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Human Rights in Russia and the Former Soviet Republics: Gender and Human Rights

Abstract

Russia's historical transition from a communist society to a system of democracy and free market practices has resulted in major social changes affecting the rights of men and women. Analysis of gender and human rights in Russia requires an evaluation of the changing social relations within post-Soviet society, which are shaped by the complex factors of ethnicity, economic class, gender norms, and the role of the state in shaping present gender inequities that hinder the realization of universal human rights. Looking particularly at how gender issues relate to changing identities, employment opportunities, health care and conditions, and public and private violence, one can more closely examine how inequitable gender relations in these areas have limited the human rights of a number of people, especially women and sexual minorities.

Keywords

Human rights, Russia, Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, Gender rights

Gender and Human Rights

By Lisa Weilminster

Russia's historical transition from a communist society to a system of democracy and free market practices has resulted in major social changes affecting the rights of men and women. Analysis of gender and human rights in Russia requires an evaluation of the changing social relations within post-Soviet society, which are shaped by the complex factors of ethnicity, economic class, gender norms, and the role of the state in shaping present gender inequities that hinder the realization of universal human rights. Looking particularly at how gender issues relate to changing identities, employment opportunities, health care and conditions, and public and private violence, one can more closely examine how inequitable gender relations in these areas have limited the human rights of a number of people, especially women and sexual minorities.

Historically, the Soviet Union created a social order based on equal political and economic rights for women and men in the public sphere. However, such policies were primarily driven by the economic needs of the state and, as such, did little to transform social norms that cast women as the primary caretakers of the household. Under this system, the Soviet state cast itself as the universal "fatherly" provider and protector of society, and minimized the role of actual fathers by directing men's attention toward and valuing their role in the public economy. Further inequalities resulted from the social construction of the ideal Soviet society based on a heterosexual family model, which marginalized sexual minorities.

The post-Soviet transition has witnessed the declining role of the state as the general provider for its people. The rise of the liberal economic market has generated significant social instability and increased unemployment. While the new Russian state has expressed a legal commitment to equality for all and has removed homosexuality from its criminal codebooks, its weak democratic institutions do not effectively enforce or protect these legal measures. Thus, inequality remains a widespread problem in Russia as reflected by the poor economic and health conditions of men and women, the continued ill treatment of homosexuals, as well as the victimization of women through public and private violence.

Inequalities are, in part, shaped and reinforced by the dominant gender norms of society, which associate men and women with particular gender identities. The new market system and reassertion of traditional values have venerated masculinity as well as the heterosexual model of the family. These norms play a powerful role in the unequal relations between men and women, and in the continued discrimination against homosexuals. Women and homosexuals are subordinated under this social model and, as such, face inequitable economic and health treatment, as well as an increased vulnerability to being subjected to violence. Changing gender identities within Russia are, therefore, closely related to the other issues covered in this overview.

Russia has suffered incredible economic strain following its transition from communism, which has had a harsh effect on men and women in different ways. Many Russian men have found themselves unemployed, which has severely damaged their masculine identity as breadwinners and as the major workforce for the Russian state. The increasingly hands-off state policies toward the family have not been countered with an increase in male support in the home. Women therefore continue to bear a double burden. As most households require a second income, many women

continue to work in the public sphere but also remain the main caretakers in the home. Economic inequalities extend beyond this, however, to include issues of unequal wages for women and a high prevalence of sexual harassment and discrimination in the labor market that impacts women's ability to acquire steady employment. Yet, gender inequities are not simply limited to economics.

Health inequalities abound in Russia as well. High rates of unemployment have driven many men to alcoholism and suicide in significantly higher rates than females; yet, the overwhelming majority of suicide prevention centers are for women. Gender inequalities also factor into the areas of HIV/AIDS health. Male homosexuals have one of the highest rates of HIV, but the stigma against homosexuality has restricted their access to information on the disease and to healthcare. Growing numbers of women have also contracted HIV. Pregnant women and their children face incredible discrimination in terms of quality care, and child abandonment is a growing problem. Finally, the gap in mortality rates for men and women negatively affect women who may be left prematurely widowed and lacking in adequate income for themselves and their remaining family.

Economic conditions and issues of women's rights for health and safety factor very closely into the study of private and public violence in the post-Soviet Russia. Domestic violence and violence against sex workers is highly prevalent in Russian society and mostly affects women. The Russian state has done little to address the problem, as law enforcement has viewed it as a private matter outside of its jurisdiction. The increasing privatization of the state has reinforced the now limited role of the state to act in the public and private spheres. Public discrimination and violence, however, are also problematic. Despite legal changes to end the criminalization of homosexuality, discrimination and attacks against sexual minorities still occur in Russia today. State conflicts against ethnic minorities and secessionist movements have also facilitated numerous acts of rape and sexual violence by the Russian military and law enforcement against men, women, and young girls and boys. Both in the cases of violence against homosexuals and sexual crimes committed as part of state conflicts, the Russian government has taken little legal action to investigate or adequately try and punish the perpetrators.

Human rights violations that stem from the complex gender inequalities in Russian society are extensive and require further research and investigation. The following bibliography of sources is divided into the four main sections discussed above: changing gender identities, employment issues, health care and conditions, and public and private violence. One should note that many of these topics overlap and are difficult to analyze independent of these other issue areas. However, the following sources provide important foundational information to understand and further explore the specific factors and general patterns related to gender inequality and human rights in post-Soviet Russia.

Changing Gender Identities

Attwood, Lynne. 1996. "Young People, Sex and Sexual Identity." In Gender, Generation and Identity in Contemporary Russia, ed. Hilary Pilkington, New York: Routledge. 95-119.

Annotation: This source offers an analytical overview of the attitudes on gender roles and sexuality during the Soviet Union and post-Soviet Russia. Looking at issues of homosexuality, the market economy, the sex industry, and the sexual practices of youth, Attwood highlights

how popular literature and the press exemplify a continued adherence to the dichotomous view of weak and submissive females versus strong males. She notes that women's roles and their actions are directly related to the moral well-being of the state. This has particular implications for lesbians and sex workers, leading to very negative perceptions of these women as defying their duties and obligations to Russian society.

Kukhterin, Sergei. 2000. "Fathers and Patriarchs in Communist and Post-Communist Russia." In Gender, Society and the State in Soviet and Post-Soviet Russia, ed. Sarah Ashwin. New York: Routledge. 71-89.

Annotation: Kukhterin explores masculinity norms and the role of men in 20th century Russia. A primary component of his argument is that the Soviet repression of the church and traditional family was not meant to empower women, but to expand the public reach of the state beyond the barriers of the private sphere. A significant implication of this was a negation of the individual male's role as a father. Instead, the state assumed the position of father of the collective, while the male members of society were valued for their role in the public, economic sphere. Post-Soviet transition has eliminated the state father-figure, and the dominant view is that men are once again meant to assert their position as head of the household. Yet, as Kukhterin's interviews highlight, men and women tend to have very different conceptions of the male role in the household. Women would like to see men play a greater part in the household but are resistant to the resurrection of a patriarchal system.

Meshcherkina, Elena. 2000. "New Russian Men: Masculinity Regained?" In Gender, Society and the State in Soviet and Post-Soviet Russia, ed. Sarah Ashwin. New York: Routledge. 105-117.

Annotation: This study looks at the changing gender hierarchies among the entrepreneurial class in Russia. Whereas, men's status and position under the Soviet system was defined in relation to the state, the post-Soviet system requires men to judge themselves against other males in society. Alongside these changes, however, are adjustments in the private sphere as well. Meshcherkina notes that among the men she interviewed for this study, all had relied, at least temporarily, on their female partners for economic support during the early stages of Russian economic transition. Despite this fact, the men consistently downplayed such dependency, while focusing instead on women's role in the home and men's position in the workforce and in control of the household. This research provides an interesting look at the construction of gender norms among a particular segment of the population, and the divergence between these norms and the economic reality.

Pavlychko, Solomea. 1996. "Feminism in Post-Communist Ukraine Society." In Women in Russian and Ukraine, ed. Rosalind Marsh, 305-314. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Annotation: This article explores the history of feminism in Ukraine, and how, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, it has faced a backlash as masculine revivalism and patriarchal mythologies have begun to dominate the national identity. Feminism and feminist organizations have been

present in Ukraine since the late 1800s, but the movement has faced a crisis, recently, as changes in society have shifted to focus on men's superior role in the workforce and family. This is particularly evident given the government's policies on the family, which identify women's problems as limited to her position as mother and caretaker of the home. This article was published a decade ago, but it offers interesting information to broaden the study of gender issues and rights outside of Russia.

Riordan, James. 1996. "Sexual Minorities: The Status of Gay and Lesbians in Russian-Soviet-Russian Society." In *Women in Russia and Ukraine*, ed. Rosalind Marsh. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 156-172.

Annotation: Riordan offers a summary of changes in policy with regard to homosexuality in modern Russian history. He identifies the fact that, historically, Russia has tended to be more tolerant of homosexual behavior than its European neighbors. However, by the 1917 Revolution, the changing social and class dynamics led to the view that homosexuals posed a national threat. This led to the criminalization of homosexuality. The changing attitudes were also reflected in the increased medicalization of homosexuality, in which it was defined as a pathological disease. In post-Soviet Russia, homosexuality has been legally removed as an official crime; however, society continues to view homosexual behavior fearfully. Following this history, Riordan offers a brief synopsis of the development of gay and lesbians groups and the future challenges they face. This source provides a sound summary of homosexual issues in Russian history up to the middle of the last decade.

Roubleva, Camilla. 2007. "The Other Siberia Part 1: Gay Russia under Church and State—of Priests, Commissars, and Putin." *Gully On-line Magazine*. 08 February:
http://www.thegully.com/essays/russia/030411_gay_overview_law.html.

Annotation: This article offers a concise modern history of homophobia in Russia up to the present time. Roubleva examines the role of the church and the state in punishing and criminalizing homosexuality. The article highlights recent developments in post-Soviet Russian regarding the treatment of homosexuals by the state, which, as a means to gain the favor of the E.U., has not re-criminalized homosexuality but has faced political pressure from conservative and mainstream political parties to criminalize gay, and now, lesbian behavior. Homosexuality, and particularly, lesbianism, is presently framed within the political debates on population because it is viewed as a threat to Russia's already shrinking fertility rates. While the article provides an overview of homosexuality in Russia, it lacks depth and analysis into the various forces affecting changes in policy on homosexual rights.

Economic Issues

Ashwin, Sarah. 2002. "A Woman Is Everything': The Reproduction of Soviet Ideals of Womanhood in Post-Communist Russia." In Work, Employment, and Transition: Restructuring Livelihoods in Post-Communism, ed. Adrian Smith, et al. New York: Routledge: 117-134.

Annotation: This article offers a critical assessment of the prevailing gender norms in post-Soviet Russia regarding women's roles in the public and private spheres. Through the use of extensive interviews and non-random group sampling involving both men and women, Ashwin provides a comparative analysis of the adaptation of Soviet-era gender roles to the present time period. According to the qualitative data collected from men and women at different stages of the employment process, women continue to see their role as partially to seek employment and contribute to the household income. However, women also see their role as household managers. Ashwin therefore concludes that women have maintained their public, Soviet-era gender identity; rather than abandoning it to return to the private sphere following the post-communist transition, women have assumed the dual burden of working and serving as the primary domestic caretaker.

Attwood, Lynne. 1996. "The Post-Soviet Woman in the Move to the Market: A Return to Domesticity and Dependence?" In Women in Russia and Ukraine, ed. Rosalind Marsh, 255-266. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 255-266.

Annotation: Attwood's article is based on the argument that the transition to a market-based economic system has resulted in the "re-masculinization" of Russia and the undervaluing of women, who were formerly honored in Soviet society. The focus is on women's experiences in the new liberal economy, which has restructured the work force to reassert men's position of dominance in society. Attwood notes that women's double burden of working in the public sphere and caring for the home has left them significantly vulnerable to being viewed as less efficient compared to male workers and therefore highly susceptible to being fired. Attwood's article provides an interesting critique of the dark side of the transition from communism to capitalism, and how easily the shallow emancipation of women during the Bolshevik revolution could be reversed. Although the article is from the mid 1990s, the issues remain relevant today.

Human Rights Watch. 1995. "Russia: Neither Jobs nor Justice-State Discrimination against Women in Russia." 7(5): <http://www.hrw.org/reports/1995/Russia2a.htm>.

Annotation: Although over a decade old, this report provides a comprehensive evaluation of women's unequal legal protection in the areas of employment and domestic violence. Using information gathered from interviews with researchers as well as unemployed women, government officials, and victims of domestic violence, the report focuses on the role of the state in perpetuating sex discrimination by failing to enforce laws to protect women against unequal treatment and violence. While there have been some moves to create new laws of gender equality and improve enforcement, the report is critical of the fact that most legal adjustments focus on providing improved protections for women, which tend to include mostly

maternity benefits and perpetuate the view that women are costly to employ and are less efficient than men. The lack of effective state regulation has resulted in little protection for women against sexual abuse and harassment in the workplace, as well as domestic violence. This is a valuable source that effectively identifies how normative gender conceptions supported by state and society have very negative repercussions for women.

Kiblitckaya, Marina. 2000. "Russia's Female Breadwinners: The Changing Subjective Experience." In Gender, State and Society in Soviet and Post-Soviet Russia, ed. Sarah Ashwin. New York: Routledge: 55-70.

Annotation: This article offers a comparative study of the historical changes in women's position as breadwinners in Russian society. Beginning with women from the 1920s and 30s, the research traces the changing motivations behind women's role in the labor forces. Under the early communist system women's employment was part of their civil duty; however, later periods of women's employment are increasingly linked to the economic necessities of the family rather than to the fulfillment of women's responsibility to the state. For those seeking to do more in-depth research on gender inequality in the area of economics, this article can provide a helpful summary of women's condition historically and in the present.

Roschin, S Yu. and Zubarevich, N. V. 2005. *Gender Equality and Extensions of Women Rights in Russia in the Context of the U.N. Millennium Development Goals*. UNESCO.
http://www.unesco.ru/files/docs/shs/publ/gender_mdg_eng.pdf.

Annotation: This is a thorough assessment of the different dimensions of gender inequalities in Russia. The study looks at economic, education, and health disparities between men and women; it notes that gender inequalities in Russia must be approached and dealt with differently than most other parts of the world. This is because under the Soviet system, men and women had legally recognized equal rights that enabled women equal access to education and the ability to join the labor force with men. The inequalities in Russia are, thus, more subtle and include unequal wages for, and discrimination and segregation of, women in the job market. Additionally, the study notes that health inequalities, for example those in mortality, which affect men in particular, have negative effects for women. Early widowhood, domestic violence, increased numbers of maternal-led single homes, and poverty all extend from, among other things, the excessive alcohol consumption on the part of men which has contributed to their high early death rates. Overall, this is a good source for recent statistical data. It also offers a comprehensive analysis of the "bottom-up" and "top-down" dimensions of gender inequality, which are reflected in the section conclusions and policy recommendations.

Smirnov, Aleksandr I. 2002. "Women in the Russian Army." *Russian Social Science Review* 43 (4): 61-71.

Annotation: Using survey data of 993 women in military service, Smirnov analyzes the issues of gender inequality facing women in the Russian military. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union,

women's numbers in the military have increased significantly. While their involvement has diversified the military, women tend to face inequality on several different levels. Despite having higher levels of education on average as compared to the men, women encounter discriminatory barriers to obtaining positions of leadership. Those that do achieve an officer post tend to be relegated to administrative tasks. Servicewomen are also vulnerable to aggressive attacks from their male counterparts, who may feel threatened by the influx of women into their perceived domain. The broader political and economic instability of Russia has affected the job security of military women; in particular the lax adherence to Russian legal provisions to protect women in the labor force have poorly affected servicewomen who may face unfavorable working conditions or discrimination with little effective options for recourse. Finally, military women must deal with the additional burden of unequal gender relations in the household, which require women to do more of the housework on top of their military duties.

Snezhkova, Irina. 2005. "Ethnic Aspects of Gender Social Inequality." *Russian Social Science Review* 46(3): 23-34.

Annotation: This article uses survey data collected from urban women of titular and non-titular groups in four Russian regions to test the hypothesis that economic conditions have a greater impact on different ethnic women's behavior rather than historical/cultural traditions. The regions examined include Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, Sakha, and Orenburg Oblast. Looking at work attitudes and satisfaction, supplementary employment, labor mobility, earnings, sense of well-being, and political participation, the survey results identified general inequality between men and women. However, the differences in the responses of women's perception of their well-being and political participation was more reflective of the diverse economic conditions of the regions rather than a pattern of behavior among all ethnic groups. While this article presents interesting data on ethnic men's and women's perceptions of gender roles and their own employment and political participation, it provides little critical assessment of the data specifically, and gender norms in general. It seems that a focus on urban women might somewhat bias the conclusions; further research might seek to include rural women into the investigation of gender inequity in ethnic groups.

Health Care and Conditions

Cockerham, William C., Brian P. Hinote, Pamela Abbott. 2006. "Psychological Distress, Gender, and Health Lifestyles in Belarus, Kazakhstan, Russia, and Ukraine." *Social Science & Medicine* 63: 2381-2394.

Annotation: The authors report on the findings of their large scale comparative study on psychological distress and its impact on the high mortality rates and significant gender gaps in mortality rates within these four countries. The results are based on quantitative and qualitative research, suggesting that, overall, women tend to feel more psychologically distressed than men but still live longer. Despite distress, most women do not engage in behavior that negatively affects their health to the degree of men, who tend to drink and smoke excessively. Women's

health is most negatively affected by their poor diets, which seems to reflect the trade-off of women living off lower incomes and suffering from poor economic conditions in general. Men, on the other hand, engage in the detrimental health pattern of alcoholism, not necessarily because of stress, but due to social norms which dictate drinking as a masculine activity. Thus, this study adds to previous research on alcoholism as a major contributor to the higher mortality of men by clarifying the reasons behind male alcoholism. It also subtly highlights how gender roles have affected health and lifestyle patterns in these states. While norms of masculinity require men to consume alcohol, which lowers their stress but is detrimental to their health, women adhere to their role as primary caretaker and tend to bear the burden of stress with few outlets in order to continue to care for the family.

Human Rights Watch. 2005. "Positively Abandoned: Stigma and Discrimination against HIV-Positive Mother and Their Children in Russia." 17(4):
<http://hrw.org/reports/2005/russia0605/russia0605.pdf>.

Annotation: This report explores the growing problem of discrimination against mothers and children with HIV/AIDS and its implications. HIV/AIDS is stigmatized to such a degree in Russian society, that many still do not have adequate knowledge about the transmission of the disease or how to protect themselves. The Russian government has done little to address the AIDS epidemic and, just as importantly, to uphold and enforce its laws which protect HIV/AIDS patients from discrimination from employment and health care. The report offers important cases studies and policy recommendations, but it does not adequately highlight the major social norms and economic conditions that further exacerbate the particular condition of mothers with HIV.

Murcott, Anne and Annie Feltman. 1996. "Beliefs About Reproductive Health: Young Russian Women Talking." In Gender, Generation and Identity in Contemporary Russia, ed. Hilary Pilkington. New York: Routledge: 152-168.

Annotation: As a preliminary study based on the responses of sixty-three women, interviewed either collectively or individually in the cities of St. Petersburg and Samara, this source presents the opinions of women on their general and reproductive health. Part of the research is meant to compare the beliefs of Russians towards health with the views held in other parts of the world. The responses collected suggest that Russian beliefs tend to be overwhelmingly similar to beliefs prevalent in countries such as Britain. What is perhaps of greater interest in the article are the references to the poor economic and environmental issues, which were believed to be the source of women's poor health. This study, now thirteen years old, provides ample areas to conduct further research into the health conditions affecting Russian women and their views on them today.

Roschin, S Yu. and Zubarevich, N. V. *Gender Equality and Extensions of Women Rights in Russia in the Context of the U.N. Millennium Development Goals*. UNESCO, 2005.
http://www.unesco.ru/files/docs/shs/publ/gender_mdg_eng.pdf.

Annotation: This is a thorough assessment of the different dimensions of gender inequalities in Russia. The study looks at economic, education, and health disparities between men and women, and notes that gender inequalities in Russia must be approached and dealt with differently than most other parts of the world. This is because under the Soviet system, men and women had legally recognized equal rights that enabled women equal access to education and the ability to join the labor force with men. Overall, this is a good source for recent statistical data. It also offers a comprehensive analysis of the 'bottom-up' and 'top-down' dimensions of gender inequality, which are reflected in the section conclusions and policy recommendations.

Wier, Fred. 2003. "Russia Begins to Reconsider Wider Use of Abortion." *Christian Science Monitor*, 28 August. <http://www.csmonitor.com/2003/0828/p01s03-woeu.html>.

Annotation: This brief article covers issues related to a governmental decree that limits women's ability to have a late-term abortion. While political and medical opponents to abortion see this as a positive development, others view it as another attempt by the state to try to control declining population levels. Many women are also skeptic of governmental measures to effectively curb abortions, believing that abortions will simply go underground. Activists and health officials have argued that more attention should be paid to providing information on contraception and effective family planning, rather than on simply eliminating abortions. However, the article reports that the Duma withdrew all financial support for family planning centers in 1998. Although it lacks in-depth study of the topic, this article effectively highlights the tension between state population policy and women's desire to control their reproductive lives.

Williams, Christopher. 1996. "Abortion and Women's Health in Russia and the Soviet Successor States." In *Women in Russia and Ukraine*, ed. Rosalind Marsh. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 131-155.

Annotation: This is a study of abortion rates and their implications for low population and fertility rates in the post-Soviet states. Using survey data, the article highlights the social factors and motives behind abortions. The poor socio-economic conditions; women's desire to control family size; and widespread public suspicion and inadequate access to contraception all impact the decision of many women to seek one or multiple abortions during their fertile years. Williams notes that in Russia, abortions have often been viewed as a medical issue, and this has limited the creation and implementation of effective public policy to address the social dimensions of abortion. The article focuses blame on the government, but somewhat surprisingly, on the women's movements as well. Williams argues that these movements have not done enough to make abortion a political issue and impact legislation. It does, however, provide thorough data, which, while dated, might be useful in comparison to more recent quantitative research.

Public and Private Violence

Horne, Sharon. 1999. "Domestic Violence in Russia." *American Psychologist* 54 (1): 55-61.

Annotation: This article examines the similarities between domestic violence in Russia and other developed countries, as well as the factors that distinguish domestic violence in Russia. In terms of its uniqueness, the author argues that Russia has a historical/cultural legacy of the oppression of women. With the 1917 Revolution, women gained equal political and economic rights, but by the era of Stalin, women's issues were relegated to a lower priority level as the focus shifted to the general economic growth and production of the state. A number of factors during the post-transition era have particularly disadvantaged women and reinforced gender norms that support women's oppression. Horne notes that the market economy recognized men as the major breadwinners, which engenders a notion of superiority in men. Socially, Russia has begun to emphasize the importance of the traditional family and, within it, women's dependent position. Such notions support the subordination of women to men and can be used to justify domestic violence. Horne also explores the reasons women find it difficult to escape violence, including a lack of alternative housing, no shelters or family to turn to, and their economic dependency. Additional challenges stem from poorly defined criminal laws, weak law enforcement, and the dominant perception that domestic violence is a private matter. Finally, Horne emphasizes the need to increase pressure on the government to implement reform through the growth of civil society, the spread of information, and provision of legal training and advocacy. This is a good source for an overview of the issue, and also suggests additional areas for research including studies on Russian conceptions of violence, the motivations behind domestic violence, as well as the most appropriate intervention measures.

Johnson, Janet Elise. 2001. "Privatizing Pain: The Problem of Women Battery in Russia." *NWSA Journal* 13(3): 153-164.

Annotation: Johnson's article compares the response of the Russian state to domestic violence with the response of women's movements. Much of the difference between the two has to do with how these two entities understand and frame the battery of women. The approach of state law enforcement has been based on the conception that violence in the home is a private matter, outside the jurisdiction of the state, and that women have generally provoked the abuser to attack. Additionally, as the preservation of the family unit tends to outweigh protection of its individual members, many public services helping victims focus on reconciliation with the spouse rather than removing the woman from the violent partner. In contrast, the women's movement has supported the rise of such organizations as ANNA which seek to address and aid victims of domestic violence by providing counseling and legal aid. These groups have challenged the conception that violence within the household is a private matter, arguing that domestic violence infringes on women's human rights, which should be protected by the state. These groups face many challenges including finding adequate funding and expanding their services; yet, they are an important development to fill the vacuum left in the absence of state protection. Overall, this is a useful comparative study, and could provide further avenues for

research both in the area of state treatment of domestic violence as well as the role of civil society.

Vandenberg, Martina, and Kelly Askin. 2001. "Chechnya: Another Battleground for the Perpetuation of Gender Based Crimes." *Human Rights Review* 2 (3): 140-149.

Annotation: This brief article focuses exclusively on rape crimes resulting from the conflict in Chechnya. It outlines several cases of sexual crimes committed against women, young girls and boys, and men both in their homes and in detention centers. By and large such crimes have been committed with impunity, as the Russian government has consistently avoided effectively investigating and prosecuting the perpetrators. The authors call to mind the systematic use of rape in the Rwandan and Serbian genocides, and highlight the advancements in international law to include rape as a means of genocides. However, in the case of Chechnya, the level of sexual violence has not been viewed as crossing the threshold of being called genocide. Regardless, the authors argue that the instances of rape do count as war crimes and require attention in order to effectively stabilize Chechen society. Though it is more an advocacy piece, the article is useful for a study of gender violence due to conflict.

World Organisation Against Torture. 2003. *Violence against Women in Russia: A Report to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*. Geneva.

Annotation: This is a very valuable source covering the various areas of violence affecting women in Russia. The report acknowledges that Russia has enacted numerous legal measures that recognize women's and men's equality; however, such laws are not well implemented. Political and economic conditions, as well as social norms supporting stereotypical divisions between men and women all contribute to discrimination against women, which as the report states, is often expressed violently. Similar to other studies, the report suggests that more efforts should be made to train law enforcement to legitimately respond to female victims needs. Overall, this report provides an updated view of how weak state enforcement of equality laws, as well as widely held public views that recognize gender divisions and accept poor treatment for women have resulted in a lack of widespread normative agreement that violent treatment of women must be confronted.

Zabelina, Tat'iana. 1996. "Sexual Violence Towards Women." In *Gender, Generation and Identity in Contemporary Russia*, ed. Hilary Pilkington. New York: Routledge: 169-186.

Annotation: Zabelina offers a summary of domestic and sexual violence issues in post-Soviet Russia during the early and mid 1990s. She notes that one of the major obstacles to effectively dealing with these issues is the popular perception among Russians that violence is only a physical act. Additionally, the remnants of Soviet definitions of collective violence that have been passed down for generations have inhibited extensive acknowledgement of violence against individuals and the rights of individuals in general. The author highlights the prevalence of victim blaming in cases of rape and domestic violence in Russia, which is used as an excuse by

authority figures and males in general and tends to be internalized by women. The consequences of this are the perpetuation of violence against women as well as the reinforcement of gender inequalities in relationships. Although it is a bit dated, this article does provide important perspectives on sexual violence in particular. It also acknowledges the incidents of violent aggression against women in situations of ethnic conflict and within minority communities, which are important areas for further research and policy protection.

Zakirove, Venera. 2005. "War against the Family: Domestic Violence and Human Rights in Russia—a View from the Bashkortostan Republic." *Current Sociology* 53(1): 75-91.

Annotation: This is partly a study of domestic violence in the Bashkortostan Republic and partly a comparative analysis between Russia and U.S. policies on domestic violence. Zakirova concludes that it is the lack of governmental management and effective social policies that have largely contributed to domestic violence in Russia and the demise of the family. She compares U.S. policy developments after the women's movement of the 1960 with Russia's continued failure to make domestic violence and healthy family relations public issues. Zakirova notes that there are still no laws criminalizing domestic violence, and that the police continue to view domestic violence as a private issue. Additionally, neither local governments nor the federal government have been overly supportive of the few women's services provided by NGOs. Zakirova's study tends to focus more on gender inequalities on a personal, psychological level rather than examining the structural factors that shape gender norms and identities. She is also not as critical of the available data as some of the other sources on the subject. Overall, however, this is a useful up-to-date source with good suggestions for areas of further research.