be a normal life.

Communication norms within each term cluster demonstrate a way for problematic alcohol consumption to be explained and accepted (“to get drunk”) and for other kinds of problematic alcohol intake to be stigmatized and shunned (“to drink”). Both of these two types of problematic drinking present a significant public health issue and require behavior change

and in some cases intervention. At the same time, communication norms around the two term clusters referring to two ways of having problems with alcohol make it difficult and sometimes impossible to talk or inquire about the problem (in the case of “to drink”) or present it as a real threat to one’s well-being (“to get drunk”).

Notes

¹ Ну горе какое-нибудь большое. Пьют много, напьются. До бессознания могут напиться. Чтобы забыться. Не помнить все это... От радости так же напиваются.

² Мальчик, мой сосед по дому ... Ездил в клуб, там напился..., приехал домой и заснул в гараже в машине. Забыл выключить машину и задохнулся.

³ Алкоголизм и вообще употребление алкоголя, это самый ленивый, самый пассивный способ сделать себе хорошо.... И отчаяние, наверное, многие люди пьют с отчаяния. А отчаяние, опять же из того, из нежелания бороться. Мне кажется, что сильные люди пить не будут.

⁴ Напился, подрался, сломал деревце. Или нахамил, или грубо ответил, или толкнул, это человеку выпившему уже проще сделать. Как бы он себя меньше контролирует. Просто все проблемы связаны с тем, что человек теряет контроль над собой.

⁵ Для каждого человека это по-разному. Есть люди, которые могут выпить достаточно много ... и чувствовать себя адекватно, и вообще даже ничто на них не влияет. А есть люди, которым достаточно полрюмочки выпить и все. И их уже, как говорят, развозит. И определить конкретную меру для всех людей за счет вот этих индивидуальных особенностей, совершенно невозможно, на мой взгляд. Но, когда человек остается, как я говорю, адекватным, в состоянии себя контролировать и принять какие-то решения, мне кажется, вот это и есть нормальное состояние.

⁶ Может, у него настроение такое? Может ему вот хочется сегодня напиться и все, чтобы прошел этот день быстрее. Может проблемы дома. Может быть проблемы на работе. Может человек чисто пришел с целью напиться. Но он не алкоголик. Он, да, будет завтра болеть, ему будет плохо. И будет проклинать то, что он пил. Но у него прошел вот этот день и прошел он.

⁷ Предельная планка, она по-разному у каждого человека выглядит эта планка. Один может уснуть. У другого, может, буйность какая-то. Третьему надо за руль садиться и не слышать ничего, хочет кататься по ночному городу. Четвертый в драку лезет. Тут же нельзя в целом сказать, что все, у него одна планка. Может мордой в салат упасть в конце концов. Все, предел у человека.

⁸ Каждый человек попадает в (трудную) жизненную ситуацию. Кто-то вот это может перебороть, кто-то это не может перебороть. Вот у каждого свой характер. И вот каждый организм воспринимает по-разному. Вот кто-то слабенький, кто-то может выдержать, а некоторые рюмку – вот уже упал, как говорится. Это ему мало хватило, чтобы спиться. А другой, может быть, посильнее. Вот все-таки, я думаю, что это от организма зависит, да? Во-вторых, от характера. Вот пересилить, поставить себя. Это внутреннее все.

⁹ Ну, я думаю слабый характер, человек, который попадает под влияние. То есть, у него нет своего мнения. То есть, сейчас он тусуется с нормальными ребятами, он

нормально себя ведет. Он попадет в компанию там с алкоголиками, он не сможет им противостоять, то есть, будет с ними пить.

¹⁰ Многие семьи распадаются из-за того, что один из членов семьи, то есть, супруг или супруга пьют. Дети остаются сиротами без родителей, которые попадают в аварии в нетрезвом состоянии... забывают и о семье и о работе.

¹¹ Муж ушел к другой женщине, она начала пить. Она пила, пила. Шла по улице, упала и умерла. Вот, что он ушел к другой, она начала пить, гулять, мужчины всякие ходили. И все. И она спилась на нет. Такая красивая женщина была. Молодая.

CHAPTER 7

FROM CONSUMPTION TO ALCOHOLIZATION: RUSSIA'S GOVERNMENT ON DRINKING

7.1 Introduction

In 2009, the Federal Service on Consumers' Rights Protection and Human Well-being Surveillance came up with the official data on alcohol consumption in Russia: stunning 18 liters of pure alcohol per person a year. Russian authorities and news sources presented this finding coupled with a statement from the World Health Organization experts who calculated that if alcohol consumption in a country exceeds 8 liters per person per year, it poses a significant threat to the nation's health. Nikolai Gerasimenko, the first deputy chairman of the State Duma Committee on Healthcare, commented on this information by saying that "without taking extreme urgent measures, degradation of Russia, its people, is unavoidable"¹ (Gerasimenko, 2009).

In August 2009, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev brought together various officials in the city of Sochi to discuss the problem of excessive alcohol consumption in the country, and come up with a plan to improve the situation. Opening the meeting, Medvedev stated that the problem had become a "national disaster" (национальное бедствие), and said that the current level of alcohol consumption "threatens to lead our country, our people to degradation"² (President of Russia, August 12, 2009).

The Sochi meeting resulted in a list of tasks that President Medvedev set up for the Russian government (President of Russia, September 11, 2009). Based on these tasks, the government developed and approved a Concept Paper for State Policy on Reducing the Scale of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism Prevention among the Population of the Russian Federation till

Year 2020.³ The Minister of Health Care and Social Development, Tatiana Golikova, made several media appearances and explained how her ministry would work to resolve the problem. Laws and regulations related to alcohol retail sales, packaging, and advertising were developed by the government and passed by the Russian legislature. The Federal Agency for Press and Mass Communications created public service announcements and aired them on national TV.

In this political context, the Russian government acted as a change agent, venturing to reduce drinking rates in the country, improve the demographic situation, and save the nation from the disastrous consequences of excessive alcohol consumption. Political discussions and statements, policy documents, and public service announcements based on the government's decisions – all of this constitutes a cultural discourse. This cultural discourse reflects the official stance toward alcohol consumption in Russia and reveals deep cultural meanings implied by this stance. Analysis of this cultural discourse should demonstrate what the Russian government as a change agent presumes about the practice of drinking in the country and what expectations it has for the Russian people in terms of change related to their alcohol intake.

This chapter explores eight terms that Russia's government used to communicate its concern with the level of alcohol consumption in the country in 16 official documents in 2008-2010. The total number of mentions of these eight terms in all 16 documents is 258: (1) "потребление/potreblenie" (consumption, intake)²⁵ – 111; (2) "алкоголизм/alkogolizm" (alcoholism) – 68; (3) "злоупотребление/zloupotreblenie" (abusive consumption) - 47; (4) "пить/pit'" (to drink) – 10; (5) "алкоголизация/alkogolizatsiia" (alcoholization) – 7; (6)

²⁵ Here and further in the discussion I use "потребление/potreblenie." However, sometimes the documents use "употребление/upotreblenie" instead of "потребление/potreblenie." The meaning is very similar, and the documents use these two words interchangeably. In this dissertation, all occurrences of both "употребление/upotreblenie" and "потребление/potreblenie" were counted as one term having a meaning of "consumption, intake."

“пьянство/р’ianstvo” (regular drunken binges, drunkenness) – 6; (7) “алкогольная зависимость/alkogol’naia zavisimost’” (alcohol dependency) – 5; (8) “алкогольное опьянение/alkogol’noe op’ianenie” (alcohol intoxication) – 4²⁶.

Cultural discourse analysis identified a presumed actor/agency of alcohol intake referred to by each term (radiant of identity); an act or actions performed by the actor (radiant of action); an evaluative and emotive component of the term (radiant of emotions or feelings); and the kind of situation or circumstances it described (radiant of location in the nature of things). Cultural norms (built on code rules and normative rules for each of the eight terms) provided access to the deep cultural meaning and assumptions that regulate placing different terms at specific discourse junctures.

At the final stage of the interpretive analysis, the government’s cultural premises about alcohol consumption in the country were formulated. The premises were developed on the basis of the radiants of meaning constituting each term and communication norms that regulate the terms’ placement in the discourse.

Research questions for this chapter are the following:

1. What are the key cultural terms referring to alcohol consumption in the Russian government’s official documents?
2. What cultural meanings do the terms imply about Russian personhood, actions, emotions and location in the nature of things as far as alcohol consumption is concerned?
3. What are the communication norms (code rules and normative rules) for each term referring to alcohol consumption in the official discourse?

²⁶ These four instances of “алкогольное опьянение/alkogol’noe op’ianenie” (alcohol intoxication) also include one instance of “пьяный/р’ianu,” which means a more informal “drunk, under the influence of alcohol.”

4. What cultural premises underlie the terms used to refer to alcohol consumption in the Russian government’s official documents?

7.2 Russian Government’s Terms for Alcohol Intake among the Population

The analysis of the Russian Government’s official discourse yielded eight terms that refer to different ways of consuming alcohol. Each of the terms has its own meaning about a presumed actor or agency, actions performed by this actor or agency, evaluation of the actions, and the situation or circumstances where the term is used. Table 2 below presents a summary of the terms’ meanings followed by more detailed explanations.

Table 2: Terms for Alcohol Intake (Continues on the Next Page)

Term	Frequency	Radiants of Meaning			
		Presumed actor/agency (Identity)	Actions performed (Actions)	Evaluation (Emotions)	Situation or circumstances (Location)
“потребление/ potreblenie” (consumption); “потреблять/ potrebliat” (consume); “потребитель/ potrebitel” (consumer)	111	People: “население/ naselenie” (population), different groups: “молодежь/ molodezh” (youth); “женщины/ zhenshiny” (women); “мужчины/ muzhchiny” (men)	Consumption of alcoholic drinks	Depends on evaluative attributes	Statistics, history, description of the situation involving alcohol intake, goals to be achieved, programs to be implemented
“алкоголизм/ alkogolizm” (alcoholism); “алкоголик/	68	Process: “болезнь/ bolezni” (illness),	Regular harmful consumption based on	Highly negative, destructive and	Medical condition, highest level of harm

alkogolik” (alcoholic)		“зло/zlo” (evil), and “угроза/ ugroza” (threat)	dependency; takes over people and their lives	irreparable	caused by alcohol with no cure
“злоупотребле- ние/ zloupotreblenie ” (abusive consumption)	47	People: “люди/liudi” (people), “население/ naselenie” (population), “лицо/ litsa” (individual, person in a formal way)	Consumption of alcoholic drinks in the amounts harmful for one’s health and social environment	Harmful, negative, causing problems, but not emotionally charged	Statistics, description of problematic drinking and its consequences
“пить/pit” (drink)	10	People: Russia, “народ/narod” (people); “мы все/мы vse” (all of us)	Consumption of alcohol/ alcohol intake without any particular pattern	Potentially negative and harmful, but part of our lives; depends on evaluative attribute	What happens informally, “among us”
“алкоголизация / alkogolizatsiia” (alcoholization)	7	Process: Spread of harmful drinking patterns in the country	Penetrates the country and takes over its people	Overwhelm- ingly negative, dramatic, corrosive for society	The scale of the problem with alcohol in the country
“пьянство/ p’ianstvo” (regular binge drinking)	6	Process: Negative process that takes over people’s lives	Regular consumption of alcohol in large quantities with harmful consequences	Negative and harmful	Informal referrals to the problem with drinking that exists in the country
“алкогольная зависимость/ alkogol’naia zavisimost” (alcohol dependency)	5	Process: “болезнь/ bolezni” (illness)	Regular harmful consumption based on dependency	Negative, needs to be prevented, otherwise there is no turning back	A very high level of harm caused by regular alcohol consumption; an indispensable component of alcoholism
“алкогольное опьянение/ alkogol’noe	4	Process/state: “alcohol” that makes people	Consumption of a large amount of	Negative, leading to problematic	As part of a criminal or highly

op'ianenie" (alcohol intoxication)		intoxicated	alcohol at one sitting	or even tragic consequences	problematic situation
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7.2.1 Consumption (Потребление/Potreblenie)

The most frequent term used to refer to alcohol intake in Russian policy discourse is “потребление/potreblenie” (consumption) – 111 instances. When the official documents and government officials introduce the problem with alcohol in Russia, they mention overall rates of alcohol “consumption” in the country:

Based on the evaluations of the World Health Organization experts, exceeding the acceptable level of *consuming* products containing alcohol (based on 8 liters of pure alcohol (spirit with no water added) per year per person) is considered to be dangerous for the health of the nation, and *consumption* of every liter above this level takes 11 months away from a man’s life, and 4 months away from a woman’s life. According to the world statistics, *consumption* of products containing alcohol brings death to almost 2 million people and leads to 4 percent of diseases in the world annually⁴ (Government of the Russian Federation, December 30, 2009).

The term “потребление/potreblenie” (consumption) is used to describe the situation with overall alcohol intake in the country and the world through statistical data. The term “consumption” is associated with certain amounts of alcohol intake per capita. It is also used to demonstrate a direct correlation of “consumption” with the statistical data on mortality and morbidity among the population.

Another common use of “consumption” is when the problem with alcohol is discussed in historical perspective, as a pattern, or in comparison with other countries:

We conducted quite a serious analysis of the history of alcohol production and *consumption* of alcohol starting with prerevolutionary and postrevolutionary Russia and up to the current time. ... every time in history, increase in alcohol *consumption* or change in the pattern of *consumption* toward *consumption* of stronger beverages happened because of the actions of the government⁵ (President of Russia, August 12, 2009).

The term “consumption” is also used when the government needs to describe the situation in more or less neutral terms and present its own goal and/or strategy of “снижение потребления/snizhenie potrebleniia” (reducing consumption) of alcohol among Russia’s population:

And it needs to be said that both of these directions are supported by the program for developing a healthy lifestyle and increasing people’s responsibility for their own health, including *reducing consumption* of alcohol and smoking⁶ (President of Russia, January 19, 2010).

The examples above demonstrate that in most contexts, the term “consumption” has a neutral meaning that refers to alcohol intake without necessarily attributing a “problematic,” evaluative, or emotional connotation to it. However, evaluative (but not highly emotional) coloring of the term is sometimes added through the attributes used with “consumption,” such as “высокое/vysokoe” (high), “чрезмерное/chrezmernoe” (excessive), or “низкое/nizkoe” (low).

The population in general, or different demographic groups such as men, women or youth, are said to be the main actors in “consuming” alcoholic drinks. The form and amount of alcohol intake is not usually identified by the term “consumption” itself, unless there is an evaluative attribute or statistical data associated with the term.

“Потребление/potreblenie” (consumption) is the most frequent term referring to alcohol intake in policy documents. Based on the analyzed data, the code rule for this term is that in Russian official discourse, the term “to consume” means intake of alcoholic drinks by the population in general and various population groups in particular. The normative rule for “to consume” is that the government should use the term “to consume” to present neutral facts on alcohol consumption in the country regarding statistics, history, and policy programs.

7.2.2 Alcoholism (Алкоголизм/Alkogolizm) and Alcohol Dependency (Алкогольная Зависимость/Alkogol'naia Zavisimost')

“Алкоголизм/alkogolizm” (alcoholism) is a frequent term, used 68 times in the analyzed documents to refer to problematic alcohol intake. The official Concept Paper presented by the government contains the frequently mentioned phrase “state policy on reducing the scale of alcohol abuse and alcoholism prevention⁷.” This phrase alone provides 15 mentions of “alcoholism” in the analyzed data. The phrase describes the state policy and separates “alcohol abuse” (злоупотребление/zloupotreblenie) and “alcoholism,” but the documents do not present a clear distinction between them.

In 29 (out of 68) instances, “alcoholism” is directly discussed as a medical issue equal to a disease, something that people are sick with. In the statement below, Minister Golikova talks about morbidity and mortality due to “alcoholism”:

As I have already said, a number of regions with low *alcoholism* morbidity have high mortality indicators. And this is connected, first of all, to the fact that these regions do not have well organized narcological medical assistance⁸ (President of Russia, August 12, 2009).

Besides “morbidity,” “mortality,” and “pandemics,” another description associated with “alcoholism” as a disease is “больные алкоголизмом/bol'nye alkogolizmon” (patients, people sick with alcoholism). “Alcoholism” is also said to “развивается, формируется/razvivaetsia, formiruetsia” (develop, progress) as a disease and requires, as we see above, “медицинская и наркологическая помощь/meditsinskaia i narkologicheskaia pomoshch” (medical and narcological assistance) or “лечение/lechenie” (medical treatment).

In six cases, “alcoholism” is described with emotionally charged words, such as a “бедствие/bedstvie” (disaster), “угроза/ugroza” (threat), or “зло/zlo” (evil) that brings overwhelming harm to Russia and its people:

Alcoholism as one of the factors of demographic and social crisis in Russia presents a national threat on the level of individual, family, society, state.⁹ (Government of the Russian Federation, December 30, 2009).

Based on these descriptions, the presumed actor in the term “alcoholism” is not an individual or a group of people. It is a disease that has a dramatically overwhelming force, taking over individuals and presenting a threat on all levels of people’s lives. In five cases, it is mentioned that the disease leads to “алкогольная зависимость/alkogol’naia zavisimost’” (alcohol dependency). “Alcohol dependency” is caused by harmful regular alcohol intake turned into a pattern:

It is known that a habit of drinking with and without a reason can lead to serious *alcohol dependency* in quite a short period of time¹⁰ (President of Russia, August 12, 2009).

The regular and habitual actions of “alcoholism” bring people to “dependency.” The consequences are destructive and inevitably lead to the end – both physical and moral. Such an end is emotionally described as “evil” and a “disaster” not just for the people directly affected by the disease, but also for the society at large. The consequences of the disease are so overwhelming and irreversible that they present a “threat” to the whole country. These disastrous consequences of “alcoholism” are impossible to resolve, so they have to be prevented.

The code rule for “alcoholism” is that in the Russian government’s discourse, “alcoholism” means a highly destructive and irreparable process based on people’s dependence on alcohol through their regular and patterned harmful consumption of alcoholic beverages. The normative rule for “alcoholism” is that the Russian government should use the term “alcoholism” to present the highest level of harm caused by alcohol addiction to people in the country.

7.2.3 Alcohol Abuse (Злоупотребление/Zloupotreblenie)

Another term that is used extensively (47 times) to refer to harmful alcohol intake is “злоупотребление/zloupotreblenie” (alcohol abuse, harmful consumption). The occurrences of the term include 40 times when it is used in the title and body of the Concept Paper developed by the government. It is safe to say that, among the 16 documents, the use of “alcohol abuse” is limited to the Concept Paper.

In the Concept Paper, the government makes sure to technically differentiate “злоупотребление/zloupotreblenie” (alcohol abuse) and “алкоголизм/alkogolizm” (alcoholism). For example, throughout the Concept Paper we see the government’s goal as that of “reducing the scale of alcohol abuse and alcoholism prevention.”¹¹ The Concept Paper also proposes to improve medical assistance to people “who abuse alcohol and are sick with alcoholism.”¹² However, as mentioned above, there is no clear explanation of what exactly the difference is between “alcohol abuse” and “alcoholism.” Both seem to have dire demographic consequences and require immediate attention.

People, population, and individuals are said to “abuse” alcohol, or be involved in excessive and harmful alcohol intake. The government discourse specifically connects “злоупотребление/zloupotreblenie” (abuse) with health, demographic and social problems among people involved in “alcohol abuse”:

In modern Russia, *alcohol abuse* leads to people’s premature death from preventable causes and is one of the main reasons for social degradation of a certain segment of the society; this is reflected in the increase of criminal activity, violence, orphanancy, health deterioration, increase in disabilities and cases of suicide¹³ (Government of the Russian Federation, December 30, 2009).

In terms of the actions involved in “abuse,” one does not have to be addicted to alcohol and succumb to “alcohol dependency” and “alcoholism.” People who “abuse” alcohol consume too much and subject themselves to possible dangers from accidents and diseases that may

occur because of the “abusive consumption.” The major difference between “abuse” and “alcoholism” is the agent of action. In “abuse,” people themselves make wrong decisions and consume alcohol in a way that is harmful for their life and health: they consume large quantities of alcohol, drink too frequently, or use alcohol of bad quality. In the case of “alcoholism,” the disease takes over people’s lives, they make decisions under the influence of their dependency, and this is how they reach the point of no return.

“Abuse” presumes a highly negative activity that causes a lot of problems, but this term is not emotionally charged. Just like “consumption,” the term “abuse” is mostly used to describe harmful alcohol intake in the country through statistical data and consequences of abusive consumption.

The code rule for “alcohol abuse” in the Russian government’s discourse is that “alcohol abuse” means the population’s consumption of alcoholic drinks in amounts harmful for health and public safety. The normative rule for “alcohol abuse” is that the Russian government should use the term “alcohol abuse” to present negative effects caused by excessive alcohol consumption.

7.2.4 To Drink (Пить/Pit’)

In ten instances, government representatives use the term “to drink” to refer to alcohol intake among the Russian population. This term is not usually used in written documents: the Concept Paper only uses the term once, to refer to the “drinking” young people who harm their life, future, and the national economy. The term is mostly used somewhat informally by government officials when they include everyone in the problem of “drinking.” For example, presumably while pointing to the chart with statistical data on world alcohol consumption at the

meeting in Sochi, President Medvedev concludes: “based on this chart, nobody *drinks* more than we do¹⁴.” At another point during the same meeting, Medvedev says: “some time ago, we received data that [showed] we kind of *drink* quite a bit, but not as much as in some other countries¹⁵.”

The actions implied by the term “to drink” in the official discourse are not clear. They depend on the context and evaluative attributes used with the term. The actions could involve drinking on social occasions, abusing alcohol or being dependent on alcohol. One is advised to quit “drinking,” but it is not explained whether that implies giving up alcohol entirely or making a transition to moderate consumption. When government officials lament about “all of us” involved in drinking, they mean the general statistical picture of consumption that puts Russia ahead of other countries. Using the term “drink” (instead of “consumption,” for example) adds an emotional connotation of informality, or including everyone and urging some change because “we all do it, and we all are affected.”

The code rule for “to drink” is that in the Russian government’s discourse, the term “to drink” means alcohol consumption that potentially has negative consequences. The normative rule for “to drink” is that the Russian government should use the term “to drink” to informally present alcohol consumption that includes everyone in the country.

7.2.5 Alcoholization (Алкоолизация/Alcoholizatsiia)

“Alcoholization” is a fascinating term coined in an effort to describe Russia’s problem with drinking. This term has been frequently used in the official discourse and public media to refer specifically to the changes in the society caused by problematic alcohol consumption among the population. Even though the term is used only seven times in the analyzed discourse,

it foregrounds and summarizes what happens with different population groups and society as a whole because of alcohol:

Direct and indirect economic losses from *alcoholization* of the population harm substantially the social and economic development of the country. Economic losses include an increased level of mortality, a decrease in years of healthy life expectancy, losses of working capabilities, a decrease in productivity, expenses on treating diseases connected to alcohol consumption, state payments to people with disabilities, orphans, damage from fires, traffic accidents, state expenses on incarceration, fighting crime and homelessness¹⁶ (Government of the Russian Federation, December 30, 2009).

The main agent of action in the “alcoholization” is a harmful process. This process involves overwhelming penetration of alcohol’s effects throughout the society on a large scale and affecting various population groups. The groups affected most often and directly are “население/naselenie” (population) or “молодежь/molodezh” (youth). The process of “alcoholization” requires a comprehensive state program that would work with different target groups on a large scale:

A system of measures to improve the demographic situation, develop healthy lifestyles among youth would be incomplete without a realistic state-sponsored social program to fight *alcoholization* of the population¹⁷ (President of Russia, July 17, 2009).

Such formal terms as “масштаб/masshtab” (scale), “меры/mery” (measures), “уровень/uroven” (level), “противодействие/protivodeistvie” (counteraction, reaction) separate “alcoholization” from folk discourse and place it firmly in the “official” talk that discusses Russia’s problems with alcohol specifically as the government’s concern.

The evaluative component in “alcoholization” makes it a term that epitomizes the scale and significance of the problem with alcohol in Russia. “Alcoholization” makes problematic alcohol consumption dangerously present at all levels of the society, constituting a threat to the country’s security and well-being. “Alcoholization” requires urgent measures on the part of the government.

The code rule for “alcoholization” is that in the Russian government’s discourse, the term “alcoholization” means a harmful process of dangerous alcohol consumption spreading all over the country. The normative rule for “alcoholization” is that the Russian government should use the term “alcoholization” to emphasize the government’s concern with the negativity and scale of alcohol-related problems in Russia.

7.2.6 Regular Binge Drinking (Пьянство/P’ianstvo)

The term “пьянство/p’ianstvo” (regular binge drinking) is mentioned six times in the analyzed official discourse. It is mainly used in spoken discourse and describes a process of harmful alcohol consumption that ruins people’s lives and damages society:

For me traditions are those undeniable values that need to be protected. They include peace among different nationalities and religious confessions, military valor, faithfulness towards your duty, hospitality and kindness that is inherent in Russian people. And bribery, stealing, laziness of mind and soul, *regular binge drinking* are evils that insult our traditions. It is necessary to get rid of them with determination¹⁸ (Medvedev, September 10, 2009).

In the paragraph above, President Medvedev emphatically puts “regular binge drinking” among the evils that undermine Russian traditions and stand in stark opposition to positive qualities attributed to the Russian people. In the term “p’ianstvo,” the agent is negative and harmful alcohol consumption involving drunken behavior and consequences that affect people’s lives and the reputation of the whole country:

I am not even talking about *regular binge drinking* as the reason for the break-up of tens of thousands, perhaps, hundreds of thousands families in our country. And the break-up of families has a clear effect on the general atmosphere¹⁹ (President of Russia, August 12, 2009).

The term “regular binge drinking” is not used frequently in the official discourse to reference problematic alcohol consumption in the country. All six cases of the term (in two

contexts: the Sochi meeting and the President's address to the nation) reflect situations when the officials were talking in a less formal tone and wanted to emphasize the scale of the problem and its moral effect on the country.

The code rule for "regular binge drinking" is that in the Russian government's discourse, "regular binge drinking" means a negative process of excessive alcohol consumption that takes over people's lives and causes negative consequences. The normative rule for "regular binge drinking" is that the Russian government should use the term "regular binge drinking" to informally present problematic excessive alcohol consumption among the Russian people.

7.2.7 Alcohol Intoxication (Алкогoльнoе Опьянение/Alkohol'noe Op'ianenie)

The term "алкогoльнoе опьянение/alkogol'noe op'ianenie" (alcohol intoxication) is used in the analyzed discourse four times. In each instance, it is used to describe the outcome of consuming large amounts of alcohol at one sitting. In every case, alcohol takes over one's physical and mental abilities and leads to disastrous consequences:

Every year, numerous crimes are committed in the state of *alcohol intoxication* – homicides, infliction of grave harm to health, rapes, disorderly conduct, robberies, assaults, car theft²⁰ (Government of the Russian Federation, December 30, 2009).

Just like in the example above, all the instances of "alcohol intoxication" bring up various crimes committed under the influence of alcohol. The officials quote statistical data as grim evidence of what happens when Russians get intoxicated: people get killed in car accidents, murdered, raped, and robbed. Alcohol intoxication adds cruelty and recklessness to one's behavior and takes over people's lives. In all four instances, the term is used to describe criminal actions that lead to tragic consequences.

The code rule for “alcohol intoxication” is that in the Russian official discourse, the term “alcohol intoxication” means the state of body and mind resulting from large alcohol intake at one sitting. The normative rule for “alcohol intoxication” is that the government should use the term “alcohol intoxication” to demonstrate the criminal and tragic consequences resulting from excessive alcohol consumption at one sitting.

7.3 Communication Norms and Term Co-occurrences

The analysis of eight terms above was oriented toward identifying four radiants of meaning (agency, actions performed, evaluative component, and the situation or circumstances described) that facilitated formulating communication norms based on code rules and normative rules. In most instances, the situations described by the terms are consistent throughout the discourse and allow identification of all four radiants of meaning in the discourse specific for each of the eight terms (see Table 2). However, in at least nine cases, the analysis identified discourse junctures with co-occurrences of the terms for alcohol consumption in a way that violates the communication norms that work everywhere else in the discourse.

One of the most problematic terms in this regard is “alcoholism.” While retaining its meaning of a harmful and evil process of addictive alcohol consumption that takes over people’s lives, it co-occurs with other terms for alcohol intake and sometimes replaces them. Such co-occurrence happens in a context that implies equivalence in the communication norm for the term “alcoholism” and another term. In some instances when “alcoholism” occurs, it is not clear what type of action is conveyed: any alcohol intake, a state of drunkenness in the case of binge drinking, regular alcohol consumption, severe or harmful intake, or alcohol dependency with dire consequences. In fact, in some discourse junctures the meaning of “alcoholism” comes

across as that of alcohol “consumption” in general, or even getting intoxicated as a result of binge drinking:

And our current demographic problems to a large extent, of course, are connected to *alcohol consumption*. As we understand, *alcoholism* leads to incurable diseases, above all – cardiovascular pathology, suicides, committing grave crimes, simple home injuries that happen a lot with us, and I think about 80 percent in the *state of alcohol intoxication*²¹ (President of Russia, August 12, 2009).

In this instance there is confusion between “consumption” and “alcoholism.” It seems that anyone who consumes alcohol or is in a state of drunkenness after binge drinking is considered to have problems with alcoholism, leading to dire consequences for the community and the whole country. This presents a challenge in defining alcohol-related problems. What is the government concerned with? Any alcohol intake by the population, those who binge drink, people who may be in danger of acquiring alcohol dependency, or those who already suffer from alcohol dependency? Or is the government trying to convey that any form of alcohol intake inevitably presumes a path to alcoholism in the nearest future?

In another instance, minister Golikova reports on the most “alcoholic” regions of Russia:

If we talk about the regions, then the situation with *alcoholism* morbidity in the regions has developed in the following way. Based on the results from year 2008, Magadan Oblast is still the leader in morbidity: the number of *alcohol consumers* in the region comprised 5.6 per cent of the general population²² (President of Russia, August 12, 2009).

In this instance, we see that after talking about “alcoholism” morbidity in the regions, the minister uses the term “потребители/potrebiteli” (consumers) and provides the statistical figure of 5.6 per cent. One might think that 5.6 per cent of Magadan Oblast’s population consists of people who consume alcohol. What about the other 94.4 per cent? They do not consume any alcohol at all? Or they are not alcoholics? Or are they not on the path to becoming alcoholics? This is not clear from the instance above.

The examples above are the words of President Medvedev and Minister Golikova from the Sochi meeting transcript, so we might assume that there could have been some misuse of terms because of their speeches were more or less spontaneous. However, the Concept Paper that was developed to shape the government's policy toward reducing problems with alcohol demonstrates a similar confusion. The most conspicuous case is its Part II, titled "Current situation with abusive alcohol consumption in the Russian Federation²³." That part of the Concept Paper contains a description of statistical data on alcohol consumption among different population groups and information about production and sales of alcohol. The description mostly uses the term "потребление/potreblenie" (consumption). It also presents harmful effects of alcohol through the term "злоупотребление/ zloupotreblenie" (abusive consumption). All this discussion is summed up by calling the problem "alcoholism" in the following final sentence:

Therefore, *alcoholism* as one of the factors of demographic and social crisis in Russia presents a national threat at the level of person, family, society, state²⁴ (Government of the Russian Federation, December 30, 2009).

Such term co-occurrence makes the meaning of the terms used to refer to alcohol consumption confusing. The code and norm rules for the term "alcoholism" are violated as other terms acquire the cultural meaning of "alcoholism" and are assumed to regulate the discourse in the same way that the term "alcoholism" does. The government is quick to announce that any type of alcohol intake counts as "alcoholism," with its dramatic consequence of presenting the highest level of harm to Russians. Such inaccuracy of term use in the government's cultural discourse might cause the population to think that when the government mentions any alcohol-related problems, it is always up against alcohol addiction, the point of no return when alcohol takes over people's lives.

7.4 Cultural Propositions and Premises

The analysis of terms for alcohol intake in the Russian government's discourse brought about a constellation of meanings. These meanings are presumed and expressed in the official discourse through the following eight terms: "потребление/potreblenie" (consumption, intake); "алкоголизм/alkogolizm" (alcoholism); "злоупотребление/zloupotreblenie" (abusive consumption); "пить/pit'" (drink); "пьянство/p'ianstvo" (regular binge drinking); "алкоголизация/alkogolizatsiia" (alcoholization); "алкогольная зависимость/alkogol'naia zavisimost'" (alcohol dependency); and "алкогольное опьянение/alkogol'noe op'ianenie" (alcohol intoxication). Based on the discussion of each term and its communication norms, cultural discourse analysis of the official discourse yielded key cultural propositions and premises about Russian personhood, actions, emotions, and location in the nature of things related to alcohol consumption.

The agent of action in all the terms presents more of a continuum than a clearly identified person or group. The continuum starts with "all of us" who "drink" and goes on to different groups of the population and individuals who "consume" and "abusively consume" alcohol. "Regular binge drinking" and being in the state of "alcohol intoxication" is when the agent morphs from actual groups of people into the process that takes over people's lives. "Alcohol dependency" removes the agency from people, and the addiction turns into an overwhelming process that becomes an actor in "alcoholism." The final stage of the agency continuum is "alcoholization," when a combination of various processes of problematic alcohol consumption act together to harm Russian society on a large scale.

The cultural proposition about the presumed actor in problematic alcohol consumption in the official documents is the following: "People," or "all of us" are presumed "to drink," and some groups of the "population" (such as "youth," "women," "men," or "individuals")

“consume” and “abusively consume” alcohol. “Alcohol dependency” eventually takes over “people’s”/“the population’s” ability to control “alcohol intoxication” and “regular binge drinking,” and they succumb to “alcoholism.” “Alcoholism” as a powerful process leads to the “country’s” “alcoholization.”

The main cultural premise regarding the actor in alcohol consumption, as expressed in the government documents, is that the severity of the problem with alcohol increases when people lose their agency in alcohol consumption. As the process of alcohol consumption takes over individuals and different population groups, it becomes impossible to overcome and reverse it. The only chance to prevent or stop harm from alcohol is at the stage when clearly identified groups of people “drink,” “consume” or “abusively consume” alcohol.

The action presumed in all the terms for alcohol consumption depends on the agent. When the agency belongs to individuals and different groups, then the verbs describing alcohol intake have some attributes referring to amounts, frequency, and patterns of consumption. When the processes of “abusive consumption,” “dependency,” “alcoholism,” or “alcoholization” take over the agency in defining the problem with alcohol, then the actions of such processes turn into something overwhelming that penetrates people’s lives and society. In both types of actions (those of the people and those of the processes), much emphasis is put on the negativity of the activity and not on specific descriptions of what exactly makes the actions harmful. Coupled with the discourse junctures when “alcoholism” is equated to “consumption,” the actions presumed to be performed within what could be called problematic alcohol intake become vague, diffuse, and unspecified.

A cultural proposition about alcohol-related action in the government documents is that people’s “consumption” and “drinking” quickly turn into “abusive consumption,” “regular binge drinking,” and frequent “alcohol intoxication.” “Alcohol dependency” is inevitably present as an

inescapable threat in all the types of alcohol intake and leads to “alcoholism” for individuals and “alcoholization” for the whole country.

A cultural premise about actions is that alcohol intake becomes harmful for people and society as the amount, frequency and regularity of consumption increase. As people’s actions are taken over by the process of harmful consumption, its activity becomes overwhelming, penetrating different levels of society, and it is mostly unstoppable.

Most of the terms referring to alcohol intake in the official discourse have a negative connotation relating the harm that alcohol brings to individuals and society at large. The continuum of harm done by alcohol intake is expressed mainly through evaluative attributes attached to the terms. Starting with more neutral “consumption” and the inherently negative but not emotionally charged “abusive consumption,” negative emotions increase when the process takes over as the agent of the action.

The cultural proposition about emotions is that when “alcoholism” and “alcohol dependency” become a part of “consumption,” “drinking,” “abusive consumption,” “alcohol intoxication,” and “regular binge drinking,” they become a “disaster” and “evil.” All the types of alcohol intake eventually end in “alcoholization,” which is a looming “threat” epitomizing the ultimate dramatic effect of alcohol on the “country.”

The cultural premise with regard to the radiant of emotions is that the negative and dramatic effects of alcohol intake for individuals and the country increase with the scale, amount and frequency of alcohol consumption among Russians.

When the radiant of location in the nature of things is explored in this cultural analysis of the government discourse, it is assumed that all the terms refer to alcohol intake and problems resulting from it in Russian society. However, the radiant of location in the nature of things in this study was mainly applied in a micro-context and used to identify and locate the

terms for alcohol intake at different junctures of the government's discourse. These junctures drew the analysis to where in the discourse the key term is being used to express certain meanings. Three groups of terms were described and interpreted based on three aspects of meaning implied by the term location in the discourse: (1) an informal description of what happens "among us" when "we" consume alcohol: "drinking" and "binge drinking"; (2) neutral descriptions of the frequency, amount and patterns of alcohol consumption among the population: "consumption," and "abusive consumption"; (3) dramatic descriptions of a process that takes over people and society: "alcohol intoxication," "alcohol dependency," "alcoholism," and "alcoholization."

The term "alcoholism" stands out in this group because its usage sometimes spreads into the domain of the other terms and, without any explanation, violates their communication norms. In some discourse junctures, "alcoholism" is used as a replacement for the other terms. This often makes it appear to be a universal term for any problematic alcohol intake in Russia.

The cultural proposition about the location in the nature of things here is that alcohol "consumption," "drinking," "regular binge drinking," and "alcohol intoxication" are all used in the documents as stepping stones for "alcohol dependency" and "alcoholism," which, on a larger scale, becomes "alcoholization" of the "country."

The cultural premise of location in the nature of things about problematic drinking in the Russian official discourse is that the terms have certain discourse locations that identify the terms' informality, neutrality and emphasis on overwhelming penetration. All the terms in a way "serve" the term "alcoholism," which is the potential end point of any alcohol intake and the main concern of the government.

7.5 Conclusion

This chapter is a cultural analysis of terms for alcohol intake in the Russian government's official discourse. The analysis of 16 government documents mentioning or specifically discussing alcohol use in Russia in 2008-2010 yielded 258 instances of references to alcohol intake. These instances included a range of eight terms that implied different agents for action, a range of activities, several emotional components, and a variety of circumstances or situations for alcohol intake. Communication norms for each term were formulated to identify the terms' cultural meanings and strategic placement in the discourse. Treating the government documents as a cultural discourse allowed me to describe, interpret and compare the eight terms. As a result, four premises for actor/agent, actions, emotions and location in the nature of things were formulated.

The Russian official discourse has the potential to discuss the problem with alcohol in the country in neutral terms without necessarily dramatizing the problem or stigmatizing any population group. These terms are "consumption" and "abusive consumption." More emphatic terms are used to describe the dire consequences of alcohol intake for individuals, population groups and the whole country. These terms are "alcohol intoxication," "regular binge drinking," "alcoholism" and "alcoholization." And while these terms can be used legitimately (for example, when "alcoholism" is referred to as a disease with clearly identified symptoms, such as "alcohol dependency"), their misuse may lead to limiting discussions of alcohol intake to those who suffer from alcohol dependency, while people who are involved in problematic alcohol consumption but are not dependent on it may be excluded from the public health discourse.

The next chapter looks into anti-alcohol public service announcements aired by the Russian government on national TV in 2009. CuDA of these PSAs adds to our understanding of

what the official discourse presumes about Russian people, problematic alcohol consumption, and what should be done to overcome problem drinking.

Notes

¹ “без принятия самых экстренных мер, деградация России, ее народа неизбежна”.

² “грозит деградацией нашей стране, нашему народу”.

³ Концепция государственной политики по снижению масштабов злоупотребления алкоголем и профилактике алкоголизма среди населения Российской Федерации на период до 2020 года.

⁴ По оценкам Всемирной Организации Здравоохранения, превышение допустимого уровня потребления алкогольной продукции (из расчета 8 литров абсолютного алкоголя (безводного спирта) в год на душу населения является крайне опасным для здоровья нации и потребление сверх данного предела каждого литра отнимает 11 месяцев жизни у мужчин и 4 месяца у женщин. Согласно мировой статистике потребление алкогольной продукции является причиной смерти почти 2 миллионов человек и возникновения 4 процентов болезней во всем мире.

⁵ Мы провели достаточно серьезный анализ истории производства и потребления алкоголя начиная от дореволюционной и послереволюционной России и до настоящего момента. ... каждый раз в истории увеличение потребления алкоголя или же изменение структуры потребления в сторону потребления более крепких напитков происходило из-за действий государства.

⁶ И надо сказать, что оба эти направления поддерживаются программой по формированию здорового образа жизни и повышением ответственности людей за свое собственное здоровье, включая снижение потребления алкоголя и табака.

⁷ государственная политика по снижению масштабов злоупотребления алкоголем и профилактике алкоголизма

⁸ Ряд регионов, как я уже сказала, с низкой заболеваемостью алкоголизмом имеет высокие показатели летальности. И это связано в первую очередь с тем, что в этих регионах, как правило, неэффективно организована наркологическая медицинская помощь.

⁹ алкоголизм как один из факторов демографического и социального кризиса в России представляет собой общенациональную угрозу на уровне личности, семьи, общества, государства

¹⁰ Известно, что привычка пить по поводу и без повода может привести к тяжелой алкогольной зависимости в достаточно короткий срок.

¹¹ снижение уровня злоупотребления алкоголем и профилактика алкоголизма

¹² злоупотребляющим алкогольной продукцией и больным алкоголизмом.

¹³ В современной России злоупотребление алкогольной продукцией приводит к преждевременной смерти людей от предотвратимых причин и является одной из основных причин социальной деградации определенной части общества, которая выражается в росте преступности, насилия, сиротства, в ухудшении здоровья, росте инвалидности и случаев суицида.

¹⁴ в соответствии с этой таблицей больше, чем мы, не пьет никто.

¹⁵ некоторое время назад у нас появились данные о том, что пьем-то мы вроде много, но не так много, как в некоторых других странах.

¹⁶ Прямые и косвенные потери от алкоголизации населения наносят ощутимый вред социально-экономическому развитию страны. К экономическим потерям относятся повышенный уровень смертности, сокращение продолжительности здоровой жизни, утрата трудоспособности, снижение производительности труда, затраты на лечение заболеваний, связанных с потреблением алкогольной продукции, социальные выплаты государства инвалидам, сиротам, ущерб от пожаров, дорожно-транспортных происшествий, расходы государства на содержание заключенных, на борьбу с преступностью и беспризорностью.

¹⁷ Комплекс мер по улучшению демографической ситуации, формированию здорового образа жизни молодежи будет неполным без реальной государственно-общественной программы по борьбе с алкоголизацией населения.

¹⁸ Для меня традиции – это неоспоримые ценности, которые надо беречь. Это межнациональный и межконфессиональный мир, воинская доблесть, верность долгу, гостеприимство и доброта, свойственная нашему народу. А взяточничество, воровство, умственная и душевная лень, пьянство – пороки, оскорбляющие наши традиции. От них следует избавляться самым решительным способом.

¹⁹ Я уже не говорю о том, что пьянство является причиной распада десятков тысяч, наверное, сотен тысяч семей в нашей стране, а распад семьи понятно каким образом отражается на общем микроклимате.

²⁰ В состоянии алкогольного опьянения ежегодно совершаются многочисленные преступления - убийства, причинение тяжкого вреда здоровью, изнасилования, хулиганство, грабежи, разбои, угоны автотранспорта.

²¹ И наши сегодняшние демографические проблемы в значительной степени, конечно, связаны с употреблением алкоголя. Как мы понимаем, алкоголизм ведет к неизлечимым болезням, прежде всего сердечно-сосудистой патологии, самоубийствам, совершению тяжких преступлений, просто к бытовым травмам, которых у нас происходит очень много, и думаю, что примерно процентов 80 – это в состоянии алкогольного опьянения.

²² Если говорить о региональной составляющей, то ситуация по заболеваемости алкоголизмом сложилась в субъектах следующим образом. По итогам 2008 года лидером

по заболеваемости по-прежнему остается Магаданская область: число потребителей алкоголя в регионе составило 5,6 процента от общей численности населения.

²³ Современная ситуация в Российской Федерации, связанная со злоупотреблением алкоголя.

²⁴ Таким образом, алкоголизм как один из факторов демографического и социального кризиса в России представляет собой общенациональную угрозу на уровне личности, семьи, общества, государства.

CHAPTER 8

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS: OFFICIAL DISCOURSE OF CHANGE

8.1 Introduction

In 2009, the Federal Agency for Press and Mass Communications in Russia launched a series of public service announcements (PSAs) following President Medvedev's initiative to improve Russia's problem of overwhelming "alcoholization." The Russian government "talked" to the people through these videos to "inform the population of the negative consequences of abusing alcoholic products" and "prevent abuse of alcoholic products and development of alcohol dependency" (Government of the Russian Federation, December 30, 2009).

The previous chapter presented cultural discourse analysis of the terms used by the Russian government to refer to alcohol intake among the Russian population. This chapter explores anti-alcohol PSAs produced by the Russian government. The PSAs are studied as a form of communication that is part of the official public health discourse. Key terms and their clusters serve as a basis for formulating cultural propositions that present statements reflecting native, taken-for-granted knowledge about (1) who people are; (2) how they are related to each other; (3) how they feel; (4) what they are doing, and; (5) where they are situated in the nature of things (Carbaugh, 2007).

In this chapter, I first look into how the government identifies the main "players" in the field of alcohol – the PSA speakers, the PSAs' presumed audience, and alcohol as a powerful agent. I also look into the relationships that define and sustain these "players." Another focus is on what kind of action is presumed to happen when people are said to abuse alcohol and what kind of action is expected of them to change the situation of excessive alcohol consumption. The

emotional side of the problem as portrayed by the PSAs helps to evaluate the feelings rendered by the videos. Russia is explored as the place where the PSAs locate problem drinking.

The cultural propositions about actors, their relations, actions, emotions and place further bring us to formulating cultural premises that should be instrumental in identifying the meta-cultural commentary about problem drinking in the official discourse. The term cluster for problem drinking in the official discourse and its deep cultural meanings will be described in more detail in Chapter 9, based on the study of the official terms for drinking (Chapter 7) and the cultural premises of the PSAs in this chapter.

Thirty-five PSAs produced by Russia's government and aired on national television in 2009 served as the data for this chapter.

Research questions for this chapter are the following:

1. What are the key terms used by Russia's government to talk about problem drinking through public service announcements?

2. What deep cultural meanings about people's being and personhood, their relations, actions, emotions, and location in the nature of things are presumed and conveyed by the term clusters consistently used in the PSAs?

3. What kind of change in people's actions is the Russian government expecting in the PSAs?

8.2 PSA Speakers: I Know It All, I Have It All

In fourteen PSAs, the speaker is not seen or known. The viewer hears a female voice when the narrative is about women and their alcohol consumption problems. A male voice is heard when the speaker talks about the biological effects of alcohol on the human body

(commenting on animated videos of human organs) and when the narrative is about issues of alcohol consumption related to men. For example (male voice):

1. (Лес, ребенок бежит за мячом) Это ведь так здорово – быть отцом,
(Video of a child running in the woods) It is so great to be a father,
2. видеть, как сын делает первые шаги. Учить его играть в футбол.
to see how your son is making his first steps, to teach him to play soccer,
3. показать ему этот огромный мир.
to show him this enormous world.
4. Подумай, алкоголь убивает твое будущее. (пьяная компания)
Think, alcohol is ruining your future. (drunken people)
5. Подумай, что будет с тобой и твоим ребенком.
Think about what will happen to you and your child.
6. Пока есть возможность – оставь себе и ему шанс на счастливую жизнь.
While the opportunity still exists, give him and yourself a chance for a happy life.
7. (текст на экране): Более 90% детей, страдающих физическими
(text on the screen): More than 90% of children suffering from physical
8. и психическими расстройствами – это дети пьющих родителей.
and psychiatric disorders are children of drinking parents.

Here the speaker in the voiceover is somebody who knows the viewer's emotions and intimate experiences. For example, he knows how it feels to be a father (1), and what kind of things a father is supposed to do with his son (2, 3). The speaker also knows the consequences of alcohol consumption (4-5, 7-8), and he urges the viewers to change the situation to avoid these dire consequences in the future (6). This anonymous neutral authority knows what you feel, how you drink, what kind of mistakes you make by consuming alcohol, and what alcohol consumption can lead to. In this and other videos, the voice does not have a plan for the viewers and does not recommend a clear course of action; it just urges people "подумай/podumai" (think), "остановись/ostanovis'" (stop yourself), or "береги себя/beregi sebja" (take care of yourself).

Twenty-one PSAs are built so that a "real" person speaks to the viewers – either a celebrity (actor, athlete, film director, etc.) or an accomplished professional in his or her field (doctor, pilot, rescuer, scholar, etc.). These videos are developed around the life experiences

and achievements of each speaker. The speakers in the videos talk about what they have seen, done, experienced, and witnessed, and what they personally like and prefer. The personal pronoun “я/ia” (I) is usually the agent in these videos. The speakers describe themselves as non-drinkers and dedicated professionals who are proud of what they do: “I am a scholar. This makes life incredibly interesting,” “working as a pilot demands full focus, a powerful spirit, and decisiveness,” “I have a different dependency – on high achievements in life and athletics, warm relationships within family, not on alcohol¹.”

The speakers do not drink because they have something or somebody more important to live for, for example: “I recently became a mother, and it completely changed my attitude to life – I have never had weakness for alcohol, but now I have given it up completely².” The personal and professional lives of the speakers are portrayed as good, successful and functional alternatives to alcohol consumption.

The phrases “я видел(а)/ia videl(a)” (I’ve seen) and “я знаю/ia znaiu” (I know) are reiterated throughout the videos with famous people. These phrases relate the speakers’ personal encounters with other people who “разрушают свою жизнь/razrushaiut svoiu zhizn” (ruin their lives) by alcohol consumption: “I am a rescuer, and I often have to see tragedies – fires, catastrophes, accidents; I’ve seen the dire consequences that alcohol may lead to,” “I have seen how alcohol ruins destinies, courses of life (судьба/sud’ba). It doesn’t matter what pedestal you were on, how talented you are, what you have achieved,” “I have seen many times how people I knew would sit behind the wheel after a shot of vodka or a glass of wine,” “I know a lot of actors and those who are not actors who ... lost everything – health, family, profession³.” The speakers have witnessed what alcohol leads to, and they ask the PSA viewers not to follow the destructive path of those who drink.

The speakers have a very distinct negative attitude toward alcohol consumption. They explicitly state that they “не выношу/не vynoshu” (cannot stand) alcohol, or just never mention that they consume any amount of alcohol. They distinguish and separate themselves from those who drink. The statements of negative attitude toward alcohol usually come as a logical conclusion to what is said in the videos: “alcohol is very expensive when its price is life,” “alcohol does not give anything but abandonment and loneliness,” “alcohol brings everyone to the same denominator, leaves you behind the line⁴.”

Like the voiceovers, the “real” speakers know what is good and bad for the viewers, and they showcase themselves as “good” alternatives to the “bad” choices made by people who consume alcohol. The speakers have made the “right choice” – they do not drink. As a result of making this choice, their lives are filled with happiness and achievements. They have all that should make one fulfilled and accomplished: family, children, home, an interesting job and great prospects for the future.

Several key terms are repeatedly and potently used by the speakers. These terms help describe and understand the speakers’ personhood in the way it is portrayed by the PSAs. These key terms form the following cluster:

- “я знаю/ia znaiu” (I know)
- “я видел(а)/ia videl(a)” (I have seen)
- “не пью/не p’iu” (I don’t drink)
- “жизнь/zhizn’” (life)
- “счастье/schast’e” (happiness)
- “семья/sem’ia” (family)
- “работа/rabota” (work, job)
- “достижения/dostizheniia” (achievements)

- “правильный выбор/pravil’ny vybor” (right choice)

A cultural proposition about the PSA speakers’ personhood is that “I” (the speaker) have an interesting “job,” a lot of “achievements,” and/or a happy “family.” “I don’t drink,” so I “made the right choice” in “life.” “I know” and “I have seen” how people make “wrong choices,” so I am urging you to make “the right choice” in the same way I have done because this will bring you closer to having a “life” full of “happiness.”

8.3 Those Who Drink: Ruining Their “Sud’ba”

In one of the PSAs, a producer, Sanaev, talks about the impact of alcohol consumption on people’s professional skills and Russia’s economy:

Many people in Russia prefer to relax with a bottle instead of improving their skills in their business. Every year we fall further behind developed countries. Drinking is to blame for this more than anything else.⁵

In a similar way, eight PSAs directly address the consequences of alcohol consumption for one’s professional development and career. Those who do not drink have “достижения/dostizheniia” (achievements), but those who consume alcohol “уходят в никуда/ukhodiat v nikuda” (go nowhere) even though they may have been born very talented. “Работа/rabota” (job, work, professional activity, occupation) is something that is connected to “стремления/stremleniia” (aspirations) and “таланты/talanty” (talents). All this is incompatible with and gets wasted through drinking. The PSA speakers bring up stories about scholars who work on their projects for a long time but quit because of drinking; actors who look for inspiration in alcohol but instead find loneliness; and talented aircraft engineers and pilots who go through a tough school to gain and master professional skills, but then lose people’s respect and their jobs because of drinking. Terms clustered around the term “работа/rabota” (job,

work, professional activity, occupation) demonstrate an alternative to drinking, and at the same time show what a person is sure to lose if he or she drinks.

Another leading theme in the PSAs is a person's close social surroundings. Russian people are asked not to drink for the sake of those who are "близкие/blizkie" (near and dear) to them, those who depend on them. Key cultural terms here are "дети/deti" (children), "семья/sem'ia" (family), "мать/mat'" (mother), "материнство/materinstvo" (motherhood), and "дом/dom" (home, house, household). These terms of the "family" cluster have deep cultural meanings of being grounded and intertwined in tight relationships. Mentions of these terms are meant to convey what one can lose because of alcohol. These terms also describe a positive alternative that exists only if one does not drink.

"Дети/deti" (children) or "ребёнок/rebёнок" (child) are brought to the fore as important reasons to quit alcohol consumption altogether. Children are precious, and they suffer most from their parents' drinking. When parents consume alcohol, they may cause their children to have ill health and an unhappy life. It is especially tragic when a mother drinks. Mothers who drink are said to "рисковать/riskovat'" (risk) their child's health, and are urged to stop drinking for good. Because of drinking, future mothers may take away their own "chance to have a healthy child." They may even be in danger of not becoming mothers at all because alcohol consumption causes infertility. Happiness is in "an opportunity to give the gift of a new life⁶," but when you "have a drink, you take away your chance to become a mother⁷." "Материнство/materinstvo" (motherhood) is not compatible with drinking. Not drinking should "make one's children happy⁸," and provide for "happy motherhood⁹."

Children are part of the "семья/sem'ia" (family), or among those who are "близкие/blizkie" (near and dear) and who constitute one's "дом/dom" (home, house, household). Soccer player Arshavin talks about his dependency not on alcohol, but on "warm

relationships within the family.” Actress Budina says that a person can quit drinking alcohol because he or she has a dream to “build a house,” among other things. Alcohol is said to require a “цена/tsena” (price), which is the suffering of “близкие/blizkie” (those near and dear) when we, ourselves, bring the enemy (alcohol) home.

Synchronized swimmer and three-time Olympic champion Olga Brusnikina shares her personal story in one of the PSAs:

I grew up without a father. Unfortunately, it is a common story. My mother brought me up. She was the one who brought me to the swimming pool when I was eight. I couldn't swim then, and I was even afraid of water. Our family broke up because of alcohol. Mother left when she realized that it is not possible to help a person out if he doesn't want it himself. And I understand her. If there is a drinking person in a family, it is not a family. It is a disaster.¹⁰

This personal story illustrates what happens when alcohol claims someone's “воля/volia” (will) and destroys his or her “личность/lichnost” (personality). The person's family is ruined, the children suffer, and the drinking person can't change anything. He or she steps onto the path of imminent self-destruction. A communication sequence like this story is a common way to relate the dire consequences of alcohol consumption and the emotional price of alcohol. The PSA speakers talk about someone they know who started out more or less fine, but then began drinking, spiraled down the path of dissipation, and “потерял всё/poterial vsë” (lost everything, all): family, career opportunities, respect, and other important things. People in such stories end up tragically when they reach the point of no return. Such stories are told to demonstrate how bad alcohol consumption may turn out to be if one loses “сила воли/sila voli” (will power) and starts drinking “без меры/bez mery” (without limit) and with no regard to any societal obligations such as family and job.

A key term that epitomizes what one ruins as a result of drinking is “судьба/sud'ba.” Wierzbicka discusses this culturally loaded term in her semantic analysis of cultural meanings of

some key Russian words (Wierzbicka, 1992). She writes about “sud’ba” as something specifically Russian; it means “one’s course of life,” fate, destiny. It is a “characteristically Russian way of looking at a person’s life,” in which the whole life (not just its “extreme points”) is viewed as something “fated” (p. 68). “Sud’ba” also has some “imaginary force” that could be subject to “external control.” In her research, Wierzbicka brings examples of such control from tyranny or political oppression. In the PSAs that were explored for this study, “sud’ba” (or course of life) is said to be controlled by alcohol: “this habit (of drinking) often ends with a broken *course of life*¹¹,” or “we all know about those crimes that were caused by alcohol, about people’s broken *courses of life*¹².” Russian people are warned that their “sud’ba” (which comprises the way their professional and personal lives develop) could be ruined if they allow alcohol to take it over. The use of the term “sud’ba” in describing the ultimate consequences of drinking adds a dramatic spin to the effects of alcohol.

The following cluster includes key terms used to describe alcohol-related problems in people and warn the viewers of the disastrous consequences of alcohol consumption for one’s personhood:

- “потерять всё/poteriat vsë” (lose everything)
- “воля/volia” (willpower, inner strength)
- “семья/sem’ia” (family)
- “дети/deti” (children)
- “материнство/materinstvo” (motherhood)
- “работа/rabota” (work, job, occupation)
- “судьба/sud’ba” (destiny, fate, course of one’s life)
- “будущее/budushchee” (future)

A cultural proposition about people who drink and what they do is that alcohol consumption is connected to “losing everything,” which includes “willpower, inner strength,” close social surroundings such as “family” and “children,” and professional “achievements” such as “work, job, occupation.” “All, everything” is destroyed by alcohol. It does not matter how talented, accomplished, and respected one is. To drink is to dramatically “challenge one’s fate, destiny, course of life” because alcohol can control one’s “course of life.” Alcohol leaves one behind the line and ruins “the future.”

8.4 Alcohol as a Powerful Agent: Death and Destruction

Nine animated PSAs demonstrate what happens to various parts of the human body after alcohol has been consumed. The speaker comments on what is happening on the screen – a serving (in a shot glass, a wine glass, a mug, etc.) of an alcoholic beverage is swallowed by a person, and it continues moving through various body parts, causing destruction. Each of the videos is named after a body part that is being destroyed by alcohol, for example:

Heart: When alcohol gets to the heart through the blood, it destroys cells of your heart muscle. Micro scars appear. The muscle loses its elasticity, it stretches to the limit, chokes with blood, failing to push it through. The heart gets covered with fatty tissue; that’s why it is always enlarged in people who drink. Clots form in arteries and capillaries, they prevent oxygen and nutrients from getting to parts of the heart muscle. Heart tissue dies off. This is called infarction. Take care of yourself!¹³

In this description, alcohol is an intruder, as it almost purposefully reaches the heart and causes damage: loss, stretching to the limit, choking, etc. It is not clear from the PSA how much, how often, and what kind of alcoholic drink one needs to consume to suffer a heart attack. The animation in the video shows one drink going down a person’s throat and further into the body causing multiple kinds of damage to different organs along the way. A heart attack ensues as a

deadly consequence of alcohol consumption. A person is doomed to have his or her heart destroyed after letting an enemy into his or her body.

A similar destructive process following alcohol consumption is described in other videos for the brain, liver, pancreas, esophagus, intestines, blood, and stomach. Key terms in all these descriptions are connected to “смерть/smert’” (death) and “разрушение/razrushenie” (destruction): “клетки гибнут/kletki gibnut” (cells perish), “мёртвые клетки/mërtvye kletki” (dead cells), “клетки отмирают/kletki otmiraiut” (cells die off), “намертво закупоривают/namertvo zakuporivaiut” (shut dead), “разрушает клетки/razrushaet kletki” (destroys cells), “ткани отмирают/tkani otmiraiut” (tissue dies off), “механизм разрушения/mekhanizm razrusheniia” (mechanism of destruction), “мозг умирает/mozg umiraet” (brain dies), “смертельные заболевания/smertel’nye zabolevaniia” (deadly diseases), “агрессивно разрушает/agressivno razrushaet” (aggressively destroys), “активно разрушает/aktivno razrushaet” (actively destroys). Other biological processes mentioned in describing the effects of alcohol on the human body imply fatal destruction. Death happens through bursting, choking, shutting off, inflaming, and decomposing.

In the PSAs with famous people, alcohol is also portrayed as an “enemy,” a powerful agent capable of acting on its own and causing multiple kinds of destruction:

I would like to talk to you, talk to you about an enemy. The enemy is called alcohol. It is an enemy to us, our children, our country. We bring it to our home ourselves. (pictures of car accidents). We all know about crimes provoked by alcohol, about broken human lives. As a writer, I would create different endings to these stories. But in reality, they are always same and predictable.

The screen: “Alcohol kills 700,000 Russians annually”¹⁴

The main action in this PSA, with the writer Sergei Lukianenko, is inevitable destruction caused by alcohol. The damage is overwhelming and penetrates society and people’s lives without leaving anything untouched. Such damage is highlighted and dramatized in the

summarizing sentences of the videos, which are formulated so that alcohol is portrayed as an active agent: “alcohol kills – fast or slowly,” “spirits cripple people, ruin lives, destroy the future,” “nobody can save a life crippled by alcohol,” “even a small amount of alcohol makes a potential victim or killer out of an experienced driver,”¹⁵ and so on.

Key terms clustered together to convey what alcohol does as an active agent are the following:

- “организм/organizm” (human body)
- “разрушать/razrushat” (to destroy)
- “смерть/smert” (death)
- “убить/ubit” (to kill)
- “враг/vrag” (enemy)

The cultural proposition based on these descriptions is that as soon as any amount of an alcoholic drink enters a “human body,” it triggers a “mechanism of destruction” because there is no such thing as a harmless dose of alcohol. The process starts on the cellular level, going on to “destroy” vital human organs, and then causing “deadly” changes and irreversible consequences. “Death” and “damage” are the main effects of alcohol on the human body. Alcohol is an active “enemy” that intrudes upon the “human body” when a person is not careful enough and “doesn’t take care of himself or herself.” All this leads to ruining one’s self. One needs to protect his or her “body” from the “enemy” by being careful. Being careful in this context means not letting any amount of alcohol into one’s body.

8.5 Place of Alcohol Consumption: Our Country is Dying Out

The public service announcements discuss the issue of where the drinking problem is located. The videos show places of alcohol consumption ranging from people's homes (as normal but inevitably leading to problematic alcohol consumption) to the streets, where highly abusive consumption occurs. However, more often the problem of drinking is located and discussed as happening in the context of the country, Russia. Four PSAs titled "Антиалкоголь/Antialkohol'" (anti-alcohol), produced by the Russian Television Channel (RTR), specifically highlight the large scale of the alcohol problem. For example, Elena Isinbaeva, a famous athlete, says:

Russia has a lot of great achievements. But one record puts shame on our country. Russia drinks more than any other country in the world. Consumption of pure alcohol has increased by three times, up to 18 liters a year per person. Consumption of more than 8 liters threatens the nation and its gene pool. We are undergoing degradation. Stop yourself. Make the right choice. Don't let yourself go to ruin!

This famous athlete, who set several world records in pole-vaulting, talks about "славные достижения/slavnye dostizheniia" (glorious achievements), including one that makes "нашу страну/nashu stranu" (our country) known all over the world. This is not something we can be proud of. It is something that leads to "деградация/degradatsiya" (degradation). People living in Russia need to "сделать правильный выбор/sdelat' pravil'nyi vybor" (make the right choice), stop drinking, and make it so that we can be proud of "наша страна/nasha strana" (our country), and not ashamed of it.

The PSAs try to foreground the contrast of Russia being a place that has a lot of achievements and potential, and at the same time being a place where people are involved in their own "саморазрушение/samorazrushenie" (self-destruction). People in Russia are described as rolling down the path of "деградация/degradatsiia" (degradation). Another example:

Russia is actively fighting for world leadership, but there is one area where nobody can compete with it. Our country is the first in the world in the number of people who die violent deaths¹⁶.

Another contrast:

St. Andrew's flag is a blue cross against a white background. This is a symbol of the faith, virtue, courage, and great victories of Russia. But today another Russian cross is known to the world. The symbol of decay and self-destruction. Low birth rates and high mortality directly connected to the increase in alcohol consumption¹⁷.

Four PSAs in the "Береги себя/Beregi sebja" (Take care of yourself) campaign on the First Channel also directly connect drinking and "наша страна/nasha strana" (our country).

Vladislav Tret'iak says, "We live in Russia – the power of tradition is too strong here¹⁸," and then he continues talking about how "пьянство/p'ianstvo" (regular binge drinking) turns into a habit and then "ломает судьбу/lomaet sud'bu" (breaks one's course of life, fate, destiny). The scholar Nemtsov, who has been studying alcohol problems in Russia for 27 years, says that "for many years, our country has taken the lead in the world¹⁹" in alcohol consumption. He continues by saying that "we are destroying ourselves as people, as a country²⁰."

Key terms that cluster together to create and reference the place of alcohol consumption are the following:

- "Россия/Rossiiia" (Russia)
- "наша страна/nasha strana" (our country)
- "мы/мы" (we)
- "народ/narod" (people)
- "среди нас/sredi nas" (among us)
- "деградация/degradatsiia" (degradation)
- "отставать/otstavat'" (fall behind)

The cultural proposition here is that the place of problematic consumption is neither physical nor tangible. The place is located “among us” in “Russia,” “our country.” “We” (or “people”) are the ones who consume alcohol and cause overall “degradation,” and this causes “our country” to “fall behind” others, even though “our country” has a lot of potential. So, “Russia” is a place where alcohol is consumed overwhelmingly, and that place suffers the consequences of its “people” drinking.

8.6 The Drinking Process: “Sitting Together Like Everybody Else”

The PSAs offer several ways to look at the drinking process. Three of the videos provide a glimpse into what happens when people drink: people sit at a table facing one another, talk, and consume alcohol. Videos with celebrities talking about alcohol problems in the country show a succession of photos of people in the process of drinking. Some of the famous people in the videos verbally reference the ways Russians drink.

The PSAs with celebrities talking about various aspects of alcohol problems (drinking and driving, impact on the family, personal and professional degradation) are created so that a person’s talk is split in two parts. Between the two parts are photos of people drinking and/or suffering from some impact of alcohol consumption. In six videos, such images include people drinking. These are people drinking from a bottle in the street; two men drinking from bottles and hugging, barely able to stand up straight, drunk and dissipated. One of those PSAs, however, shows people drinking “normally”: young people sitting at a table and facing one another, laughing, clinking their glasses, hugging and clearly having a good time. The message of that video is: “half of moderately drinking Russians turn into alcoholics²¹.”

In one of the PSAs, Vladislav Tret'iak describes drunkenness that has become “everyday, regular, and even habitual²²,” saying that “I agree, there are good drinks, nice company, fun parties. We live in Russia – the power of tradition is too strong here. (Drinking) to friends’ health, to relax²³.” Here the speaker equates “пьянство/р’ianstvo” (regular binge drinking) to having drinks in nice company where people drink to relax, and where they drink for various “good” and acceptable reasons – for example, to friends’ health.

Two PSAs talk about men acquiring female physiological features and women acquiring male features as a result of drinking beer. The videos start out by showing a “sitting together” scene. Nice music is playing, beer is poured into glasses (in the PSA for men into glass mugs, and in the PSA for women into slimmer glasses). We see outlines of people sitting at a table, chatting, and having a great time. The text for both PSAs starts out as: “Хорошо посидеть/khorosho posidet’” (It’s good to sit ...). It continues, “It’s good to chat with friends ... and while talking you don’t notice that ...²⁴” Further on, both PSAs tell the audience about the dangers of estrogen in beer, which makes men’s bodies look more female and women’s bodies more male.

Another PSA talks about ten people sitting at a table, clearly having a good time with a conversation and drinking. This PSA talks about what happens to each of them according to statistics (without specifying the source of the statistics). It starts out saying: “There are ten people at the table. They are young and careless, and they are drinking like everyone else²⁵.” “Выпивать как все/vypivat’ kak vse” (drink like everyone else) apparently means drinking in the way that is acceptable and normal for everyone in the group. Then the PSA describes what is going to happen to each person sitting at that table according to statistics (someone becomes an alcoholic, someone dies of heart disease, someone gets injured in a car accident, etc.), and at the end the viewers are asked the question: “You are one of them?²⁶” A period at the end of

that sentence merges into a question mark, implying that the viewers could be one of these ten, but that it is also in their power to question the situation and change it.

The images in the videos emphasize that drinking together with friends at a table has consequences similar to those of drinking alone, or from a bottle in the street. All this leads to alcohol dependency and dramatic events in one's life. The way of drinking that is considered normal and acceptable is, in fact, deeply problematic and should be avoided. Based on all the PSA images, videos, and verbal references to the drinking process, the following terms cluster together to reference the process of problematic alcohol consumption:

- “посидеть/posidet” (to sit together)
- “как все/kak vse” (like everyone else)
- “пьянство/p'ianstvo” (regular binge drinking)
- “алкоголизм/alkogolizm” (alcoholism)

The cultural proposition about the drinking process is the following: drinking regularly, “sitting” together “like everybody else,” leads to “regular binge drinking” and “alcoholism.”

8.7 How to Change the Situation: “Beregi Sebia!”

Public service announcements are created to effect changes in society. In our case, the change is to “reduce the scale of alcohol abuse and prevent alcoholism” (Government of the Russian Federation, December 30, 2009). I looked specifically at each PSA to understand how such public health change is expected to occur. What are Russian people urged to do to change their presumably harmful drinking patterns?

Of 35 public service announcements that were analyzed for this study, only two offer a direct course of action in terms of alcohol consumption. In one PSA, a doctor says: “There is only

one way to get rid of diseases caused by alcohol, radically and without surgeries: one shouldn't drink²⁷." In another PSA, a film producer concludes: "Learn to live without alcohol!"²⁸ In these two cases, the Russian people are asked to give up alcohol consumption entirely. Other videos provide a description implying but not explicitly stating that the viewers should give up alcohol entirely: "I have seen the horrible consequences that alcohol leads to; it doesn't matter how much you have drunk," "I can't stand alcohol on a physical level," "one may drink because of boredom, suffering, along with other people, or may not drink at all; not to drink because he has a dream,"²⁹ and so on. These statements imply that alcohol consumption is bad, and to avoid all the negative consequences, one should not drink. However, nothing is said specifically about whether drinking should be completely stopped or reduced to less dangerous amounts, and what these amounts could be.

Two of the PSAs urge the viewers "подумай/подумаи" (think): "think, alcohol is killing your future; think about what is going to happen to you and your child³⁰." Women are urged "остановись/ostanovis'" (stop yourself): "When you have a drink, you are taking away your chance to become a mother ... Stop yourself, give yourself the gift of happy motherhood³¹." Another call to "остановись/ostanovis'" (stop yourself) is at the end of all four "Antialkohol" PSAs: "Stop yourself! Make the right choice! Don't let yourself go to ruin!"³² These calls to "stop yourself" and to "think" come after the viewers are offered descriptions of two alternatives: one is a happy and successful life and the other is dissipation and personal degradation caused by alcohol overpowering everything.

Thirty-one PSAs were created under the slogan "Береги себя!/Beregi sebia!" (take care of yourself). The call "to take care of yourself" is pronounced by a speaker or written at the end of the videos. If we assume that "to take care of yourself" is a call for change, then it is important to understand what "yourself" means in this particular context. When we look back at

the cultural propositions about what key things constitute the PSA participants (the speakers and the viewers), we see that one's personhood is a tight interrelationship of "body," "family," "children," "home," "job," and what one does to ensure a positive or favorable "destiny, course of life" and "future" as well as contribute to "our country's" development. So the PSAs' call to "take care of yourself" means providing all the necessary conditions for all that constitutes "yourself" to thrive in the way shown in the PSAs.

Key terms clustering around the change proposed by the PSAs are:

- "не пей/не пей" (don't drink)
- "подумай/rodumai" (think)
- "остановись/ostanovis'" (stop yourself)
- "сделай правильный выбор/sdelai pravil'nyi vybor" (make the right choice)
- "береги себя/beregi sebia" (take care of yourself)
- "защити себя/zashchiti sebia" (protect yourself)

The cultural proposition regarding expected changes in Russian people's alcohol consumption patterns is that "to reduce the scale of alcohol abuse and prevent alcoholism," a Russian person should "stop himself or herself" and "make the right choice." "The right choice" is "taking care of yourself" and "protecting yourself" through "not drinking." "Yourself" comprises an elaborate, tight relationship of one's "body," "children," "family," "home," and "job," which ensures the positive development of "achievements," "future," "destiny, course of life" and contributes to "our country" in a productive way.

8.8 Cultural Premises

Public service announcements are a cultural form within the Russian government's discourse of change. The analysis of the PSAs' key terms and the PSAs' cultural sequence yielded the government's official understanding of the "target audience," Russian people, what they do, what consequences ensue as a result of their alcohol consumption, and how they need to act to improve the situation in the country. The next CuDA step is to identify the cultural premises that are embedded in the PSAs as a form of the Russian government's communication. The premises reflect what is believed to be the essence of the problem of alcohol consumption and what is presumed by the government to be proper and valued in people's behavior.

One of the key cultural premises is related to what constitutes a person in terms of alcohol consumption. A focal term referring to one's personhood, which further elaborates on the impact of alcohol and expected behavior change in the PSAs, is "себя/sebia" (yourself). This reflexive pronoun is especially conspicuous in the title of the PSA series "береги себя/beregi sebia!" (take care of yourself). The phrase is also repeated as a call for action at the end of all the PSAs in the series. "Yourself" encompasses quite an elaborate network of relationships, portraying a person deeply connected to them. Such a network consists of one's physical body and psychological state, family, friends, home, work, and the country. Another important part of one's personhood is the unfolding of his or her "судьба/sud'ba" (destiny, course of one's life), which can be ruined if one allows negative overpowering agents such as alcohol to interfere and take charge. Even though the PSAs seem to address individuals and call for their own personal change, they in fact appeal to a broad relational network that people are believed to be a part of.

The PSAs describe a person as belonging to what I call here "camps" – "good" or "bad." The "good camp" typically includes the speakers in the video, who usually do not drink and, as a

result, have functional family relationships, a home, a successful career and achievements, dreams, plans, and bright future prospects. Such people have been in situations where they could have consumed alcohol and let it interfere with their lives. However, they consciously “made a choice” not to let alcohol, as a powerful agent, ruin their “selves.” They do not allow alcohol to take control of their “sud’ba.” Alcohol is not a part of what constitutes their “selves.” People from the “good camp” contribute to society and Russia’s success in the world, but they directly and indirectly suffer from those in a “bad” camp.

The “bad camp” includes those who have spiraled down the path of degradation by allowing alcohol to destroy and take charge of important components of their “selves.” Their vital body organs are ruined, and their family is a “disaster,” with the children suffering physical and psychological damage. Spouses and friends leave them. No matter how talented they are, their careers do not progress, and very often they lose their jobs for good. They look dissipated and unattractive. They lose “всё/vsë” (everything, all). Their destiny, course of life (“sud’ba”) is ruined by alcohol, but they are responsible for letting alcohol do this. They take away from Russia’s development, making Russia look shameful in the eyes of other countries. And while the lives of the people in the “good” camp are dynamic and develop in a positive direction, the “bad” camp people stagnate and are headed toward annihilation, potentially drawing others (and the whole country) with them.

The PSAs address “you,” or somebody who is headed toward the “bad” camp. The PSAs do not explicitly say that you are already in the “bad camp.” Nor do they think of “you” as one of those in the “good camp.” You may think that your life is fine, but because you consume alcohol, you are “making the wrong choice,” and you will inevitably end up as a lost person, somebody who “is left behind the line,” headed to the point of no return, and who succumbs to the “deadly” effects of alcohol. You will endanger all important components of your “self,” including

the people who are connected to you. As a result, you will inevitably become an abusive drinker and an alcoholic. The videos assume the existence of two polar opposite groups of people, and you are somewhere in the middle but presumably heading toward a negative outcome because you consume alcohol.

The PSAs do not offer any direct recommendations for a course of action for people who are headed toward the “bad” camp. Giving up drinking is implied as something that can save you, but there is no specific advice on whether one should stop drinking altogether, or reduce one’s current consumption. There are four explicit actions to improve the situation – “to think,” “to stop yourself,” “to take care of yourself,” and “to protect yourself.” Another implied way to improve is to build your life in a way similar to that of the PSA speakers, who seem to have made the right choices in life, and, as a result, enjoy overall success.

A cultural premise about people’s action is that all the decisions an individual makes reverberate throughout the whole sociocultural network – starting with one’s psychological state to family and friends, and all the way to “all of us” and “the country.” One’s drinking has a direct impact on all that constitutes “self.” However, there is no discussion or acknowledgement of any effect of the sociocultural network on the individual’s behavior or “self.” A drinking person is portrayed as acting irresponsibly and in this way ruining his or her own course of life and that of others, but not the other way around. A sociocultural network is not presumed to have much effect on the person’s decisions and actions. In the PSAs, a person is tightly connected to the network that constitutes “self,” but he or she is not interconnected with it.

Such dependence of a large sociocultural network on an individual’s actions is portrayed as highly dramatic and requiring the urgency of immediate action. This is not something that should be treated lightly; it is a “disaster” that will inevitably consume everyone and lead to the end of everything close and dear to all of us. One of the most important things that may be

ruined and destroyed because of alcohol is Russia, our country. It is a place where we all are living and a place that depends on us in order not to fall behind and to succeed. Emotions run high in this drama, and responsibility for what is happening or about to happen is put on “you” – the viewer of the videos.

8.9 Conclusion

The goal of the Russian government’s public service announcements is to address Russian people and urge them to change their problematic alcohol consumption practices. In this cultural discourse analysis of PSAs as a form of communication, special attention was paid to how the PSAs portray Russian people and to what kind of action or change is expected of them as the target audience of the public health message in the PSAs. The main finding is that Russian people’s personhood is presumed to consist of such components as a physical body, children, family, home, people close to you, and job. All this plays an important role in the way one’s course of life unfolds and has a direct impact on Russia as a country. While an individual’s behavior has a clear impact on all that constitutes his or her self, there is no indication that all these aspects of one’s personhood have an impact on people’s “selves.” Alcoholics are people who have lost all of these important components of their “selves.” Anyone who consumes alcohol is presumed to be heading in the dangerous direction of self-destruction and joining the alcoholics who have reached the point of no return. The PSAs do not propose any clear means for change either for alcoholics (they seem to be already degraded beyond the possibility of change) or for the viewer who is on his or her way to join the army of hopeless drunkards who cause devastation to everyone and everything around. The only change suggested to the PSAs’

viewer is a subtle urge “not to drink” and to “think” about the consequences of alcohol consumption.

The next chapter brings together CuDA of the government’s documents and PSAs to describe and analyze the official stance toward problematic alcohol consumption. Chapter 9 also compares problem drinking as it is described in the folk and official discourses.

Notes

¹ “Я занимаюсь наукой, это делает жизнь невероятно интересной,” “работа летчика требует полной концентрации и силы духа, решительности,” “у меня другая зависимость – от высоких достижений в жизни и спорте, от теплых отношений в семье, не от алкоголя.”

² Недавно я стала мамой, и это серьезно поменяло мое отношение к жизни. Я никогда не питала слабости к алкоголю, а сейчас отказалась от него совсем.

³ “Я – спасатель, и мне часто приходится видеть трагедии – пожары, катастрофы, аварии. Я видел, к каким ужасным последствиям может привести алкоголь,” “я видела, как алкоголь ломает судьбы. Неважно, на каком пьедестале ты стоял, насколько ты талантлив, чего ты достиг,” “сколько раз я видел, как мои знакомые садились за руль после рюмки водки или бокала вина,” “я знаю много актеров и не только актеров, которые... потеряли все – здоровье, семью, профессию.”

⁴ “Алкоголь обходится слишком дорого, когда его цена – жизнь,” “алкоголь ничего не дает, кроме забвения и одиночества,” “алкоголь всех приводит к одному знаменателю, оставляет за чертой.”

⁵ Сколько жителей России вместо того, чтобы совершенствоваться в своем деле предпочитают расслабляться с бутылкой. С каждым годом мы все больше отстаем от передовых стран. В первую очередь в этом виновато пьянство.

⁶ возможность подарить новую жизнь

⁷ Когда ты выпиваешь, ты отбираешь у себя шанс стать матерью

⁸ сделать своих детей счастливыми

⁹ счастливое материнство

¹⁰ Я росла без отца. К сожалению, это обычная история. Моим воспитанием занималась мама. Она и в бассейн меня привела в 8 лет. Я тогда не умела плавать и даже боялась воды. Наша семья распалась из-за алкоголя. Мама ушла, когда поняла, что невозможно помочь человеку подняться, если он сам этого не хочет. И я ее понимаю. Если в семье есть пьющий человек, это уже не семья. Это – беда.

¹¹ но эта привычка часто заканчивается сломанной судьбой

¹² все мы знаем о тех преступлениях, на которые толкает спиртное, о сломанных человеческих судьбах

¹³ Сердце: Когда алкоголь с кровью попадает в сердце, он разрушает клетки вашей сердечной мышцы. Появляются микро рубцы. Мышца теряет эластичность, работает на пределе возможностей и захлебывается кровью, не успевая ее проталкивать. Сердце покрывается жировой тканью, поэтому у пьющего человека оно всегда увеличено. В

артериях и капиллярах образуются тромбы, которые перекрывают доступ кислорода и питательных веществ в части сердечной мышцы. Ткани сердца отмирают. Это называется инфаркт.

¹⁴ Я хочу поговорить с вами, поговорить о враге. Врага зовут алкоголь. Это враг наш, наших детей, нашей страны. Мы сами приводим его в свой дом. (кадры аварий) Все мы знаем о тех преступлениях, на которые толкает спиртное, о сломанных человеческих судьбах. Я, как писатель, придумал бы другие финалы этих историй. Но в реальности они всегда одинаковы и предсказуемы.

Надпись на экране: “Алкоголь ежегодно убивает 700000 россиян”

¹⁵ “Алкоголь убивает – быстро или медленно,” “спиртное калечит людей, ломает жизни, разрушает будущее,” “искалеченную алкоголем жизнь не спасет никто,” “даже небольшая доза алкоголя делает из опытного водителя потенциальную жертву или убийцу.”

¹⁶ Россия активно борется за мировое лидерство. Но в одной области не знает себе равных. Наша страна занимает первое место в мире по количеству людей ежегодно умирающих насильственной смертью.

¹⁷ Андреевский флаг – синий крест на белом фоне. Символ веры, доблести, мужества и великих побед России. Но сегодня в мире известен другой русский крест. Символ упадка и саморазрушения. Низкая рождаемость и высокая смертность, напрямую связанная с ростом употребления алкоголя.

¹⁸ мы живем в России – здесь слишком велика сила традиции

¹⁹ наша страна уже много лет держится среди мировых лидеров

²⁰ мы уничтожаем себя как народ, как страна

²¹ Умеренно пьющие Россияне в половине случаев становятся алкоголиками.

²² обыкновенным, бытовым и даже привычным

²³ Я согласен, есть хорошие напитки, приятные компании, веселые застолья. Мы живем в России – здесь слишком велика сила традиции. За здоровье друзей, чтобы расслабиться.

²⁴ Хорошо... поболтать с подружками/друзьями, ... за разговорами и не замечаешь как...

²⁵ За столом десять человек. Они молоды и беззаботны и выпивают как все.

²⁶ Ты один из них?

²⁷ Есть только один способ избавиться от болезней, вызванных спиртным – радикально и без операций: не надо пить.

²⁸ Научитесь жить без алкоголя.

²⁹ “Я видел, к каким ужасным последствиям может привести алкоголь. Не имеет значения, сколько ты выпил,” “я не переношу спиртное на физическом уровне,” “человек может пить от скуки, от страдания, за компанию, но может и не пить. Не пить, потому что появилась мечта.”

³⁰ Подумай, алкоголь убивает твое будущее; подумай, что будет с тобой и твоим ребенком.

³¹ Когда ты выпиваешь, ты отбираешь у себя шанс стать матерью. ... Остановись, подари себе счастливое материнство.

³² Остановись! Сделай правильный выбор! Не дай себя уничтожить!

CHAPTER 9

COMPARING THE PROBLEM: FOLK AND OFFICIAL DISCOURSES ON PROBLEM DRINKING

9.1 Introduction

The CuDA comparative mode in public health and policy contexts has the potential to turn into an important and much-needed step for understanding what works, what fails to get accomplished, and what could be improved in public health or other interventions designed to improve people's lives. Such practical knowledge comes from a stance assuming that the official discourse of change (whether it belongs to the government, an international agency, or a non-governmental organization) is as cultural and distinct as the discourse of the people who practice the behavior requiring change.

As described in the theoretical stance for this dissertation, CuDA and ethnography of communication have been instrumental in comparing cultural discourses and explaining sociocultural actions in various settings. In higher education, a teacher and students may differ substantially in the systems of cultural beliefs and meanings that underlie some forms of communication performed during a class. For example, a public-speaking assignment in a US classroom was awkward for American Indian students who value nonverbal, listener-active modes of communication (Carbaugh, 1995). An assignment to write an "obituary" offered by a US professor was not acceptable to Russian students because, according to a Russian communication norm, one should not verbally put a living person in the realm of dead people (Carbaugh, Nuciforo, Molina-Markham, & van Over, 2011). The difference in cultural belief systems between teacher and the students in those two cases resulted in interpersonal misunderstandings and failures to accomplish educational tasks. In environmental protection

settings, Morgan (2003) learned that term clusters and norms of interpretation that are associated with them differed in five discourses about a watershed project. He found that understanding and taking into account different ways of talking about water could significantly improve discussions and decisions regarding water management policy in the region under study. Mackenzie compared the official medical discourse about Williams Syndrome (WMS) and the way people with WMS talked about themselves. This helped her identify significant differences and provide recommendations for enhanced educational and life opportunities for people with WMS (Mackenzie, 2007).

As we can see from these examples, the CuDA comparative mode has the capacity to explore and compare two or more different cultural discourses in one study. Such a comparison can start from a moment of “cultural asynchrony” that triggered a cross-cultural misunderstanding, or it can specifically focus on one type of communication form or concept in two or more cultures (Carbaugh, Nuciforo, Molina-Markham, & van Over, 2011).

There was no clear and outstanding “moment of asynchrony” where the folk and official discourses about problem drinking in Russia clashed and caused a misunderstanding or difficulty in performing a cultural action. However, it was possible to describe and interpret term clusters and communication norms regulating the clusters’ functioning within the discourses. The clusters expose a system of cultural beliefs and meanings about problem drinking in both the folk discourse and the official discourse.

This study identified two key term clusters (“напиться/napit’sia” (to get drunk) and “пить/pit’” (to drink)) that are used in the Russian folk discourse to talk about alcohol consumption causing problems.

The analysis of the official discourse yielded eight terms used by the government to refer to problematic alcohol intake in the country: “потребление/potreblenie” (consumption,

intake); “пить/pit” (drink); “злоупотребление/zloupotreblenie” (abusive consumption); “алкогольное опьянение/alkogol’noe op’ianenie” (alcohol intoxication); “пьянство/p’ianstvo” (regular binge drinking); “алкогольная зависимость/alkogol’naia zavisimost” (alcohol dependency); “алкоголизм/alkogolizm” (alcoholism); and “алкоголизация/alkogolizatsiia” (alcoholization). All these terms have their own radiants of meaning and communication norms that require locating them and their corresponding term clusters at certain discourse junctures.

CuDA analysis of the PSAs produced by the government identified the government’s assumptions about participants in the alcohol consumption process, their relationships, their actions, the location of the problem and the emotional burden caused by the problem.

Since no single key term is used consistently throughout the official and folk discourses to refer to problem drinking (even with different meanings attached to it), it would be challenging to take each term one by one and compare the meanings and norms associated with these terms in two different discourses. However, a comparative analysis requires a certain point that guides the comparison, something that could be compared across the discourses based on an idea or a stance that the researcher takes. For example, Morgan (2003) compared the term “water” and the idea of protecting the local watershed in an organizational discourse and four local discourses. In Mackenzie’s study, it was the identity of people with WMS in the medical discourse and the discourse of people with WMS. In this study of Russian alcohol consumption, I compared cultural premises based on the radiants of cultural meanings as they are expressed when problematic alcohol consumption is discussed through different term clusters. So this exploration and comparison will focus on what happens with regard to personhood, relations, action, emotions, and location in the nature of things among those who are said to practice problematic alcohol consumption in the two discourses.

The research question for this chapter is the following: What are the similarities and differences in the radiants of cultural meanings about personhood, relations, actions, emotions and location in the nature of things associated with consuming alcohol in a problematic way in the folk and official discourses?

To respond to the research question, this chapter first reviews and summarizes the cultural premises implied in two term clusters (“to drink” and “to get drunk”) in the folk discourse. After that, the chapter brings together the radiants of cultural meaning that constitute a term cluster for problematic alcohol consumption as portrayed in the discourse of the Russian government in its official documents and public service announcements. The next step is to identify differences and similarities in the radiants of cultural meaning about personhood, relations, actions, emotions and location in the nature of things that are presumed in these three ways of portraying problematic alcohol consumption. Finally, the chapter looks at how the two drinking practices considered problematic in the folk discourse are reflected in the official discourse, which is supposed to address the public health problem of excessive alcohol consumption in Russia.

9.2 Folk Term Clusters for Problem Drinking

The analysis of the Russian folk discourse revealed that there are two ways to describe how people have problems or negative consequences as a result of consuming alcohol. One of these problematic experiences is expressed through the key term “напиться/napit’sia” (to get drunk) and its term cluster, built by such terms as: “потерять контроль/poteriat’ kontrol’” (lose control); “(не) знать меру/(ne) znat’ meru” ((not) to know the limit); “предел/predel” (behavior boundaries); “(не) уметь пить/(ne) umet’ pit’” ((not) to have the skill to drink); “слабая

воля/slabaia volia” (weak willpower); “компания/kompaniia” (company, people who drink with you); “под влиянием/pod vlianiem” (under the influence); “как все/kak vse” (like everyone else); “повод/povod” (reason, excuse to have a drink); and “обстоятельства/obstoiatel’stva” (circumstances).

The other key term describing problem drinking is “пить/pit” (to drink), with a corresponding term cluster consisting of: “пьяница/p’ianitsa” (drunkard); “алкоголик/alkogolik” (alcoholic); “сразу видно/srazu vidno” (one can tell right away by the appearance); “наследственность/nasledstvennost” (inherited in the genes); “предрасположенность/predraspolozhennost” (predilection, inclination); “слабый/slabyi” (weak); “ничего не надо/nichego ne nado” (doesn’t need anything, doesn’t have any motivation); “все пропить/vsë propit” (drink everything away); “запой/zapoi” (drinking for days and weeks without any break); and “спиться/spit’sia” (succumb to alcoholism).

These two ways to describe problematic alcohol consumption were earlier compared to a downward spiral with no way back (“to drink”) and an occasional dip below the level of what is considered to be normal living (“to get drunk”). A set of differing cultural premises explicate who “drinks” and who “gets drunk,” what relations they have with others, how they act, what kind of emotions they experience and cause, and where they are situated in the nature of things. The main difference is in the perceived regularity of presumed action, the depth of personal and relational change, and the irreversibility of the problem that causes changes in one’s life. The regularity of the action and personal change may put “to get drunk” within the “to drink” cluster when “getting drunk” acquires a pattern and consistency that is described verbally. So, one can “get drunk” if one “drinks,” but if one “gets drunk,” it does not necessarily mean that one “drinks.”

It is important to point out that both ways of consuming alcohol are considered to be problematic, as they have a negative impact on people's health and sometimes severe consequences for their lives. However, in the folk discourse, "to get drunk" has more reversible consequences: occasional bad behavior can be explained, understood and eventually excused; mild health problems like a hangover in the morning are not something to be too concerned about in the long term. Irreversible tragic consequences largely depend on a set of many other circumstances. For example, if one "gets drunk" and causes a car crash, this can be explained by an unfortunate set of co-occurring events, because not everyone gets in a car crash after "getting drunk." At the same time, "to drink" means to be somewhat doomed, to be on the way toward permanent and irreparable damage to one's health, well-being and personal relationships.

As we can see above, the difference between the two term clusters for problem drinking in the folk discourse lies within the pattern of drinking and, more importantly, the way damage is done to one's life as a result of alcohol consumption. In order to compare the folk understanding of problem drinking and the official projection of problematic alcohol consumption, it is necessary to compare separately the radiants of meaning that constitute the two folk term clusters for problem drinking and the radiants of meaning implied by the term cluster for the government's rendering of problem drinking.

9.3 Official Term Cluster for Problem Drinking

CuDA of the Russian official discourse about problematic alcohol consumption in this research is based on describing and interpreting Russian policy documents and public service announcements sponsored by the state and aired on national TV. This exploration yielded eight

terms that the government used to refer to alcohol consumption in its documents in 2008-2010. The analysis of the documents and PSAs provided access to the government's assumptions about what constitutes the problem with alcohol consumption among the population: what kind of people are in trouble or are heading toward it, what relationships they are in, what they do that makes their behavior problematic, what emotions they cause and experience as a result of their drinking, and where they are located in the nature of things.

The terms used in the official discourse to refer to drinking and to describe problem drinking practices in Russia provided a valuable understanding of the government's stance toward drinking among the population. The eight terms assume that the agent of drinking in Russia moves from different groups of the population "consuming" or "abusively consuming" alcohol to those who "drink" or are involved in "regular binge drinking" when they "get intoxicated," and then toward the overwhelming process of "alcoholism" based on "alcohol dependency," and finally off to the "alcoholization" of the whole Russian nation. In this range of meanings about the agent of action, the process of alcohol abuse takes over the individuals who initially consume alcoholic beverages by their own choice. The public service announcements convey the assumption that the population (the PSAs' viewers) has not quite reached the "alcoholism" dead end of drinking, but is in the process of moving there. The main message about those involved in problematic alcohol consumption is that they have either already reached "alcoholism" as the point of no return, or that they are inevitably moving there as part of the process just because they "consume" alcoholic drinks.

Assumptions about the relations of problem drinkers are that, by ruining their "selves" and "destiny, course of life," they cause problems and damage to the whole network of relationships that the "self" is a part of: family, friends, home, work, and the whole country. The

negative impact is largely directed from the drinking person outward, without much acknowledgment of any influence from the relationship network on the drinking individual.

Where actions are concerned, the official discourse becomes vague and confusing. Even though the official discourse very often mentions the damaging consumption of 18 liters of pure alcohol per person per year in Russia, there is not much discussion or clarification of what exactly people do that puts them on the path of “alcoholism” and eventually causes “alcoholization” of the nation. The PSAs and the discussions in the official documents assume that everyone “consumes” or “drinks” alcohol in a way that is potentially destructive (aside from the role models who address the nation in the PSAs and who do not seem to consume any alcohol at all).

The location of alcohol consumption is “among us”; everyone is involved in it, and it is a part of every person’s life. It is emphasized throughout the government discourse that the place of alcohol consumption is Russia, our “nation,” which makes the problem even more emotionally loaded and dramatic. The “nation” is in danger because of the drinking population. “Alcoholism,” which is the inevitable end of those who drink, is “evil,” a “threat,” and a “disaster.” Russia cannot compete with other countries because a lot of talent and energy is wasted on drinking. Something needs to be done urgently to reverse “alcoholization.” The action required from the population is “to think,” “to stop,” and “to protect yourself.”

If we look at the two term clusters through which the folk discourse sees problem drinking (“to drink” and “to get drunk”), we notice that the official discourse does not have the same distinct ways of describing the population’s problematic alcohol consumption. However, the government’s premises about what happens to one’s personality, relations, actions, emotions and location in the nature of things when one steps on the path of problem drinking

should be instrumental when we compare these premises to the ones conveyed by the two term clusters in the folk discourse.

The next step in this comparative analysis is to put the three sets of cultural meanings next to each other and compare them. The first is the set of meanings behind the term cluster used in talking about problem drinking in the official discourse. The next two sets of meanings are conveyed by the two term clusters (“to drink” and “to get drunk”) in the folk discourse.

9.4 Official and Folk Discourses: What is the Problem with Drinking?

The table below compares three different types of problem drinking: one from the official discourse and two from the folk discourse. They are compared on the basis of the five radiants of cultural meaning behind each term cluster. These meanings are about personhood, relations, actions, emotions, and location in the nature of things.

Table 3: Folk and Official Terms for Problem Drinking (Continues on the next page)

Radiants of meaning	Problem Drinking in Official Discourse	Folk Discourse: “to get drunk”	Folk discourse: “to drink”
Personhood	The self of the person who consumes alcohol is responsible for letting the enemy (alcohol) into his or her body. This causes irreversible biological changes. Alcohol becomes a powerful agent, and the process of consumption takes over a person’s self.	The person who got drunk temporarily loses control over self, becomes more beastly and acts under the influence of alcohol. This happens under certain circumstances or because of lack of the skill to drink.	The self of the person who drinks is inherently weak and lacks willpower to withstand an urge to drink. One’s self and physical body deteriorate and succumb to dependency.
Relations	Consuming alcohol ruins all that constitutes the self: family, home, friends, country, and destiny or course of life.	The person can get drunk to be like everyone else and enhance relationships in the company of all those present.	The person can easily fall under the influence of others and give in to alcoholism, causing

			damage to surrounding people and losing his or her relational bonds.
Actions	Any alcohol intake puts one on a path to alcohol dependency that is irreversible.	Large alcohol intake at one sitting for a specific purpose or because of clear circumstances; the actions incur risky and socially unacceptable behavior.	Regular, patterned and predictable alcohol consumption for no particular reason.
Emotions	Alcohol consumption is a disaster and threat to all that depends on the person's self. Russia's economy and reputation in the world suffers dramatically from its people's drinking.	Getting drunk enhances positive emotions or relieves negative emotions that caused alcohol intake. Getting drunk may cause negative feelings if something tragic happens as a result.	If people drink, they escape reality and cause devastation and hopelessness to the people close to them.
Location in the nature of things	Alcohol consumption happens among us, but takes over our lives and society.	Located in the private set of circumstances that caused consuming large quantities of alcohol.	People who drink become isolated from the community.

When people are described as consuming alcohol in a problematic way in the government discourse, they are urged to take responsibility for letting the “enemy” (alcohol) into their bodies. Any amount of alcohol ruins vital organs on entrance and puts people on the path of degradation and self-destruction. Alcohol consumption ruins all that depends on a person: family, home, friendships, their community, country, the course of life and the future. All these components of one’s relational universe are damaged and lost as a result of alcohol consumption.

When a person “gets drunk” in the folk discourse, he or she consumes so much alcohol at one sitting that he or she “loses control” over the “self.” “Getting drunk” usually has a clearly identified reason or purpose. For example, a person could be celebrating or mourning something. The reason for “getting drunk” may be in the person: it is quite possible that he or

she does not have the “skill” to drink and does not know his or her “limit.” Very often, “getting drunk” happens as part of a pattern of alcohol consumption among those who are drinking together. What they do after they “get drunk” could also be something expected and patterned for the particular group. The loss of control that results from “getting drunk” is something temporary and does not influence one’s relationships, work, or general way of living, unless, of course, a set of circumstances leads a “drunken” person to a tragic event. As far as relationships are concerned, “getting drunk” with other people may even enhance friendships and relational bonds with the other participants of “getting drunk,” even if they end up getting in trouble as a result of excessive alcohol consumption.

If the folk discourse describes someone with a cluster of “to drink” terms, his or her personality is said to have an inclination for alcohol addiction, something that is “in the genes.” People who drink do not have the “willpower” to withstand the urge to consume alcohol, and this is clearly reflected in their appearance and the choices they make. They succumb to drinking and are on a downward path of moral and physical degradation. As far as their relationships are concerned, they tend to be loners or flock together with those who “drink” in the same way. Their families fall apart, their spouses and children suffer (or join them in their senseless drinking bouts), they no longer have friends who do not drink in the same way, and they have no career or any respect in the community.

If we compare the three radiants of meaning about what constitutes personhood and relationships in the three ways of problematic drinking, we see some stark differences and similarities. One similarity is that everybody’s personhood changes in a problematic way under the influence of alcohol. The difference is in the depth of change and the ability to bounce back from what alcohol does to one’s “self.” When one “gets drunk,” one’s loss of control over “self” may lead to dangerous decisions and cause risky behavior. At the same time, one’s responsibility

over such risky behavior is lowered because such decisions are made “under the influence” of alcohol. Any change in “self” goes back to normal after the person becomes sober. If one “gets drunk,” his or her relationships are usually not damaged beyond repair, and they may even be strengthened if people go through “getting drunk” together. In the case of the person who consumes alcohol in a problematic way in the official discourse, he or she consciously and independently makes a decision to consume alcohol. So his or her “self” allows alcohol to make some irreversible changes, both physical and psychological. These changes may not be noticeable, but they put the person on the path to addiction and self-destruction. The damage is being done not only to “self,” but also to all the person’s ties, connections, and relationships. A very similar dangerous change happens to the person who “drinks” in the folk discourse. The “drinking” person’s self is inherently predisposed to become an alcoholic. Most often, it is not the person himself or herself who chooses to start drinking. It is the genetic set-up and social environment that make one “drink.” The personhood and relationships of somebody who “drinks” have already changed beyond repair or are heading that way.

The messages about one’s actions in the three problematic ways of alcohol consumption described here are different. In the case of “getting drunk,” a person is presumed to consume so much alcohol at one sitting that it leads to intoxication, with various behavioral and health consequences. Even though such consequences may be considered not so dangerous in the folk discourse (unless something tragic happens), from a public health perspective, this way of drinking may lead to substantial social and health problems. The actions involved in “getting drunk” differ from what happens when one “drinks” or consumes alcohol in the official discourse. When one “gets drunk,” one does it for a clearly identified reason or because of a set of circumstances. When someone “drinks” in the folk discourse, his or her actions are patterned, regular and predictable, and there is no socially acceptable reason or goal for consuming

alcohol. In the official discourse, problem drinking is any alcohol consumption, whether there is a culturally accepted reason and a set of circumstances or not. It inevitably leads one to what is described in the folk discourse as the path to alcohol dependency and degradation.

Messages about the emotional effects of consuming alcohol differ in all three term clusters. "Getting drunk" causes negative emotions only if something tragic or unpleasant for one's reputation happens as a result of excessive alcohol intake. But very often, emotional bonds are actually enhanced as a result of "getting drunk" together. When one "drinks" in the folk discourse, one causes devastation, hopelessness, and other negative emotions in the people close to the person who "drinks." The official discourse encompasses all this emotional negativity, but it goes further and insists that people's problematic alcohol consumption causes dramatic effects that reverberate through communities and all the way to Russia's success and reputation in the world. In all three term clusters for problematic alcohol consumption, the emotional drama and effects seem to escalate from possible personal reputational damage to devastation caused to relatives and friends, and all the way to dramatic negative effects for Russia's demographic and economic situation.

A similar increase in scale is observed in the terms' messages about the place and circumstances of problematic consumption. "Getting drunk" usually happens in a situation that is clearly defined and dependent on private circumstances that caused one to consume large quantities of alcohol at one sitting. People who "drink" in the folk discourse are isolated from the community. They exist in their own world of alcohol dependency. That world is different and separate from the situations in which people consume alcohol normally. In the official discourse, problematic alcohol consumption happens among people who drink, but it takes over everybody's lives (even those who are not part of it) and affects the whole society. Problematic

alcohol consumption in the official discourse is firmly located in Russia and causes significant devastation to the country.

9.5 What is the Official Discourse Addressing?

This comparative analysis of the folk and official terms in Russian cultural discourse has been carried out to identify similarities and differences in what is presumed to be culturally recognized cultural practices of problem drinking among Russian people and what is targeted as problematic alcohol consumption in Russia's government discourse. The analysis did not identify any terms that are used in both the official and folk discourses to refer to problem drinking. However, it was possible to identify and describe term clusters for problematic drinking practices in the official and folk discourses. The CuDA comparative mode above was based on putting side by side cultural premises anchored by five radiants of cultural meaning that three term clusters presume about the identity, relations, actions, emotions, and location in the nature of things as far as problem drinking is concerned.

The official discourse does not discuss "getting drunk" (or getting heavily intoxicated) in much detail as a way of having problems through alcohol consumption unless doing so is a part of "пьянство/p'ianstvo" (regular binge drinking) or "алкоголизм/alkogolizm" (alcoholism). There are only three instances when the official documents mention the term "алкогольное опьянение/alkogol'noe op'ianenie" (alcohol intoxication), and one instance of "пьяный/p'iany" (drunken), a folk version of having "alcohol intoxication." In each of these four cases, the government refers to crimes committed in a state of intoxication. The PSAs twice mention crimes committed in a state of "alcohol intoxication," and they bring up "drunk" ("пьяный/p'iany") people three times. The first time a PSA speaker talks about a "drunk driver";

the second time an actor says he has played “drunk” people many times in his career (to say how funny it looks, but how it is not so funny when it happens in real life); the third time, a famous animal trainer says that he has never been “drunk.”

With little or no discussion of the problematic alcohol consumption described in the folk discourse through the “getting drunk” term cluster, the official discourse fails to acknowledge and address an important public health issue. The issue is that of binge drinking,²⁷ when people consume so much alcohol at one sitting that it may lead to negative health and behavior outcomes even if there is no pattern or regularity in such consumption. Cultural premises about the practice of “getting drunk” differ substantially from the cultural premises of the practice described through the term cluster “to drink.” In the official discourse, “to get drunk” only fits within the assumed cultural actions when any alcohol intake is a problem and leads one down the path to “alcoholism.”

The Russian folk discourse recognizes “getting drunk” as a problem mainly because of possible behavioral changes and tragic outcomes partially caused by impaired judgment after a person consumes too much alcohol. The reason for “getting drunk” often does not depend on the decisions made by the person who gets intoxicated. “Getting drunk” may happen because

²⁷ The World Health Organization defines “binge drinking” as “a pattern of heavy drinking that occurs in an extended period set aside for the purpose ... often with intervening periods of abstinence” (World Health Organization, 1994). This definition is very close to a term “заной/запой” (extended heavy drinking without a break) in the term cluster associated with the Russian folk practice “to drink.” The US National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) defines “binge drinking” as “a pattern of drinking alcohol that brings blood alcohol concentration (BAC) to 0.08 gram percent of above” (National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, 2004). The NIAAA definition lacks an acknowledgement that binge drinking is often a social occasion, and there are extended periods of abstinence between drinking bouts that may help to fit such drinking into sociocultural rituals accepted as normal in people’s lives. The discrepancy in the definitions of “binge drinking” proves yet again that it is important to define patterns of problematic drinking based on the culture of those who consume alcohol. In this dissertation, “binge drinking” is closer to “getting drunk” when one consumes large quantities of alcohol at one sitting with intervening periods of abstinence.

one “does not have the skill to drink” and “does not know the limit,” has “weak willpower” and follows what is going on in the “company,” or because there were certain “circumstances” and a legitimate “reason, excuse” to “get drunk.” The risk of “getting drunk” is not recognized as something serious requiring prevention and control unless it becomes recognized as patterned and regular and starts getting referred to as the practice described as “to drink.”

Not acknowledging “getting drunk” in a specifically Russian way in the official discourse may lead to the assumption that this type of problematic alcohol consumption is either a part of problem drinking leading to alcoholism, or that it does not present much public health risk. Both outcomes are potentially dangerous. If “getting drunk” is considered to be a part of alcohol addiction, with a pattern and regularity, then it will invoke a normative rule that does not permit attributing the “to drink” term cluster to oneself in the folk discourse. If that happens, then every time the government talks about “drunken behavior” and what happens as a result, a Russian person can always think that “this does not refer to me, I do not drink this way because I am not an alcoholic.” If “getting drunk” is not positioned as something presenting a significant public health risk in the government discourse at all, then public health efforts will miss a significant part of the Russian population that considers it acceptable to binge drink as long as there is no verbalized pattern and regularity in such consumption.

Another type of alcohol consumption that is considered problematic in the Russian folk discourse is “to drink.” Comparative analysis above demonstrated that the term cluster “to drink” in the folk discourse shares some cultural premises with the term cluster for problem drinking in the official discourse. The similarities in the premises about personhood for both drinking practices (in the official and folk discourses) point to the process of degradation and deterioration that inevitably takes over a person’s self and causes irreversible changes. The difference concerns the agency of one’s decisions to start drinking in a problematic way. In the

folk discourse, one's "self" is inherently weak and very often genetically predisposed to succumb to alcoholism. A social situation where others urge such a person to drink may turn dangerous and trigger the downward spiral of "drinking." In the official discourse, a person is fully responsible for starting alcohol consumption in a problematic way because he or she consciously lets the "enemy" in. This difference needs to be addressed in the public health discourse, since people consuming alcohol may presume that they are not "weak" or not "genetically predisposed" to become alcoholics. In the folk discourse, a proclaimed ability to make conscious decisions regarding drinking is a sign of having things under control and knowing when to stop. It is important for the official discourse to acknowledge that and work with the complexity of such personal decisions in the process of getting addicted to alcohol.

Another similarity concerns relationships: both in the folk "to drink" and in problem drinking in the official discourse, alcohol consumption ruins all that is important to a person's self: family, home, friends, work, and his or her course of life in general. However, in the official discourse, such destruction flows mainly from the person who consumes alcohol toward all that is related to him or her. In the folk discourse, the person who "drinks" ruins his or her social network, but at the same time, he or she very often starts regular heavy drinking because of the relationships he or she is involved in. Very often, the "wrong" relationships sustain the drinking pattern and do not allow the person to get out of patterned and regular alcohol consumption. The folk discourse does not give as much agency and independence to one's decision to start drinking in a problematic way. Public health discourse needs to take into account the role that social networks and relationships are said to play when a person takes the path toward alcohol addiction.

In terms of actions, the official discourse assumes that any alcohol intake brings one to alcohol dependency and alcoholism. Since a person's actions are obvious things that people can

observe, describe and judge, it is very important for the public health discourse to be more specific about the actions constituting problematic alcohol consumption. It is also important to connect one's actions to one's health and social consequences. The public health discourse needs to take into account the fact that the folk discourse does not allow verbalizing any pattern or regularity in alcohol consumption because it then becomes "drinking." And "to drink" is a practice that is stigmatized in the folk discourse.

The radiants of meaning about emotions in both official discourse and the folk "to drink" practice are very similar. People who consume alcohol are believed to cause devastation and hopelessness to all those around them. People involved in problematic alcohol consumption are loners who cannot participate in what are considered to be normal human emotions. The difference in meaning about emotions is in the scale of devastation that one's drinking brings to the world around one. The official discourse claims that people who consume alcohol ultimately cause a threat and disaster to the whole country. The folk discourse demonstrates an emotional effect that is more localized and personal.

As far as the location in the nature of things is concerned, the folk discourse isolates the "drinking" person as somebody who is separate from the community and cannot take part in regular life along with other people. "Drinking" people live in their own world that eventually comes to an end in a tragic way. In the official discourse, problem drinking is closely intertwined with what goes on in the lives of non-drinkers. People who consume alcohol constantly take away from the experiences of those who are trying to live a normal life. On a larger scale, problematic alcohol consumption in the official discourse is located in Russia, the place that inevitably suffers from drinkers who drag the country backward and ruin its reputation in the world.

Public health discourse that fuels its message by blaming drinking individuals for the country's reputation and failures to achieve success sends a message of overall devastation and inability to work with problem drinking unless individuals make a conscious decision not to drink. Folk discourse joins the official discourse in isolating and ostracizing those who "drink" and leaving them without any hope for getting back to normal life.

9.6 Conclusion

The CuDA comparative mode puts side by side radiants of cultural meanings conveyed by term clusters for problematic alcohol consumption in the folk and official discourses in Russia. The official discourse analyzed here comprises public health policies explicated in government documents and behavior change messages in public service announcements on national television. The folk discourse reflects Russian people's talk about what they consider to be problem drinking.

The official discourse hardly acknowledges any of the cultural premises about problematic alcohol consumption that are expressed in the folk discourse through the term cluster "to get drunk." This term means consumption of a large amount of alcohol at one sitting to the point of intoxication but without any verbally acknowledged regularity. Neglecting "getting drunk" in public health messages may have a significant impact on the effectiveness and cultural appropriateness of public health campaigns that intend to reduce rates and negative effects of alcohol consumption in Russia.

Cultural meanings behind the folk term cluster "to drink" partially coincide with the official portrayal of problem drinking. Some of the differences in messages about personhood, relationships, action, emotions and location in the nature of things may facilitate further

isolation of those who “drink.” Similarities in the cultural meanings of “to drink” and what the official discourse considers to be problem drinking undermine the government’s message because of the normative rule for the folk term cluster “to drink.” The normative rule (that one should not attribute any terms from the “to drink” cluster” to one’s personal experience) does not allow the presumed “target audience” of the official discourse to relate the government’s public health message to their own drinking practices.

The next chapter in this dissertation will summarize the findings and discuss the implications of this study. It will also provide recommendations for public health interventions. The recommendations were developed based on the cultural discourse analysis of Russian alcohol consumption in the chapters above.

CHAPTER 10

CONCLUSION

10.1 Introduction

This chapter finalizes my cultural discourse analysis of Russian drinking practices. First, I summarize five groups of findings: (1) explorations of a normal and enjoyable drinking practice as a communication ritual; (2) an explication of a ritualistic corrective sequence that ensues when a ritual participant refuses to accept a drink; (3) an overview of two term clusters for problem drinking in the Russian folk discourse: “to drink” and “to get drunk”; (4) interpretations of a term cluster for problem drinking in the Russian government’s discourse, and; (5) a comparative analysis of the problem drinking in the Russian folk and official discourses.

Second, I discuss the findings based on the three key theoretical propositions that guided this study: (1) a communication ritual serves as a valuable heuristic concept that provides access to important cultural meanings; (2) a meta-cultural commentary about problem drinking is explicated through the analysis of term clusters arranged in the discourse according to code and normative rules, and; (3) cultural discourse analysis is a productive theoretical framework with tools that are essential for describing and interpreting means of communication to learn cultural meanings radiating from cultural practices. The discussion of the third proposition results in recommendations for developing culture-based public health interventions for working with problematic alcohol consumption in Russian culture.

Third, I look into the implications of this study of Russian drinking for studies of Russian communication, social interaction and public health communication. Finally, I propose directions for future research based on the current study.

10.2 Summary of Findings

The main finding of this study is that Russian alcohol consumption (both normal and problematic) is deeply embedded in the Russian cultural discourse and is expressed through specific term clusters, communication norms and cultural forms of communication. Interpretive analysis of these means of communication collectively and coherently used by representatives of the Russian culture in the folk and official discourses provides access to deep meanings that guide and structure symbolic actions involving normal and problematic alcohol consumption.

The theoretical framework of cultural discourse analysis was used in this study to describe symbolic resources (such as various forms and means of communication) shared by members of the Russian culture and to interpret deep cultural meanings that make a collective performance of these cultural means and forms possible. Communication ritual and ritualistic corrective sequence were the key forms of communication applied here to understand normal drinking practices in Russian culture. Term clusters and communication norms were the discursive resources explored to learn about the meta-cultural commentary about problem drinking in Russian folk and official discourses.

The data collected for this research came from authentic Russian sources and included qualitative interviews, participant observation, films and TV series, home videos, web discussions, public service announcements and government documents. These data were described, interpreted and compared based on CuDA philosophical, theoretical, and methodological assumptions.

The key findings of this study are summarized below:

1. An event called “*посидеть/posidet*” (to sit) is deeply embedded in Russian cultural discourse in the form of a communication ritual. “Sitting” is built around enjoyable and normal alcohol consumption that has a structured sequence, commonly upheld norms and rules guiding

its performance, and a multilayered “sacred object” collectively celebrated by the participants. The interpretation of the event’s “sacred object” provides access to deep cultural meanings about Russian personhood, relations, actions, emotions, and location in the nature of things.

Communication rituals of toasting and drinking serve as focal points of the “sitting” event. The “sitting” participants collectively produce toasts through unsolicited contributions, side conversations, personal comments, and emotional responses. Symbolic phrasing of the toasting and drinking ritual is based on drinking “to you,” “to us,” and “so that”/“to” important things happen and desires come true. The modal particle “давай(те)/davai(te)”(come on, let’s do it) serves to facilitate and urge an act of joint drinking. Both the symbolic phrasing and the collectively maintained sequence of toasting and drinking makes it a shared interactive experience in a group of people who get together to “sit.” This provides the participants with common resources that convey a deep cultural meaning of celebrating a “sitting” occasion, belonging to the same immediate group, and enhancing the soulful connection among those who gathered together.

The norms of the “sitting” ritual require one’s committed participation in collective drinking and conversation without prioritizing one’s own personal interests (for example, consuming much more or much less alcohol than other people in the group). One is also required to neglect (sometimes defiantly) the demands and rules of the world outside the “sitting” situation.

Correctly performed “sitting,” with drinking and toasting rituals as its focal points, ensures reaching “понимание/ponimanie” (understanding, bonding), the ultimate “sacred object” of the event. “Understanding” happens when everyone becomes an integral part of the group through interpersonal “soulful” interaction, and together the group becomes separated from the outside world.

2. The ritualistic corrective sequence in the case of someone's refusal to accept a drink brings out a clash between the collective face of the immediate group and the face of the individual who refuses to drink. The analysis of the individual and communal motives at the offering/acceptance stage of the ritualistic corrective sequence demonstrated that a "motive battle" usually leads to saving the group's face and celebrating community values at the expense of individual interests. This happens when the participant who at first refused a drink eventually gives up individual preferences and the demands of the community external to the group. The "sacred object" of the ritualistic corrective sequence is the face of the immediate group that got together to "sit." Success of communal motives over individual ones becomes one of the key conditions for moving closer to reaching "understanding," the ultimate goal of the "sitting" event.

3. The Russian folk discourse defines problem drinking through two key terms and their clusters: "to drink" (regular and patterned consumption based on alcohol dependency) and "to get drunk" (a reason-based one-time intoxication that under certain circumstances may lead to behavioral problems and tragic consequences). Communication norms structuring the meaning and strategic use of each cluster in the discourse justify and accept the actions and personality of people who "get drunk," and condemn and shun the actions and personal choices of those who "drink."

4. The official discourse in the form of government documents and public service announcements mainly directs its communication about problem drinking through a term cluster that presumes a drinking individual's imminent movement toward alcohol dependency, with inevitable and irreversible harm done to the person's health, personhood, family, relationships, career, and Russia as a country. The official discourse does not clearly define

problem drinking, nor does it propose a clear message for change and improvement besides an implied urge “not to drink” and “to think” about the consequences of alcohol consumption.

5. A comparative analysis of the folk and official term clusters for problem drinking demonstrated that problematic alcohol consumption is constructed in two different ways in both discourses. The official discourse largely ignores the practice conveyed by the folk term cluster “to get drunk,” and portrays most problematic consumption through a term cluster close in its meaning to the folk practice “to drink.” The official public health message about problem drinking is undermined by putting everyone who consumes alcohol on the path inevitably leading to regular and patterned harmful alcohol consumption. This way of consuming alcohol, defined through the folk term cluster “to drink,” is stigmatized in the Russian folk discourse because of a communication norm that regulates the use of the “to drink” term cluster. The government does not have a consistent and comprehensive way to refer to problem drinking without isolating and ostracizing those who consume alcohol.

10.3 Discussion of Findings

This discussion of the findings is built around three theoretical positions that were central for the study. First, a ritual as a form of communication is a valuable heuristic concept that provides access to important meanings embedded in cultural actions. Second, term clusters are organized according to code and normative rules and direct cultural meanings in the discourse. Third, a theoretical framework of cultural discourse analysis with its five investigative modes organizes research in a way that helps to theorize communication inquiry, describe communication means and resources, interpret cultural meanings, compare communication means and meanings, and take a critical stance in order to analyze communication means and

meanings. CuDA leads to culturally grounded recommendations for overcoming problem drinking in Russian culture.

10.3.1 Heuristic Value of Communication Ritual

One of the goals of this study was to explore a normal and enjoyable way of consuming alcohol as part of the Russian cultural discourse. The interest in exploring “sitting” as a communication ritual was initially inspired by Pesmen’s anthropological study of the Russian soul – a beautiful and rich description of cultural practices that reveal the “dusha” (soul) and “depth.” These two concepts were introduced in Pesmen’s research as “organizing principles” for exploring different aspects of life in Russia. One such aspect was identified as “sitting” – a ritual that involves collective alcohol consumption and leads to “opening” of “dusha” in a conversation (Pesmen, 1995; Pesmen, 2000).

Ethnographic descriptions in Pesmen’s study offered detailed accounts of what happens during “sitting.” However, applying the theoretical concept of communication ritual to exploring “sitting” in this dissertation allowed me to learn about the ritual’s sequence and its symbolic meaning, norms and rules of its cultural performance, and its “sacred object,” or collectively appreciated way of being. Interpretation of the “sacred object” of the communication ritual served as a heuristic resource that provided access to what “the performers of the ritual are saying about their particular social life and the meaning it has for them” (Philipsen, 1993, p. 108). Assuming that applying the theoretical concept of a communication ritual reveals deep cultural premises guiding the participants’ social lives, I explored Russian cultural discourse to learn about the cultural specifics of alcohol consumption in Russia.

This study demonstrated that the ritual of “sitting” has a multilayered “sacred object.” The layers include: (1) the sacred object of the occasion (or the reason to drink); (2) becoming separated from the outside world together with the immediate group of people; (3) reaching “understanding” through “soulful” connection. If a toasting and drinking ritual within the “sitting” event gets disrupted by someone’s refusal to drink, a ritualistic corrective sequence is initiated. The sequence has its own symbolic structure and “sacred object.” The “sacred object” here is the collective face of the group that gets “saved” by all the participants, very often at the expense of the face of the person who refuses to drink.

A complex “sacred object” in the ritualistic events that structure normal drinking, demonstrates the value of achieving relational harmony through interaction among the participants during the ritual. The success of bonding to reach “understanding” very often depends on the participants’ readiness to give up the demands of the world outside the drinking event. Reis (1997) calls such incomppliance with larger societal rules and expectations “a challenge to the pragmatism and material concerns of everyday life” (p. 69), while Pesmen (1995) says that “sitting” must be “in defiance of contexts of power relations” (p. 72). In the “sitting” ritual, a challenge to the demands and control of the world outside the immediate situation can be expressed in the final stage of “mischief,” when the participants “get drunk” and demonstrate risky or inappropriate behavior.

The “sacred object” in the ritualistic corrective sequence when someone refuses to drink is to defy and sometimes undermine the individual faces of the participants in order to affirm and save the collective face of the group. Drinking together with everyone else is valued more than adhering to one’s own rules regarding alcohol consumption. So building a relationship during “sitting” very often happens through challenging the personal interests of each individual in the group as well as the interests of society and of groups outside the “sitting”

event. Consuming large amounts of alcohol at one “sitting” event (or “getting drunk”) may be a part of the expected and collectively enforced sequence.

The analysis of normal drinking practices as a communication ritual demonstrated the value of a small immediate group of people who are working on developing an intimate “soulful” bond specific for this occasion. The group members contribute to the experience by complying with the norms and rules of the immediate “sitting” group and by giving up personal interests and societal demands.

Such a basis for the social action of what is considered to be normal drinking presents a challenge from a public health point of view. On the one hand, a group may require consistent moderate alcohol consumption throughout the event. The group may also be unsupportive of heavy intoxication and the risky behavior of the “mischief” stage of “sitting.” Such group dynamics should serve as a great cultural mechanism to regulate drinking and prevent heavy alcohol consumption and its consequences. On the other hand, “normal” drinking in a group when people “sit” may include consumption of large amounts of alcohol at a fast pace. A group may also expect its members to act in defiance of the collectively accepted requirements for safety and public health. For example, in a particular group, a way to get separated from the outside world and challenge its norms and rules could be to get heavily intoxicated and go outside at night, drive while under the influence of alcohol, get into a fight, or engage in risky sexual behavior. Collective permission and encouragement to do what might not be acceptable for an individual when he or she makes decisions on his or her own while sober may lead to dangerous consequences. This shared responsibility for the dangerous acts could facilitate bonding among this particular group of participants and further encourage and excuse risky behavior.

Another hurdle for a public health effort would be the group's disregard for the individual interests of the participants and the demands of the outside community. Very often, public health messages appeal to giving up drinking for the sake of one's personal health, family, or work. If a "sitting" participant were to act according to these public health appeals, he or she would have a hard time verbalizing his or her refusal to drink because this would be a very personal reason not to consume any alcohol. If a public health campaign calls for social responsibility on the part of individuals (for example, when the PSAs say that "our country is dying out, stop drinking"), the "sitting" participants will most likely disregard such a demand because it is outside the immediate concerns of the "sitting" group.

Another conclusion based on the cultural discourse analysis of "sitting" is that even though this event involves alcohol consumption that at times may turn into heavy drinking, it is never conceptualized solely as a drinking event by the participants. The main activity during "sitting" is usually soulful communication and bonding that leads to "understanding." Focal rituals of toasting and drinking during "sitting" are not done for the sake of inebriation and alcohol intake. They are performed to celebrate togetherness and create an autonomous world within the "sitting" group. If people who "sit" with their friends are told not to consume alcohol, they may legitimately think that what they do is not "drinking" or "consuming alcohol." They are enjoying their time, communicating, and creating a special connection with their friends. The symbolic sequence of "sitting" would not be possible without alcohol, so the "sacred object" or "understanding" would never be achieved.

10.3.2 Term Clusters

In this dissertation, I used Burke's concept of terministic screens, which drew our attention to the terminology crucial in discussing alcohol consumption in both the Russian folk and official discourses. I explored term clusters and the way they are strategically placed in the discourse. The analysis of cultural term clusters provided access to sets of cultural premises, through which people (and the government) rationalize the world around them and their own and other people's behavior.

Strategic placement of the term clusters in the discourse was identified and interpreted through communication norms consisting of normative and code rules. Exploration of how the term clusters are structured and what terms they need, where, and in what capacity, laid the groundwork for a comparative analysis of folk and official term clusters reflecting views on alcohol consumption in Russia.

Discussions of terministic screens in Burke's works do not specifically focus on communication norms that regulate placement of the terms within a discourse. However, applying Hall's discursive force position (1988/89) and identifying code and normative rules as suggested by Carbaugh (1990a), I revealed the dynamics active within the term clusters. Code rules brought to the fore relationships among symbols and sharpened the analysis of cultural meanings conveyed through the terms. Normative rules explained how sociocultural action was guided and coordinated through a certain strategic arrangement of the terms in the discourse.

Introducing the concept of norms helped to understand why some of the government's messages may be unsuccessful among the Russian population. For example, in the official discourse, the term "alcoholism" has a very strong meaning of addictive alcohol consumption based on "alcohol dependency." The normative rule of "alcoholism" puts it at the discourse junctures that refer to the highest levels of harm done by alcohol addiction. The official

discourse also quite extensively uses other terms describing different levels and degrees of alcohol consumption. These other terms are sometimes used with the code and normative rules pertaining to “alcoholism.” Such confusion in the government messages and documents may lead the population to think that the official talk about problem drinking is targeted at those with alcohol dependency and its dire consequences. At the same time, a normative rule in the folk discourse requires that one should not attribute any terms from the “to drink” cluster to one’s personal experience if one does not want to be considered a person suffering from alcohol dependency and permanent damage to oneself. This discrepancy may lead the government’s policies to miss their “target.” People who consume alcohol (with possible risky consequences as they “get drunk”), but do not consider themselves to be alcoholics, would dismiss any of the appeals to reduce alcohol consumption.

Applying the concepts of code and normative rules to the analysis of term clusters helped to get deeper insight into the cultural meanings of terms in their cultural context. The code and normative rules within the term clusters also served a practical purpose as they helped to define strategic placements of cultural terms in the discourse.

The concept of term clusters and code/normative rules that regulate term placement in the discourse should be a productive research tool for public health communication efforts. In this study, it helped identify what goes wrong in the official discourse and what may cause misperception of the official message among the population. Exploring cultural terms used in public health interventions and in the way they are conceptualized can help to avoid the “definitional fuzziness” (Morris, 2003; Huesca, 2003) that was discussed in the literature review for this dissertation. If public health researchers and practitioners try to carefully understand the meaning of “health,” “communication,” “empowerment,” “participation,” “change,” and other key terms and term clusters that structure the discourse used by intervention programs, those

programs would be much more efficient and improve their work on the issues that cause poor health.

Public health specialists need to specifically set out to explore term clusters of both the population that they are working with and the terms clusters used in the “change” discourse (that of international institutions, government, and non-governmental organizations).

Understanding and fully explicating key terms that describe not only a public health problem among the population, but also key action terms for the intervention, may prevent social change and development efforts from being “co-opted” by the dominant discourse of change.

10.3.3 Cultural Discourse Analysis

Cultural discourse analysis has been used in this study as a guiding research framework. CuDA turned out to have the much-needed philosophical, theoretical and methodological tools to explore the communication aspects of such a complex issue as consumption of alcohol in Russian culture.

In one of its practical applications, CuDA provided ways to make policy more culturally appropriate and efficient. Based on his own research and review of the work of other scholars who looked into clashes between organizational (Milburn, 2009), environmental (Morgan, 2003), medical (Mackenzie, 2007; Suopis, 2002) and folk discourses, Carbaugh (2008) suggested using CuDA to create effective policies by focusing on three key aspects: (1) concepts for ways of living pertaining to a particular policy (this research focused on key terms for problem drinking in the official and folk discourses); (2) conduct that is considered appropriate and good (this study focused on what is considered to be a practice of normal and enjoyable alcohol consumption), and; (3) cooperative action, or bridging the differences in the concepts and

conduct and developing a culturally appropriate way to resolve these differences (in our case, that would be comparing problem drinking in the folk and official discourses and providing recommendations for an intervention to overcome alcohol abuse problems based on the understanding of normal and problem drinking in both the official and folk discourses).

The most attractive aspect of cultural discourse analysis is that it treats the official discourse (or discourse of change) as inherently cultural. Before any efforts are made to change risky or unhealthy behavior, the discourse of change is analyzed to identify how it views the culture that it approaches, how it conceptualizes the problem, and what it suggests as a goal for change. The analysis helps to identify the gap between what the policy strives to achieve and what is deemed inappropriate/normal, dangerous/safe, and unhealthy/healthy in folk practice.

In the process of this cultural discourse analysis, I was able to identify the gap between the folk and official discourses and develop the following recommendations that should serve to improve current public health efforts aimed at reducing the level of alcohol consumption in Russia:

1. The official policy should develop and present a clear definition of what constitutes problem drinking. It should present detailed descriptions that would cover different types of problem drinking without dramatizing the situation and stigmatizing any population group.

2. The terms used to refer to alcohol consumption (both problematic and normal) should be consistent throughout all the policy documents and various forms of public health intervention. Such terms do not necessarily have to be the same as the ones used in the folk discourse, but they need to be consistent and have clear definitions based on what the government considers to be different types of problem drinking among the population.

3. "Alcoholism" and "alcohol dependency" should not be used interchangeably with other terms referring to alcohol consumption causing health problems.

4. “Alcoholism” and “alcohol dependency” are not an effective threat in public health messages: people who are not alcoholics do not attribute any of the alcohol dependency-related symptoms to themselves (even potentially), and people who are alcoholics become stigmatized as those who have reached the point of no return and will never be functional members of society.

5. The practice of “getting drunk” (meaning one-time inebriation that does not have a pattern or regularity) should be extensively described and be present in the government discourse (both in official documents and in forms of public health communication) as problem drinking that leads to various health risks. “Getting drunk” should be separated from what is considered to be “drinking” (or alcoholism).

6. It is important to recognize that excessive alcohol consumption at one sitting (or “getting drunk”) very often happens as the final stage of a “sitting” ritual that is considered a normal and enjoyable way to connect to other people and reach “understanding.” The process of alcohol intoxication in this case is not considered “drinking,” it is considered “sitting” mainly for the sake of interpersonal communication.

7. Policy documents and various forms of communication designed for public health intervention should clearly indicate the expected change in people’s behavior in terms of their alcohol consumption.

8. Emotional calls to reduce alcohol consumption because it hurts Russia’s reputation in the world, harms the Russian economy and causes overall degradation of Russian society do not present an effective appeal for people to reduce their alcohol consumption.

9. Appeals to personal interests and values may be ineffective when urging people to refuse a drink in a group that is “sitting” together.

10. The government's discourse needs to recognize the influence of people's social networks (especially small groups) on their alcohol consumption patterns. It is important to develop a strategy to address such influence or use it to reduce alcohol consumption.

11. It is important to develop and provide communication resources for people to be able to refuse a drink or avoid drinking when consuming alcohol in a small group with others while "sitting."

12. Rigorous research should precede and follow any efforts to develop behavior change campaigns.

These recommendations are based on my use of CuDA resources to explore Russian folk and official discourses to understand alcohol consumption. I used the key modes of CuDA (theoretical, descriptive, interpretive and comparative) to identify the main means of cultural communication within the two discourses and interpret the meanings of these cultural means. Each of these recommendations has the potential to turn into an extensive research endeavor and be applied to particular public health needs.

I have not specifically turned to the CuDA critical mode in the sense of trying to figure out who benefits from the practice of drinking (both normal and problem) or talking about drinking. In other words, I did not deal with the issues of power or discrimination in this study. However, I took a specific stance toward alcohol consumption practices. The position assumes that excessive alcohol consumption may cause personal, health, and social problems. This brought the "locus of criticism" (Carbaugh, 1989/1990) to a public health stance that excessive drinking leads to problems that should be avoided by designing a public health intervention based on cultural knowledge of drinking practices. This "locus of criticism" allowed me to discuss the problems in the light of public health concerns and design recommendations that are based on a clearly stated position.

10.4 Implications

This research on Russian drinking as communication has implications for studies of Russian communication, advancement of studies of social interaction and introducing new directions to public health communication.

10.4.1 Studies of Russian Communication

A recent introduction to a special issue of the Russian Journal of Communication noted a “lack of published research on Russian interpersonal communication” (Scollo & Carbaugh, 2013, p. 96). This study contributes to current research on Russian communication by identifying some key cultural means of communication and their deep cultural meanings specific to Russian culture.

This study has confirmed the importance of the cultural symbol of “dusha” (soul) in facilitating Russian interpersonal communication. The symbol of “dusha” becomes especially potent when communication among those who get together to “sit” reaches its focal points in toasting and drinking rituals. The process of talking and consuming alcohol at a “sitting” event is guided by what Wierzbicka (1992) would call emotions, irrationality, non-agentivity, and passion. If the “sitting” ritual is performed in the “dusha” spirit, the participants reach the ultimate goal of “understanding,” which brings all those “sitting” close together.

Reaching “understanding” becomes possible only if the participants give up their personal interests and the demands of the world outside the group that gathered to “sit.” One important implication for studies of Russian culture is this inherent ability to create a small and unique world with the group of people who become very close through interpersonal

connection at a specific communication event. These people might not have established such a bond before the event, but if the event is successful, the communication resources that they use together help them to become a close group of people with shared values. People's "selves" here matter only if they comply with the demands and rules existing in the immediate group "right here and right now." The group participants' communicative actions have to be performed in a "soulful" way and be attuned to reaching the common goal of "understanding."

When the group participants encounter any resistance or threat to the communicative process co-created by all of them, they start acting together against the danger, trying to save the collective "face" of the group. This way they can act in solidarity against any individual or a force coming from outside.

The most important implication for Russian communication studies is this solidarity in upholding the small group's values, norms and expectations through a communication process. The interactional dynamics between the efforts to save the group's face at the expense of the individuals and as a challenge to the outside world deserve more attention and seem to be very specific to Russian culture.

10.4.2 Studies of Social Interaction

This dissertation confirmed that the CuDA framework is efficient when applied to an exploration of social interaction processes. This study of Russian drinking as communication also introduced some new concepts and sharpened theoretical propositions used in ethnographic works and studies of cultural communication. Some of the theoretical concepts that were introduced or modified are those of symbolic phrasing, ritualistic corrective sequence, group face, and term clusters.

To describe and analyze a toasting and drinking ritual, I used a new concept of “symbolic phrasing” that provides access to deep cultural meanings conveyed by the consistent way the ideas are communicated through certain phrasing. Symbolic phrasing is recognized and used by those who belong to the same culture. Such phrasing “anchors” the content of what is being communicated through a familiar and shared vocabulary. For example, in the Russian toasting and drinking ritual, one of the ways to render symbolic content is through phrasing “за вас/za vas” (to you). This phrase may actually be pronounced or just implied, but it is always present as one of the key ways to toast a person or a group of people other than the individual who pronounces the toast. The meaning of this particular symbolic phrasing is to single out a person or group of people and extoll their virtues, emphasize their value to the others, or point out that there is something special about them. Symbolic phrasing is a valuable theoretical concept that allows one to identify key communication resources that are used by the participants of the communication process to create shared meaning. Using symbolic phrasing as a theoretical concept helps to systematically present the content of cultural communication without cataloguing every single word or phrase.

Another theoretical concept that I used in this dissertation is the ritualistic corrective sequence. This concept is based on two forms of communication: social drama (Turner, 1980; Philipsen, 1987) and corrective process (Goffman, 1967). There is a precedent for using both frameworks to analyze decision-making as a social drama by Carbaugh (1996). To analyze what happens when a participant refuses to accept a drink in the Russian “sitting” ritual, I merged the two theoretical concepts and called the combined concept a “ritualistic corrective sequence.” The sequence ensues after a breach in an interpersonal communication process and has three consecutive stages (crisis, redressive stage with offering and acceptance/rejection, and

reintegration or schism). The sacred object of the sequence is maintaining face through efforts to mend the ruptured communication process.

I also looked at Goffman's concept of face from a different angle. During the ritualistic corrective sequence that ensues after a participant refuses to drink, "face" turned out to be not only that of an individual who aligns himself or herself with the group, but also the collective face of the group that must be saved when challenged by an individual's actions. Goffman's "positive social value" in the case of Russian drinking is not what individuals "claim for themselves," but what is being constructed by a group of individuals who are in the process of nurturing their relationship through sharing communicative resources in this particular situation at this particular time. The individual who is challenged (when he or she refuses to drink) aligns himself or herself with the group (or refuses to do so) in a way that is closer to what was described by Goffman.

I reviewed and refined the concept of term clusters through which the problem of drinking is explored. Understanding the discursive functioning of term clusters provides the luxury of getting access to how a cultural group conceives of a way of living and the deep cultural meanings attached to it. In the process of analysis, I identified one important component of the term clusters that has not been explicitly discussed by previous researchers. That component is normative and code rules. Identifying the rules helps to define the cultural context and the meaning of the symbols (code rules) as well as what regulates the appearance of the terms and their use (normative rules) in the discourse.

This study describes and efficiently uses a methodology for identifying cultural terms and their meaning. The methodology is based on six major steps:

1. identify key terms that stand out in the discourse of interest based on the following criteria: frequency of use, appearance at key defining discourse junctures, consistency of use among different participants;
2. identify term clusters that are used with the key terms (or replace them);
3. formulate cultural propositions based on these term clusters;
4. define code and normative rules for the key terms;
5. formulate cultural premises about personhood, relationships, actions, emotions, and location in the nature of things;
6. describe the meta-cultural commentary based on the radiants of cultural meanings.

This sequence turned out to be a productive way to explore cultural terms as means of communication that provide access to the deep cultural meanings radiating from the term clusters. The methodology should be an effective tool for public health communication efforts that strive to be culturally grounded.

10.4.3 Health Communication and Public Health

The literature review for this study demonstrated that the fields of health and development communication are concerned about the presence and role of culture in behavior change interventions. Cultural adaptations, cultural appropriateness, cultural sensitivity, cultural groundedness, and culture-centered and culture-based approaches are becoming more and more necessary when scholars and practitioners talk about designing and implementing effective health interventions. Such discussions are more present in a global context when those who develop health programs work with cultures different from their own. In the best-case scenario, those who design interventions study their “target groups” through surveys,

interviews, focus groups, and participant observation to identify what needs to be changed and what specifically defines such behavior in a particular group. Such methods (both qualitative and quantitative) are necessary not only at the formative stages of the program, but also for evaluating the success of the intervention.

However, the notions and concepts that the program developers usually operate with in the program design, implementation and evaluation are rarely studied and challenged as culture-specific themselves. This is especially true for health programs and interventions designed in the cultures shared by the program developers and the “target audience.” This dissertation tackled the issue of treating the discourse of change itself as a cultural discourse that has means and meanings that may work against the noble goals of public health interventions. The study showed that CuDA can help to understand what are considered to be normal and problem-causing practices in the discourse of change (or intervention) and in the discourse of those who are the addressees of the behavior change programs. CuDA methodology also equips researchers and practitioners with tools to compare the two discourses and develop recommendations for proper culture-based interventions.

In his foreword to the reprint of MacAndrew and Edgerton’s book *Drunken Comportment* (2003), Dwight Heath, a recognized expert in anthropological exploration of alcohol consumption, pointed out that public health efforts rarely acknowledge the cultural specifics of drinking patterns. Epidemiological research that feeds development of public health programs mostly focuses on the amount, frequency, and type of alcoholic beverage consumed by a population. At the same time, to understand alcohol-related problems, it is necessary to explore “how” people drink, and that, as Dwight Heath pointed out, should help figure out what influences people’s choices and actions. So when public health program developers invest time and money in various surveys and studies of local groups’ behaviors, they may be looking into

the “wrong” indicators or just doing insufficient research into what constitutes the problem that they are going to work with. This CuDA research of Russian drinking showed that various means of social interaction can be rich resources for learning about targeted behaviors. Identifying cultural means of communication and their meanings can make public health interventions grounded in local culture.

10.5 Future Studies

This study does not claim to be a comprehensive exploration of Russian drinking as communication. I attempted to learn about the practices of normal alcohol consumption and what is considered to be problem drinking in the folk and official discourses in Russia. There are many more directions and ways to explore Russian culture and Russian drinking practices.

This study did not focus on any demographic group or geographic region of Russia. However, there were some indications in the data that “молодежь/molodezh” (young people) and people in “деревня/derevnia” (village) drink at alarming rates and in very large quantities. Men were often mentioned to be especially fond of getting together in a “гараж/garazh” (garage), where they not only keep their cars overnight in urban areas, but also drink and socialize with their male friends after work and on weekends. So although I looked at the ritual of “sitting” as something common for Russian culture and performed consistently in different groups of the population irrespective of who they are and where they live, there is a lot of potential to do CuDA of normal and problematic drinking that is specific to certain population groups.

Another important component that needs to be studied in more detail is the alcoholic drink itself. Some of the respondents were concerned about increasing rates of consumption of

beer, which is very often believed to be a harmless “soft drink,” especially compared to vodka. It would be useful and productive to explore how different types of alcoholic drinks are consumed in Russia and how they are conceptualized in communication practices.

The ritual of “sitting” has been explored here as a cultural form of communication with drinking as its indispensable part. The “soulful” nature of the event facilitates “understanding,” the key goal of “sitting.” Of the most important communication rituals that often happen as a part of “sitting” is the ritual of “разговор по душам/razgovor po dusham” (soul talk, soul-to-soul conversation). A more focused study of such “soul talk” would help to understand deep cultural values in Russian interpersonal communication.

This study has been done to understand drinking as a part of Russian culture. I also sought to derive important knowledge about Russian culture from analyzing discourse about alcohol consumption. The implications of this study are meaningful for public health efforts that strive to be culturally grounded. However, before any health intervention or policy is developed based on this research, it would be important to understand the concept of “health” itself. It is necessary to explore what health means for Russians and what key cultural practices are associated with it. In the data that I have collected for this study, there are some indications that Russian people value social well-being and relationships based on “understanding” as more important than potential illnesses, traumas, or other outcomes of risky behaviors and unhealthy habits.

Another important direction for future studies based on CuDA is learning about the most effective ways to make cultural adaptations of public health interventions. In other words, it is important to know what to do with all the valuable cultural knowledge obtained through cultural discourse analysis. How should all the information about normal and problematic health practices be introduced into various interventions? How should the discourse of change use the

recommendations provided by cultural discourse analysis? I hope that my future work in the field of communication will tackle these and a lot of other important questions, the answers to which can make this world healthier.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Вступление: Сейчас я задам несколько вопросов для этнографического исследования. Пожалуйста, говорите то, что думаете. Мне особенно ценно ваше личное мнение и примеры из жизни. Все будет записано на диктофон, но никто, кроме меня не услышит наш разговор. Если я использую цитаты из ваших ответов, то ваше имя упоминаться не будет.

Вопросы:

Здоровье

- Как вы понимаете, что такое здоровье? Что такое здоровье для вас лично?
- Опишите здорового человека.
- Что необходимо делать для того, чтобы быть здоровым?
- Что нужно избегать для того, чтобы сохранить здоровье?
- Насколько важно быть здоровым для вас? Для людей в России?

Что такое «посидеть»?

- Есть выражение «посидеть» или «хорошо посидели». Объясните, что это значит. Опишите. Приведите примеры того, когда вы «хорошо посидели».
- Что может помешать тому, что мы «хорошо посидели»? Когда вы скажете «не получилось хорошо посидеть»? Приведите примеры.

Нормальное и проблемное употребление алкоголя

- Что вы думаете об употреблении алкоголя в русской культуре?
- Каковы положительные стороны употребления алкоголя? Польза?
- Каков вред от употребления алкоголя?
- Каковы последствия употребления алкоголя? (примеры)
- Какова граница между нормальным употреблением алкоголя и проблемным?
- Могут ли какие-то человеческие качества привести к проблемам в употреблении алкоголя?
- Почему одни люди спиваются, а другие нет?
- Какого человека можно назвать алкоголиком? Как вы определите?
- Зачем люди вообще выпивают?
- Помните ли вы фильм «Ирония судьбы или «С легким паром!»? Как вы думаете, тот эпизод, где Женя напился с друзьями соответствует действительности? Почему ему было сложно отказаться?

Отказ от употребления алкоголя

- Сложно ли отказаться от употребления алкоголя в компании? Почему?
- Не могли бы вы вспомнить случай, когда вы сидели с друзьями, а кто-то отказался выпивать? По какой причине? Какова была реакция окружающих?
- Вы когда-нибудь отказывались? Опишите случай.
- Какие аргументы при отказе от алкоголя в компании срабатывают лучше всего? Какие не срабатывают?

Разговор по душам

- Есть такое выражение «разговор по душам», скажите, когда он может произойти? Где он происходит, с кем? О чем? Почему говорят именно «по душам»?
- Что может помешать разговору по душам?

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT

МАССАЧУСЕТСКИЙ УНИВЕРСИТЕТ

Здоровье в русской культуре

Я приглашаю Вас принять участие в исследовании, которое я провожу под руководством профессора Донала Карбо. Цель данного исследования - изучить, каким образом представители русской культуры понимают здоровье и все, что с ним связано. Я использую данный материал в этнографическом исследовании русской культуры и здоровья. Я также надеюсь, что мое исследование, основанное на особенностях русской культуры, послужит вкладом в разработку программ по здравоохранению.

Наша беседа будет проходить следующим образом. Я задам Вам вопросы о поведении людей, основанном на различном отношении к своему здоровью. Разговор также будет включать вопросы о поддержании и сохранении здоровья. Ваше участие займет от 20 до 30 минут.

Если у Вас есть вопросы или предложения по данному исследованию, вы можете связаться с Доналом Карбо по электронной почте carbaugh@comm.umass.edu или Еленой Хацкевич khatskevich@comm.umass.edu.

Я сделаю все, что от меня зависит для сохранения конфиденциальности Ваших ответов. Я не буду использовать Вашего имени и фамилии ни в одном из отчетов или публикаций, относящихся к данному исследованию.

Насколько я могу предположить, участие в данном исследовании не принесет Вам никакого вреда. Я также не могу обещать никакой пользы от данного исследования лично для Вас. Тем не менее, данное исследование может послужить вкладом в общественное здравоохранение в России и в дальнейшем помочь разработать программы с учетом особенностей нашей культуры.

Пожалуйста, примите самостоятельное решение, желаете ли Вы принять участие в данном исследовании. Если Вы решите принять участие в данном исследовании, за Вами сохраняется право отказаться от участия в нем в любое время во время нашей беседы.

Ревизионный совет учреждения в Массачусетском университете одобрил проведение данного исследования. Если у Вас есть какие-либо вопросы о Ваших правах как участника данного исследования, Вы можете связаться с Отделом защиты участников исследования по электронной почте humansubjects@ora.umass.edu; телефону (413-545-3428); или почте (Office of Research Affairs, 108 Research Administration Building, University of Massachusetts, 70 Butterfield Terrace, Amherst, MA 01003-9242).

ПОЖАЛУЙСТА, ПРОЧТИТЕ СЛЕДУЮЩЕЕ УТВЕРЖДЕНИЕ И ПОСТАВЬТЕ ВАШУ ПОДПИСЬ, ЕСЛИ ВЫ СОГЛАСНЫ

Мне была дана возможность задать вопросы по поводу данного исследования и я получил(а) ответы на все мои вопросы. Я прочитал(а) информацию в данном информированном согласии, и я согласен(на) принять участие в данном исследовании. Данная форма подписывается в двух копиях. Я возьму одну копию себе, а другую отдам Елене Хацкевич.

Подпись

Дата

APPENDIX C

KEY TO TRANSCRIPTION²⁸

[a left bracket indicates the point on overlap onset
]	a right bracket indicates the point at which overlapping utterances end
(0.0)	numbers in parenthesis indicate elapsed time in a pause by tenths of seconds
:::	three colons indicate prolongation at the immediately prior sound
(laughter)	words in parenthesis are the transcriber's clarification of meaning or a description of nonverbal behavior

²⁸ This key to transcription is based on the glossary of transcript symbols by Jefferson (2004).

APPENDIX D

RUSSIAN ROMANIZATION TABLE

(Based on the Library of US Congress Russian Romanization Table)

Vernacular	Romanization	Vernacular	Romanization
Upper case letters		Lower case letters	
А	A	а	a
Б	B	б	b
В	V	в	v
Г	G	г	g
Д	D	д	d
Е	E	е	e
Ё	Ё	ё	ë
Ж	Zh	ж	zh
З	Z	з	z
И	I	и	i
Й	I	й	i
К	K	к	k
Л	L	л	l
М	M	м	m
Н	N	н	n
О	O	о	o
П	P	п	p
Р	R	р	r
С	S	с	s
Т	T	т	t
У	U	у	u

Ф	F	ф	f
Х	Kh	х	kh
Ц	TS	ц	ts
Ч	Ch	ч	ch
Ш	Sh	ш	sh
Щ	Shch	щ	shch
Ъ	⌘ (hard sign)	ъ	⌘ (hard sign)
Ы	Y	ы	y
Ь	⌘ (soft sign)	ь	⌘ (soft sign)
Э	E	э	e
Ю	IU	ю	iu
Я	IA	я	ia

APPENDIX E

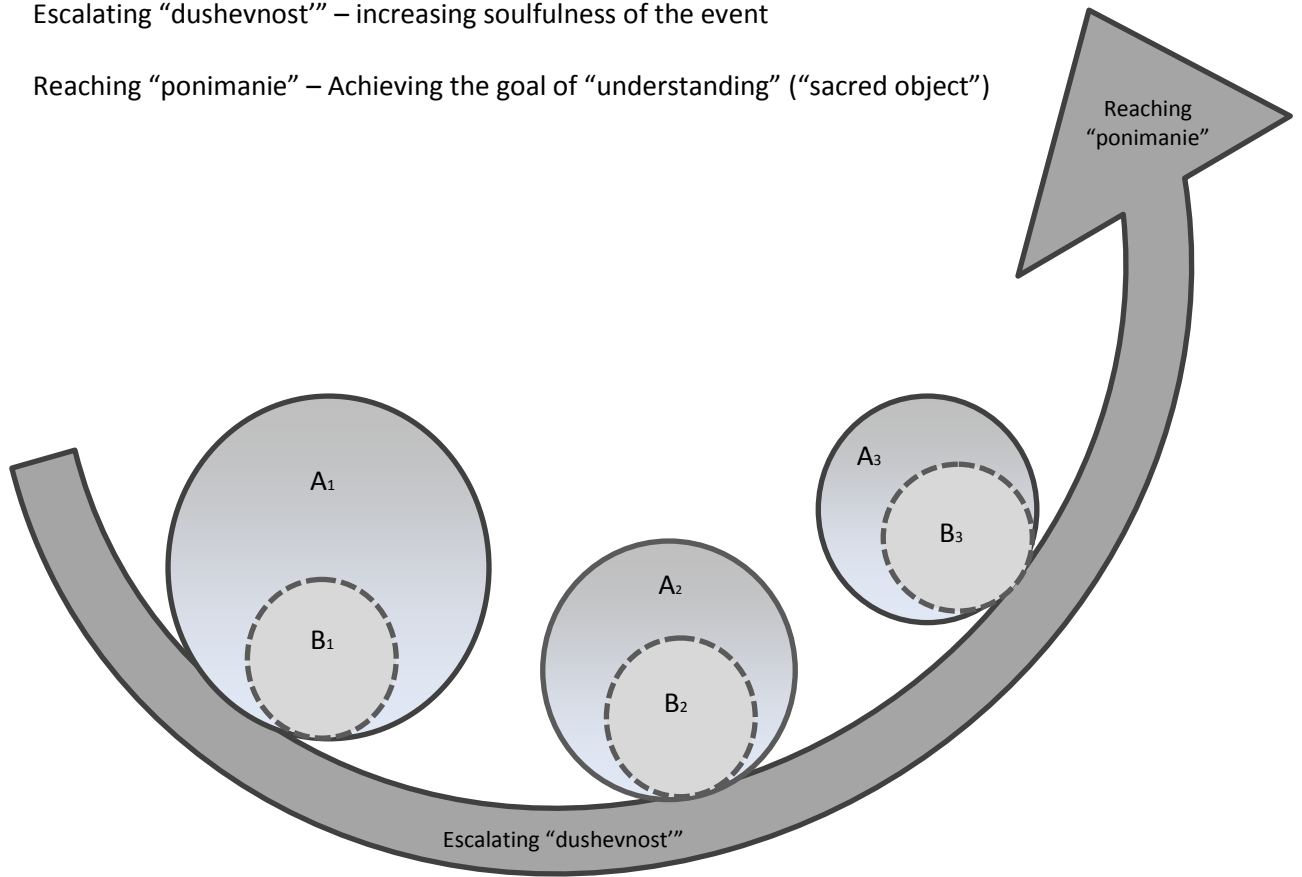
“SITTING” EVENT DIAGRAM

A₁, A₂, A₃ – Events (rituals) of toasting and drinking

B₁, B₂, B₃ – Ritualistic corrective sequence

Escalating “dushevnost” – increasing soulfulness of the event

Reaching “ponimanie” – Achieving the goal of “understanding” (“sacred object”)



APPENDIX F

TRANSCRIPT: MOSCOW DOES NOT BELIEVE IN TEARS

Datum 1

There is a conflict situation at table – younger guests said that they “would not have kept silent” hinting at the time of Stalin repressions. An elder guest said that the time was quite different. There is an awkward pause, during which the guests are exchanging glances. Sergey (S) is a hockey player, Rudolph (R) is a journalist, Liudmila (L) is one of the hosts, G is a guest:

1. L: Ах, Серёжа, я смотрю рюмка у вас совсем не тронута! Так нечестно!
Oh, Serëzha, I see that your glass has not even been touched! It is not fair!
2. S: (смущенно) Нельзя мне.
(shyly) I am not allowed.
3. G1: Больны?
Sick?
4. S: Ну почему больны? Тренер не одобряет. Спортивный режим.
Why sick? The coach disapproves. Athletic regime.
5. R: Позвольте, вы Гурин, да?
Excuse me, you are Gurin, right?
6. S: Гурин.
Gurin.
7. R: А я сижу и мучаюсь, откуда мне ваше лицо знакомо!
And I am sitting here and wondering why I know your face!
8. S: Послушайте, я несколько раз передачи вел с ваших матчей.
Listen, I was televising from your matches several times.
9. R: Ну, товарищи, мы будем гордиться, что сидим за одним столом с самим Гуриным!
Well, comrades, we should be proud that we are sitting at the same table with the famous Gurin!
10. S: Да ладно вам.
Please, it's not a big deal.
11. R: Да что вы скромничаете? (Берет бокал).
Why are you so modest. (Takes a glass with a drink).
12. S: Я же читал, что о вас шведы писали. Вы что теперь, в Москве?
I read what the Swedes wrote about you. Are you in Moscow now?
13. S: В Москве.
In Moscow.
14. R: Ну так это здорово! Товарищи, ну я предлагаю выпить за великого хоккеиста Гурина.
Well, this is great! Comrades, I suggest drinking to the great hockey player Gurin.
(Everyone is reaching out with their glasses. Serëzha clinks his glass and puts it back.)
15. G2: Ну-ну, одну-то рюмочку за себя можно.
Well, you can have one little glass to yourself.
16. S: Нет, спасибо, вам, так сказать за хорошие слова. Не люблю я.
No, thank you for the good words. I don't like it.
17. R: Да и нельзя нам. (Поставил рюмку на стол). Сухой закон.
And we are not allowed. (Puts the glass on the table). Dry law.

Datum 2

Guests got together at table to celebrate the birthday of Katerina's daughter. Suddenly Nikolai (N) noticed that Sergey (S) has an empty glass. He exclaims:

18. N: Ой, Серёга, подожди!
Hey, Serëga, wait!
19. S: Не, не, не, мне нельзя. У меня режим.
No, no, no, I am not allowed. I have a regime.
20. N: Сегодня ты обязан выпить.
Today you are obliged to have a drink.
21. S: У меня режим. Да нельзя мне, ребята. Де не люблю я.
I have a regime. And I am not allowed, guys. And I don't like it.
22. G: За ребенка выпить – святое дело. Одну рюмочку.
Drinking to a child is a sacred thing. One little glass.
23. S: Эх, черти, надоело мне с вами бороться!
Ah, devils, I am so tired of fighting with you
24. All: Тост, тост!
Toast, toast!

APPENDIX G

IRONY OF FATE OR “ENJOY YOUR BATH!”

Friends Zhenia (Z), Pavel (P), Misha (M), and Sasha (S) are in the sauna on New Year’s Eve (December 31). They are sitting in the sauna lounge and drinking beer.

1. Z: Ой, ребята, как, как, как тут ни прекрасно, но мне пора...
Well, guys no matter how great it is here, but it’s time for me to go...
2. M: Все-таки ты нехороший человек.
Well, turns out you are such a bad person.
3. Z: Почему?
Why?
4. M: Мы все ждем...
We are all waiting...
5. Z: (недоумевая). А чего вы ждете то?
(at a loss). And what are you waiting for?
6. M: Ты что хочешь уйти сухим? Не хочешь отметить свою женитьбу?
Do you want to leave dry? You don’t want to celebrate your marriage?
7. Z: Здесь, в бане что ли?
Here in the sauna?
8. S: Нет, ребята, вообще Женя прав. В бане же не отпускают [водку].
No, guys, in general, Zhenia is right. They don’t sell [vodka] in sauna.
9. Z: Ну конечно! Нет, в бане же не отпускают.
Well, of course! But they don’t sell in sauna.
10. M: Ааа. Если бы не я, вы бы все тут без меня пропали (достает бутылку водки из сумки)
Aaah. But for me you would all get lost. (pulls a bottle of vodka out of his bag)
11. Z: Нет, ну я не не не буду. (качает головой) Не-не могу.
No, well, I will not, not, not have it (shakes his head) I can’t.
12. P: (Открывая бутылку) Ребята, ну по одной. Потому что мне-то лично на аэродром.
(Opening the bottle) Guys, just one glass each. Because I personally have to go to the airport.
13. M: Люди, не волнуйтесь! Всем надо быть в форме, всем надо новый год встречать.
People, don’t worry! We all need to be in shape, we all need to see the New Year in.
(Pavel pours vodka in beer glasses)
14. Z: Ребята, давайте завтра, а? Приходите ко мне завтра.
Guys, let’s do it tomorrow, huh? Come visit me tomorrow.
15. И вообще, мы так редко встречаемся. Я вас с женой познакомлю, а?
And in general, we see each other so rarely. I will introduce you to my wife, huh?
(Everyone is busy pouring vodka in glasses)
16. P: Завтра я буду в Ленинграде. (поднимает стакан) Ну, пей! (отдает стакан Мише)
Tomorrow I will be in Leningrad. (raises his glass) Well, drink it up! (gives the glass to Misha)
17. S: А все-таки интересно, Женечка, что ты в конце концов выбрал?
And it’s interesting, Zhenechka, what did you finally select?
18. Z: Не что! Что! А кого! (держит стакан с отвращением) Это ужасно, водку после пива.
Not “what”! What! But “who”! (holds a glass with disgust) It’s horrible – vodka after beer.
19. У меня ночное дежурство было, сотня пациентов.
I had a night shift, a hundred patients.
20. M: (протягивает шоколадку) Вот шоколадка.
(hands out a chocolate bar) Here’s a chocolate bar.
21. Какая ни на есть, но все-таки закуска.
No matter what it is, it is still something to eat (zakuska).

22. Z: (смеется) Ну ладно, давайте, вот по глоточку и все.
(laughing) Well, ok, let's do one sip and that's it.
23. S: Ну ладно, Павел, скажи тост. Ты у нас самый красноречивый.
Well, ok, Pavel, say a toast. You are the most eloquent among us.
24. P: А ты у нас самый недалекий.
And you are the slowest.
25. S: Спасибо большое.
Thank you very much.
26. P: Я говорю.
I am talking.
27. M: Ну ладно, давай.
Well, ok, do it.
28. P: Ребята, выпьем за Женечку Лукашина.
Guys, let's drink to Zhenechka Lukashin.
29. Z: (смущенно) Павлик, ну перестань!
(shyly) Pavlik, stop it!
30. P: Нет, ребята, без дураков. Самого застенчивого, действительно, из нас человека,
No, guys, no fooling around. The shyest, person among us, really,
31. который наконец преодолел в себе это качество и женился.
who finally overcame that quality in himself and got married.
32. Z: Ну, хватит!
Well, enough!
33. P: Последним. Жень, последним из всех нас.
The last one. Zhen', the last one among us.
34. Жень, сейчас серьезно, как друзья, будь счастлив! Будь счастлив, Женя!
Zhen', now seriously, as your friends, be happy! Be happy, Zhenia!
(Everyone is reaching out with their mugs to clink)
35. S: Будь счастлив, Женя!
Be happy, Zhenia!
36. Z: Ну, спасибо! За это надо выпить (кивает головой).
Well, thank you! It is necessary to drink to this (nods his head).
37. P: До дна давай!
Up to the bottom, come on!
38. M: Мы же серьезно!
We are being serious!
39. S: Это да, да. (все выпивают)
Yes, yes. (everyone drinks)
40. S: Слушай, а как ее зовут?
Listen, and what is her name?
41. Z: (приходит в себя после выпитого, трясет головой) У нее...
(coming back to his senses after a drink, shakes his head) She has...
42. M: Заешь! Заешь! (протягивает шоколадку)
Chase it! Chase it! (hands out a chocolate bar)
43. Z: У нее прекрасное имя - Галя!
She has a beautiful name - Galia!
44. S: Прекрасное!
Beautiful!
45. P: И очень главное, что примечательно – редкое!
And the most remarkable thing is that it is rare!²⁹
46. S: (все смеются) Редкое!

²⁹ Galia (Galina) was one of the most popular female names at that time.

- (everyone is laughing) Rare!
47. M: Ребята! Ребята! Положение безвыходное! (все смотрят на Мишу удивленно)
Guys! Guys! The situation is hopeless! (everyone is looking at Misha in surprise)
48. За Галю надо выпить!
It is necessary to drink to Galia!
49. Z: А? Не-не! (Все тянут кружки, Павел разливает водку)
Huh? No, no! (Everyone is reaching out with mugs, Pavel is pouring vodka in them)
50. All: За Галю до дна! Только до дна! Галка будь счастлива! Ура!
To Galia, bottoms up! Only bottoms up! Galka, be happy! Hurray!
51. Z: (жалобно, когда все чокаются) Какие вы все-таки мерзавцы!
(complaining while they are clinking glasses) You are such jerks!
52. У меня до приема в поликлинике было ночное дежурство.
I had a night shift before the office hours at the outpatient clinic.
53. P: Теплая, вообще! (о водке)
So warm! (about vodka)
54. M: Расскажи, как ты с ней познакомился?
Tell us, how did you two meet?
55. Z: Это целая история. (подбадривающие возгласы) Она пришла ко мне в поликлинику...
It's a whole story. (the guys cheer) She came to see me at the outpatient clinic...
56. S: Она что, больная? (всеобщий смех)
And what, she is sick? (everyone laughs)
57. Z: (обиженно) Ну зачем? У нее был вывих. Вывих!
(offended) Well, why? She had a dislocation. Dislocation!
58. S: А ну теперь все ясно, именно поэтому она за тебя и выходит. Нормально.
Oh, well, now it is all clear, that's why she is marrying you. It's all clear.
59. M: Ребята! Ребята, выпьем за то, чтобы они оба были всегда здоровы!
Guys! Guys, let's drink to them both always being healthy!
(pulls out the second bottle).
60. P: Ты с ума сошел. Ты что их рождаешь что ли?
You are crazy. Are you giving birth to them?
61. M: Жена велела взять для гостей.
My wife told me to pick up some for the guests.
62. P: Нет, нет я... не... Если в таком темпе будем продвигаться, я на аэродром не попадаю.
No, no, I... If we move along like this, I am not getting to the airport.
63. M: Паша, Паша, положись на меня, я никогда не пьянею.
Pasha, Pasha, rely on me, I never get drunk.
64. P: Я не попадаю на аэродром.
I am not getting to the airport.
65. M: Дай-ка билет! Дай-ка свой билет!
Give me your ticker! Give me your ticket!
66. Z: Я категорически не буду больше пить. Она подумает про меня, что я алкоголик. (смех)
I absolutely refuse to drink. She will think that I am an alcoholic. (laughter)
67. S: Ну это вообще неслыханно, ребята. Доктор отказывается пить за здоровье!
Well, this is unheard of, guys. Doctor refuses to drink to health!
68. Z: Ну, черт меня дернул, пойти с вами в баню!
Well, it was devil's work to go to bania with you!
69. M: Давай! (смех)
Come on! (laughter)
70. P: До дна! (все выпивают)
Bottoms up! (everyone drinks)
71. M: Ну, а теперь расскажи, как ты с ней познакомился.
Well, and now tell us how you two met.

72. Z: (он уже опьянел). Ты меня? С кем?
(he acts drunk). Me? Met who?
73. S: С Галей. Или у тебя есть еще кто-нибудь?
Galia. Or you have someone else?
74. Z: У меня никого нет. Я холостой!
I don't have anyone. I am a bachelor!
75. All: Оооооо! (разливают алкоголь)
Оооооо! (pour alcohol in glasses)
76. P: Выпили за холостяка!
Let's drink to a bachelor!
77. Z: За что? А за холостую жизнь. Ура! (Все что-то говорят)
To what? To the life of a bachelor. Hurray! (Everyone is saying something)
78. S: Ему хорошо! А я как представляю себе, какой будет скандал,
He is happy! And I can only imagine the scandal,
79. если я может быть приду домой встречать новый год...
if I may come home to see the New Year in...
80. Z: (встает на весы) Ребята, люди! У меня родился очень важный тост!
(gets on the scale) Guys, people! I came up with a very important toast!
81. M: Не-не, тебе больше нельзя, ты сегодня женишься.
No, no. You can't have anymore, you are getting married today.
82. Z: Не, я про это не забыл!
No, I didn't forget that!
83. M: Если ты забудешь, я тебе напомню. Потому что я не пьянею никогда.
If you forget, I will remind you. Because I never get drunk.
84. Z: Ребята, давайте выпьем за нашу дружбу!
Guys, let's drink to our friendship!
85. S: Умница! Умница! Красиво говоришь! Ты прирожденный оратор.
Good for you! Good for you! You are saying it beautifully! You were born to be a public speaker.
(Pavel comes up to Zhenia, they both get on the scale and drink).

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