

**2013 -2014 TITLE VIII RESEARCH SCHOLAR PROGRAM
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**Sexuality, Orthodoxy and “Russianness”: A Comparative Historical Study of
Matrimonial Rhetoric in the Russian Orthodox Church**

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Research Abstract

The goal of this project was a comparative historical analysis of Russian Orthodox Church rhetoric regarding gender, sexuality, and marriage at two crucial points in Church and national history and to explore the implications of this rhetoric for the historical and current reification of Russian identity vis-à-vis the West. The first is the late 19th and early 20th century, the height of the Church’s struggle to maintain relevancy as well as its traditional State and social authority in opposition to modernization and secularization. The second is the contemporary post-Soviet space, where the Church has reemerged as a moral authority and has become a powerful ally in the federal administration’s efforts to combat in all areas of culture what it frames as “Western moral perversions”, especially homosexuality, through the production of rhetoric that is both strongly religiously conservative and nationalistic, framing traditional gender identity and morality as an indelible feature of “Russianness.” In both cases, I sought to contrast the Church’s façade of internal dogmatic and theological unity and historical continuity, as well as the many historical and cultural studies that have taken at face value the notion of the Church as a dogmatic and theological monolith.

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I focused my research on the ways in which ecclesiastical publications concerned with educating various segments of the laity, from the intellectuals to the working class, addressed questions around sexuality, marriage and gender in the 19th and early 20th century vis-à-vis contemporary publications of the same type. My primary focus in terms of research materials was ecclesiastical journals, as these materials remain largely untapped by American Slavists but represent an invaluable source of information regarding the inner workings of the Russian Orthodox Church and its relationship to Russian society. In this sense, I had a dual research goal: both to investigate the formation of rhetoric about the topic in question as it compares to that of the contemporary Church, and to bring to light the ways in which the investigation of these journals can contribute to Russian cultural history.

In terms of the late 19th and early 20th century, I worked predominantly with the collection of periodicals housed at the Journal Archive of the National Library of Russia in St. Petersburg. I gathered contemporary materials, including books, magazines, and newsletters from religious bookstores, monasteries and churches, as well as from television, radio and websites. Within all these publications and other forms of mass communication, I looked both at internal discussions regarding the education and guidance of laity and at those aimed at the laity directly. I also looked at more general intra-Church discussions from both eras around the theology of gender, sexuality and marriage, though the purpose of reading these more general discussions was to gain a better idea both of the process behind the formation of rhetoric to be directed at laity and to explore differences between internal Church theological disagreements

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and controversies and the “united front” that it aims to show the public in an effort to bolster claims of its guardianship of an unchanging tradition and the imperative to protect it from destructive foreign elements. I sought areas of continuity between pre- and post-Soviet rhetoric regarding the issues in question, paying particular attention to points of internal conflict between claims to the preservation of tradition and the stability of Church teachings and the realities of rhetorical and theological evolution. In terms of the comparisons between the formation of rhetoric in materials aimed at different segments of society, I examined the relative degrees of focus on theology and dogma. I sought to come to some conclusions about the ways in which the Church envisions the roles of these various segments of society in “restoring” traditional Russian religious morality and the shifting attitudes on the part of ecclesiastical representatives towards the educated elite who, both in the late 19th century and today, are simultaneously perceived both as the most “Westernized” and secular, and therefore corrupted and “un-Russian” members of society, and as potential leaders. I also analyzed the ways in which the formulation of the Church’s contemporary social influence is shaped and informed by Russian Orthodox tradition as well as the ways in which the construct of tradition is regularly deployed as a way to silence, marginalize and otherize opposing voices as both immoral and anti-Russian while propagating a vision of Russian national identity that is socially conservative, Orthodox, and morally superior to Europe and the United States.

Research Activities

As I mentioned in the previous section, the majority of my research activities in relation to the late 19th and early 20th century were focused in the Journal Archive of the National Library

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of Russia at its central location in St. Petersburg. Due to the restrictions on photocopies, photographs and other reproduction of rare materials, this was by far the most time-consuming activity, as I had to take extremely copious and careful notes to insure that I would not miss anything when writing up my research later. I generally spent 8 hours per day, 6 days a week, at this archive. While in my original proposal I stated an intention to spend six weeks at the NLR and then move on to historical and ecclesiastical archives in Moscow, upon my arrival in St. Petersburg I quickly realized that due both to the incredible richness and depth of the collections at the Journal Archive and the copying restrictions, the best use of my time would be to remain in St. Petersburg for the entirety of the summer and get a solid sample rather than an assortment of incomplete data from various archives. My other consideration in making this decision was the extremely restricted summer hours of other archives in Moscow (some of which close altogether in August); the NLR had reduced hours in July and August but remained open for 8 hours per day. At the Journal Archive I was able to consult the full run of the following journals, most of which began their publications between the 1860s and the 1880s and ceased between 1910 and 1920: *Bogoslovskij Vestnik (Theological Herald*, the journal of the Moscow Theological Academy); *Tserkovnij Vestnik (Church Herald*, the journal of the St. Petersburg Theological Academy); *Christianskoe Chtenie (Christian Reading*, also of the St. Petersburg Theological Academy); *Pravoslavnij Sobesednik (Orthodox Interlocutor*, the journal of the Kazan Theological Academy); *Rukovodstvo dlja sel'skih pastyrej (Guide for Parish Priests*, a publication of the Kiev Theological Seminary); *Vera i Razum (Faith and Reason*, a journal of the Kharkov Theological Seminary); *Dukhovnaja Beseda (Spiritual Conversation)*; and *Strannik*

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(Pilgrim, a privately-published theological journal). The reading of the full runs of these journals gave me a multi-dimensional and well-rounded understanding of the theological and dogmatic discussions around sexuality, gender and marriage taking place in and around the central theological academies and of the ways in which clergy and theologians worked to disseminate their teachings among the laity. In addition to the examining the full runs of these journals, I also read samples of various other ecclesiastical journals from 1890-1905.

In addition to the Journal Archive, I also made extensive use of the enormous electronic collection of parish newsletters from the 18th and 19th century available at the NLR. These parish newsletters were an invaluable resource in comparing the rhetoric directed at the intelligentsia and other educated members (and general urbanites) of 18th and 19th century Russia with the rhetoric directed at the less educated (and small town/rural dwellers) and to investigate both theological debates and sermons, the latter of which were often published in the newsletters. Particularly helpful in my investigation of the parish newsletters were those produced by Orthodox Brotherhoods, which were organizations of laity with origins in 15th and 16th century Galicia and who were oriented towards the Orthodox education of the masses. Most useful in this collection were the newsletters from the central parish of Moscow, produced by the Society for Lovers of Spiritual Enlightenment, a conservative and dogmatically straightforward publication that produced an informative contrast to the more moderate publication of the Moscow Theological Academy. Finally, in the general section of the NLR, I was able to find a large number of publications by clerical authors on the subject of marriage, family and gender, mostly in relation to the “Woman Question” of the second half of the 19th century and in response to

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Leo Tolstoy's *Kreutzer Sonata*, which opened the floodgates of discussion around marriage and sexuality in late 19th-early 20th century Russia. In addition to my work at the NLR, I also spent some of my research time at the library of the St. Petersburg Theological Academy. However, my research there was not nearly as fruitful as that which I conducted at the NLR, as the vast majority of the resources I was seeking – especially periodicals – are housed at the National Libraries. Lastly, apart from gathering materials at religious bookstores, I was also able to explore several small church libraries, such as the one in Kazansky Cathedral, though this was also not particularly informative for my goals.

Important Research Findings

My research findings from this trip confirmed a series of hypotheses that I had formed as a result of previous work in this area, including research for my MA thesis in Religious Studies and my dissertation, as well as giving me valuable insights into the operation of the Church in contemporary Russian society that I consider crucial for understanding Russia's current project of identity reformation around the rejection of Western sexual (im)morality.

My MA thesis in Religious Studies centered around the Religious-Philosophical Society of St. Petersburg, a group of artists, writers, philosophers and other members of the intelligentsia, who met with theologians and members of the Russian Orthodox Church's clergy between 1901-1903, when further meetings were forbidden by Konstantin Pobedonostsev, the Oberprocurator of the Holy Synod. While a variety of issues were discussed at these meetings, the nucleus was the fraught issues around marriage, gender and sexuality, which had become especially important in Russian society as a result of the publication of Leo Tolstoy's novella *The Kreutzer*

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Sonata. The novella, which centered around the marriages and sex lives of the Russian aristocracy and educated elite, and its confessional *Postlude*, in which Tolstoy explained his “message” in more stringent and clear terms, made the case that sexual intercourse as such – regardless of whether or not it took place between married people or not – was contrary to the central teachings of the New Testament. According to Tolstoy, “Christian marriage” was a contradiction in terms, and the Orthodox Church, which recognized marriage as a sacrament, was in error. The veritable explosion of the novella in the public sphere – which took place despite bans on its dissemination – brought to the forefront of Russian society not only questions about the correct Christian view of matrimony but also about the judicial role of the Church in marriage. In response, the clergy and theologians had no choice but to defend the institution of matrimony from the “Tolstoyans”, who promoted total celibacy, and from the “liberals” who agitated for the right of Orthodox citizens to marry outside the Church. The exploration of these issues highlighted the fact that, while the institutional Russian Orthodox Church sought to present itself to the laity as a united front guarding the timeless “mystical Church”, internal conflicts were manifold and many of them were reflected in the debate around marriage. As I found in researching the proceedings of the RPS meetings, clergy and theologians, who had come to evangelize the intelligentsia and call them back “home”, exhibited a range of opinions regarding the institution of marriage. In attempting to explain the high value that the Church placed on the institution, the ecclesiastical representatives continually found themselves confronting a history – one that the intelligentsia would not allow them to forget and which was particularly pronounced in the historical Russian Church - of the devaluation of marriage in favor

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of monasticism and the oppression of the married clergy, whose marriages were ostensibly prized for allowing a degree of “relatability” between clergy and laity. Similarly, the discussion between the intelligentsia and the ecclesiastical representatives demonstrated disagreement around the extent of the role of the Church in regulating marriages as an agent of the State. What I observed in reading the proceedings of the meetings was a struggle within the Church to formulate rhetoric around marriage and sexuality that could fulfill two chief requirements: presenting the Church as a broad body inclusive of various expressions of spirituality (i.e., celibate and married), and stringently maintaining “timeless” teachings that had to remain immutable in the face of modernity. What remained a rhetorical constant, however, was the notion of Russian exceptionalism in the area of sexual morality and matrimonial relations, both as a purported historical reality and as a continuing cultural imperative. The immoral sexual trends of Europe (civil marriage, female liberation and promiscuity, matches based solely on romantic love and even, in very subdued terms, homosexuality) and the perceived shortcomings of the Catholic and Protestant churches (extreme legalism, overemphasis on either one or the other spiritual path) were held up as dangers that obedience to the ROC could help avoid. In contrast to the intelligentsia, who had lost their way as a result of Westernization, the clergy and theologians held up the peasantry who, while less educated and less informed of individual theological points, trusted the Church fully due to their isolation from Western ideas. Thus, the overarching point to which the clergy and theologians invariably returned was the need for dissenters and backsliders to submit themselves fully to the Church, their rightful Mother by virtue of their Russianness, rather than seeking to debate individual points or presuming to

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suggest reforms. “Those who do not live the life of the Church cannot criticize it” was a constant refrain.

In my investigation of the 19th and early 20th century ecclesiastical publications discussing marriage, gender and sexuality, I found that the roots of the disagreements witnessed in the meetings stemmed predominantly from the fact that while general teachings around matrimony and sexuality were agreed upon by all but the most extreme members on either the liberal or the conservative end of the spectrum, the Church had not formulated the sort of detailed rhetoric on the subject that the public had begun to demand. While the early ecclesiastical journals of the 1860s and 70s addressed other, more practical issues around marriage – such as the permissibility of divorce and the validity of the marriages of Schismatics in the eyes of the official Orthodox Church – the question of the relative valuation of celibacy and marriage, as well as of the spiritual consequences of sexual intercourse within marriage for purposes other than childbearing, had not been at the center of post-medieval Church discussions until Tolstoy made them unavoidable. Although it must be noted that a sort of defensive rhetoric had been developed by the married clergy, who were ill-treated by the celibate hierarchy and promoted themselves via reference to the family lives that they asserted made them superior pastors, this issue was in fact more closely related to questions of class than to that of marriage and celibacy as such. Moreover, even as the celibate clerics looked down upon their married counterparts in practice, in the dissemination of rhetoric they continually referred to this class of clergy as a feature of the rectitude of Orthodoxy vis-à-vis other forms of Christianity.

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Further, while the ecclesiastical participants at the RPS were able to speak as one in relation to the indivisibility of Russianness, Orthodoxy and sexual morality, the journals demonstrate a great deal of disagreement regarding the idea of Russia as a historical bastion of Christian sexual morality and matrimonial stability. The cracks in the façade of the Church that I had found in the proceedings of the RPS meetings were more pronounced the deeper I looked into intra-Church dialogue. While my findings in the ecclesiastical journals and other publications were informative for many aspects of the debate around marriage and sexuality in late 19th and early 20th century Russia, for the purposes of this summary I will concentrate on the connection between sexual morality and Russianness, which is most relevant for the comparison between 19th-20th and contemporary rhetoric on the topic and especially for questions of policy.

The disagreement between clerics and theologians who promoted the idea of Russia as a historical bastion of sexual morality, matrimonial stability and gender complementarianism and those who pointed out the realities of the commonality of cohabitation, forced marriages, illicit divorce, spousal abuse and promiscuity in Russian history is most pronounced when comparing journals and publications meant for the consumption of the educated, theologically savvy believers (such as the journals produced by the Theological Academies or privately published by pious laymen, such as *Strannik*) and those directed at “common people” (such as the parish newsletters). In the first category, we observe a much greater variety of opinions and analyses of historical facts. While many contributors in this category certainly also glorified, or at the very least apologized for, the domestic piety of medieval Russians (a prominent example being a series on the *Domostroi*, a compendium of rules for religious Muscovite householders, published

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in *Christianskoe Chtenie*), there were just as many contributors who directly addressed the aforementioned historical vagaries of sexual and matrimonial morality in Russia. Contributors to the newsletters, on the other hand (many of whom included parish priests publishing homilies and sermons), were much more likely to glorify the Russian past, especially in relation to the status of women, who were said to have enjoyed a higher place in the family and in the Church before they began to seek an extra-domestic role. In addressing the less educated, more rural and traditional population, contributors to the newsletters encouraged the laity to see themselves as continuing a pious Russian tradition that had protected the family and strengthened society for centuries while avoiding the corruption that had overtaken the higher strata. Moreover, in addressing this segment of society, it appears that the contributors to the publications felt free to focus on dogma to a much greater extent than theology. Particularly because it was safe to assume that the majority of readers would be living in families, the question of the relative valuation of marriage and celibacy was more or less avoided altogether.

However, while there was clear disagreement about the success of the Russian Church in its guardianship of Christian sexual morality and matrimony historically, there was an overarching agreement among all the contributors, shared with the clerical members of the RPS, that it was the duty of Russia to exercise such guardianship and to continually strive towards it. On both sides of the argument, clerics and theologians blamed corrupting influences external to the Russian Church itself – everything from paganism and Catholicism to French novels and German philosophy – for any shortcomings in this area. The common refrain of the RPS meetings – the imperative of every believer to submit him or herself fully to the Church rather

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than attempting to find common ground with his or her own corrupted ideas – repeated itself in the ecclesiastical publications in various degrees of sophistication. What we can conclude here, in terms of the question of ecclesiastical unity, was that while the individual clerics and theologians who made up the Church certainly disagreed on individual issues – sometimes vehemently so – it was issues that they did not see as being quite as crucial to the overall validity of dogma around sexuality and marriage due to their overall adherence to the concept of the mystical body of the Church. While gradations of these questions were important to the intelligentsia, for the clergy and theologians, the key issue was above and before all else submission to the mystical Church under the guardianship of the ROC.

The crux was this: regardless of the solution to the question of the valuation of celibacy vs. marriage, the fact remained that the ROC offered two paths towards salvation. Unlike the Catholic Church, the theological influence of which was often blamed for the overvaluation of celibacy in Christendom, the very difficulty of coming to an agreement regarding valuation was cited as proof that, at the very least, the Church showed a great degree of mercy towards both spiritual inclinations rather than creating a clear hierarchy. This idea was bolstered, according to the various contributors, by the institution of married clergy, who symbolized the Church's embrace of the non-celibate. While the Catholic elevation of celibacy would lead (much like Tolstoyanism) to sexual immorality by virtue of forcing those of a different spiritual inclination into celibacy and, out of frustration, into sin, the Orthodox view would allow all to serve the church as well as they could and to remain chaste. In the same vein, the Catholic prohibition of divorce would encourage sin while the Orthodox tolerance of divorce and remarriage in certain

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cases presented a more natural path for the human being. Likewise, Orthodoxy was superior to Protestantism by maintaining the institution of monasticism and celibacy for “those to whom it was given” (Mt. 19:10-12). Finally, by maintaining the Church as a home for both spiritual paths, the path of full submission would theoretically be made more tolerable, having the end result of protecting the body of believers from the corrupting influences not only of other theologies but also of the immoral tendencies of European modernity. In turn, the maintenance of Christian sexual morality would allow Russia to remain (or become, depending on one’s point of view of the premodern period) a bastion of strength in a dying Europe through the propagation of strong families and morally upright citizens.

The rhetoric that can be found in contemporary Orthodox publications on matrimony, sexuality and gender is developed in the face of issues superficially different but substantively quite similar to those described above. Although the relative valuation of celibacy and marriage, Church involvement in the regulation of divorce, and the superiority of Orthodoxy to Catholicism and Protestantism are no longer primary topics of discussion, the Russian Church’s imperative to preserve traditional Christian morality through the maintenance of chastity and the heterosexual family, thereby winning the culture war with the West, has returned to the forefront of Church rhetoric, now incorporating new Western “evils” such as abortion, euthanasia, homosexuality, no-fault divorce, promiscuity, female careerism, and child-free lifestyles. Advice manuals, journal articles, websites, and other forms of Orthodox media directed at a lay audience focus on chastity and marriage even in cases when the main topic under discussion is something

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unrelated, as the maintainance of the Russian Orthodox heterosexual family is considered to be the primary force for healing Russian society.

That being said, of course, there are some minor but noticeable shifts in contemporary rhetoric around marriage and sexuality, though they are more noticeable in publications aimed at a wider lay audience (such as the “nominally Orthodox”) as opposed to those meant for the strictly observant. For example, more emphasis is put than before – perhaps because of a greater overall openness when discussing matters of sexuality – on cultivating a sexual relationship within marriage that exists apart from the goal of childbearing and that is meant to strengthen and support the marriage. Tolerance towards slightly less than traditional gender roles is also noticeable even in the most conservative publications, likely as a concession to Russian economic realities. Namely, the necessity for most women to work is accepted, though it is stressed that women’s work should neither constitute a career, which would interfere in family duties, nor offer more pay and prestige than the husband’s. Dating and modest amounts of premarital affection – kissing, embracing – are also tolerated, but never full intimacy or cohabitation. There is also a small amount of tolerance extended towards the use of certain methods of birth control, though this is by no means the consensus of the Church. Likewise, there is some support for life-saving abortion, but this position is generally overshadowed by extreme opposition within the Church. On the other hand, in certain areas the Church has grown even more stringent. For example, whereas the pre-Soviet Church considered valid the marriages of couples who had been wed outside it and had later accepted Orthodoxy, the contemporary

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Church necessitates that those who have only undergone a civil ceremony also wed in the Church to avoid being considered cohabitators.

Policy Implications and Recommendations

A particularly interesting point when comparing contemporary Orthodox writings to those of the late 19th and early 20th century is the fact that recent history rarely enters into the discussion, at least in terms of the questions which I am exploring. Despite nearly a century of the suppression of the Church and State-sponsored atheism under the Soviet regime, the rhetoric around the ROC as the guardian of authentic Christianity is, if anything, even more strident than it was in the pre-Soviet Church. The impression that I have received from my study of these contemporary sources shows a somewhat surprising tendency in contemporary Russian Orthodox rhetoric: the damage done to the Church and to religious literacy and piety during the Soviet regime is perceived as far less of a threat to the revival of Christianity in Russia than the influence of European and American culture. In one startling example, mentioned in one of the books in a series called *Slozhnosti Liubvi* (*The Difficulties of Love*, part of a larger series called “Lifesaver” and published by Simvolik, an producer of popular Orthodox literature), an exemplary Christian couple is mentioned. Describing their ideal matrimonial relationship, the author writes that due to having grown up and lived most of their married life in the Soviet Union, they were free from pernicious Western influences that might have destroyed their marriage. On the other hand, examples of contemporary couples who have fallen astray due to such influences are manifold, both in this series and in other sources. This anecdote is a crucial example of the notion of the equivalence of Russianness and sexual/matrimonial morality and its

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deployment in the contemporary post-Soviet space. This couple did not have the Church, but they did, the writer implies, have the guideposts of traditional Russian culture that, he further seems to imply, contain the basic precepts of Christianity.

Understanding this equivalence between traditional Russian culture, Orthodoxy and sexual morality is indispensable in formulating policy towards Russia as related to social issues but also to the wider questions regarding the future relationship between the Russia and the West. Many journalists and analysts unfamiliar with the history of Orthodox culture around sexuality and marriage have erroneously interpreted recent news about the oppression of, and violence against LGBTQ individuals and communities in Russia in the language of tolerance and human rights. They have, however, failed to recognize that for many Russians, even the “nominally Orthodox”, questions around LGBTQ rights are deeply entangled with a much wider suspicion of Western cultural imperialism. In fact, this suspicion goes so deep that the term “LGBTQ”, in English used as shorthand to refer to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer individuals, has in Russia become a derogatory shorthand for Western culture, including but not limited to what is considered sexual immorality. Likewise, just as the suspicion of LGBTQ acceptance is tied to a much larger perception of the essential features of Russian culture, so is the revival of the Orthodox Church as a whole. This revival, and its renewed role as an ally of the federal administration, is just as much part of the project of rebuilding a holistic Russian national identity as it is a reaction to Soviet atheism, as it is generally explained in the West. For these reasons, any efforts to promote the human rights of LGBTQ individuals and communities

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in Russia must be informed by the entanglement of cultural and historical issues that underpin current attitudes and policies.

Co-curricular activities

N/A

Conclusions

The discussion of marriage and sexuality that reached a fever pitch in the late 19th and early 20th century in Russia became such a widespread topic of interest, controversy and debate within the Church not necessarily (or not only) because of knee-jerk conservative reactions to the free discussion of sexuality, but also because it was so inextricably linked to a multitude of other questions surrounding the role of the Church in Russian society. The representatives of the Church who engaged with the laity in a variety of contexts believed that the loss of Church influence over sexual morality as well as over matrimonial legislation and divorce proceedings would not only weaken the institutional Church and its social relevance but also hasten the transformation of Russia into a Western European nation in the worst sense possible by weakening families and disturbing the “natural” order. Although they were willing to discuss the intricacies of theology regarding questions around topics such as celibacy and the relative success of the ROC in maintaining the Christian ideal throughout its history, and although their disagreements over these topics were sometimes irreconcilable, they agreed on the ROC’s imperative to stand in the front lines of protection against the encroachment of Western corruption. In contemporary Russian Orthodox literature addressing marriage and sexuality, the rhetoric of sexual morality as Russianness is not only continued but significantly intensified,

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building on the rhetoric developed in the past. Understanding the historical context for the formation of contemporary Orthodox rhetoric around this topic grants superior insight to those seeking to understand social policy in modern Russia and to determine the future direction of its relationship to the West.

Plans for Future Research Agenda/ Presentations and Publications

I am currently working on a presentation to be given at the annual conference of the National Association of Women's Studies in Puerto Rico in November 2014. This presentation will focus predominantly on contemporary Orthodox advice literature in the area of romantic relationships, sexuality, marriage and motherhood directed at women and will but will, like the rest of the project, provide historical context for the new role of Russian women in the Orthodox Church. Also like the rest of my project, in this presentation I will make some observations regarding the connection between sexual morality and Russianness, remarking specifically on the deployment of women's bodies in the project of Russian national renewal. My goal is to then revise this presentation for publication.

I am also currently working on revising my MA thesis into a series of two articles focusing on the questions of marriage, sexuality and gender in the Orthodox Church prior to the Revolution. The first of these two articles focuses specifically on the question of the relative valuation of celibacy and marriage at the Religious Philosophical Society of St. Petersburg as compared to the explorations of this question in the theological journals published by the St. Petersburg Theological Academy. The second article focuses on a historical exploration of the



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roots of the concept of sexual morality as Russianness, tracing the genealogy of ideas presented in the 19th century ecclesiastical press to their origins in medieval and early modern Russia.

Lastly, this research will represent a large portion of my dissertation, which focuses on the rhetoric of marriage and family, and specifically what I refer to as “domestic piety”, as it was developed from the early modern period to the early 20th century; this project will include a “postlude” dealing with the contemporary side of these issues. The archival work completed this summer allows me to work with sources that have not hitherto been investigated in detail in relation to this question, thus giving me the opportunity to make an original contribution to my field and to highlight the complexity of an institution (the Russian Orthodox Church) which is often discussed in the absence of rigorous historical context or rhetorical analysis.