Moral Reasoning in the Context of Reform: A Study of Russian Officials

This article reports on an exploratory study of ethical reasoning among public administrators in Russia. Survey interviews and focus group follow-ups with civil servants participating in graduate training programs at the Russian Academy of Public Service provide information about their preferred mode of ethical reasoning; the demographic, attitudinal, organizational, and professional factors associated with that reasoning; and the behavioral choices implied. Using a sample of 113 public officials who represent a broad spectrum of regions in Russia, this study assesses moral reasoning, examines variables associated with alternative models, and compares these responses with findings from studies conducted in Poland and the United States. Based on this exploratory study, we suggest implications for theory, research, and practice.

The Ethical Challenges in Russian Public Service Today

Historians and political scientists agree that Russia's historical legacy of despotism, anarchy, and totalitarianism is directly relevant to future political developments in the country (Green 1995; Dawisha and Parrot 1994; Sakwa 1996). Some analysts contend that Western democracy is alien to Russia's tradition, culture, and national character (interview of Anatoly Lukianov, in Pryce-Jones 1995, 425). One Russian historian provides a counterpoint in his description of the Russian people as having long-standing traditions of political self-management (Simush 1993). Regardless of how one characterizes the past, it is difficult to deny that historically, European-type democracy (and consequently the Western style of public administration) has no roots in Russia. One author suggests that bureaucracy as practiced historically in Russia may be the main reason why Russian citizens are both alienated from the state and cynical toward the law (Kotchegura 1997).

The Russian government has taken steps to create a professional, Western-style civil service, but public skepticism is fed by daily press reports of government employees' involvement in cases of corruption, bureaucratic red tape, abuse of authority, and other forms of misconduct (Kotchegura 1997; Handelman 1994). In the experience of many ordinary Russians, civil service practices seem unchanged from the Soviet period, with incumbents deferring to the ruling elite or pursuing their own interests and exhibiting little accountability to the citizenry (Kotchegura 1997). In fact, according to studies conducted by Russian Academy of Public Service, the level of citizen alienation from the state apparatus was higher in 1997 than in the last years of the communist regime (Komarovski 1997).

The transition from communism to democracy has been much more uneven and controversial in Russia than in countries such as Poland. As a result, incumbent civil ser-
vants have developed vested interests in continuing business as usual. With the current civil service populated by individuals who have deep roots in the old regime, some believe that a major obstacle to reform is the resistance of the entrenched bureaucracy itself (Kotchegura 1997). Even if this problem could be addressed through an aggressive decommunization (“de-nomenklatura”) program, another analyst observes that the “new Russian civil servants” do not hold the key to needed reform either. Too often, he points out, these people simply represent the values of the new Russian business community and treat their office as an extension of the corporate enterprise (Murtazayev 1996, 2), leaving little voice for the public interest.

Given the burdens of the pre-Soviet legacy of despotism, the Soviet experience, and Russia’s transition history, there may be little hope for evolution of a professional public service in the near future. This article provides preliminary testing of that conclusion by reporting on an examination of how 113 Russian public servants think about the use of administrative discretion in responding to ethical quandaries in their work lives. Before proceeding, we need to elaborate on why appropriate use of administrative discretion is important in the Russian context and why moral reasoning is the significant arena of discretion for understanding Russia’s road to democracy.

The Exercise of Moral Judgment and Administrative Discretion

If the Russian civil service context is so radically different from that found in Western democracies, or even in Poland, one may question whether it is reasonable to apply an American civil service concept to Russia at all. Our response is that, in democratic societies, the devolution of formal authority to civil servants assumes a cadre of public administrators ready to step into their roles and prepared to exercise administrative discretion informed by the public interest. In fact, “professionalism” in public administration is marked by the capacity to draw on decision-making criteria that reach beyond personal interests to democratically recognized standards. Russia must evolve in this direction to evolve as a democracy.

Casting the current situation in Russia in public administration terms, the challenge is to achieve the proper use of administrative authority and discretion, particularly in resolving ethical dilemmas in administrators’ public roles. But why is this an important feature of democratic government everywhere? Administrative discretion is integral to the practice of public administration in complex democratic systems where administrators must follow codes of personal conduct, interpret legislation, and even propose policies for which they must mobilize support (Stewart 1985; Thompson 1985; Warwick 1981; Wilburn 1984; Meier 1999). Though the debate continues about how much discretion is appropriate or necessary (Lowi 1993; Wilson 1989), discretion is generally regarded as an essential element in a well-functioning public administration system. Because “bounded rationality” challenges all public administrators, discretion is important (March and Simon 1958).

Although often overlooked, in the U.S. context the founders of public administration as a distinct field recognized the importance of discretion (Goodnow 1900, 61)—indeed, Wilson (1887, 213) called for “unhampered discretion”—and discretion has been integral to the complementary relationship between politics and administration from the beginning (Svara 1999). Given the inevitable exercise of administrative discretion, the quality of judgment informing the decision determines how that discretion is exercised. James Q. Wilson cites a study of patrol officers by William Muir that illustrates this point: “The ‘good cops’ were ‘street-corner politicians’ who controlled their beats in the common interest by selectively enforcing the rules, sometimes letting off people for behavior for which others were arrested. The not-so-good cops were those who either retreated from the confusion and dangers of the street altogether or mechanically applied every rule as the law required” (Wilson 1989, 344). In other words, administrative discretion is made inevitable by the impossibility of anticipating all the circumstances in which policy is applied, the ambiguity of situations encountered, and the “bounded rationality” of decision makers, but it is made tolerable by the quality of their judgment.

If judgment is a central element in administrative discretion, it is important to identify and understand the ethical orientations on which that judgment is based. Some level of public interest is required. Operationally, the capacity to act in accord with public interest can be assessed by examining the models of moral reasoning that decision makers employ. Methodologies for doing so range from case studies of exemplars (Cooper and Wright 1992) to empirical studies attempting to understand patterns of moral reasoning across groups of public officials (Stewart and Sprinthall 1994). In our research, we use an instrument—the Stewart-Sprinthall Management Survey (SSMS)—that reveals the preferred models of ethical reasoning in specific public administration contexts. It presents the respondent with a series of dilemmas. While not every exercise of discretion in public administration occurs in the context of an ethical dilemma, by studying the models decision makers use to solve ethical quandaries in Russia, we can understand how a significant arena of the exercise of discretion works in an evolving democratic system.
Theoretical Construction and the Research Design

The ethical-reasoning model was established in the 1950s and 1960s by Kohlberg (1969), first in this country and then replicated extensively cross-culturally (1981). He demonstrated through multiple empirical studies that ethical/moral reasoning could be conceptualized as a hierarchy of reasoning patterns from the less to the more morally adequate systems of cognition. His two highest stages were representative of Mill’s “utilitarian” and Kant’s “categorical imperative” levels. He was also able to demonstrate that adults who produced cognitive responses to a series of general moral dilemmas behaved in real-life situations in a manner consistent with democratic principles such as fairness, social justice, and the “golden rule.” From a theory standpoint, he noted the parallelism to Rawls’s (1971) work on democratic justice and the perspective-taking competencies required to understand and to act within a veil of ignorance.

There were some criticisms of this approach. Conceptually, the dilemmas themselves were somewhat remote—for instance, generic issues such as stealing a drug to save a life, reporting an escaped prisoner to the authorities, etc. Second, there was an enormous empirical problem in establishing adequate reliability of the open-ended interview transcripts: specifically, the need to master a 700-page scoring manual.

As a result, there has been a shift in procedures: first, to create assessment techniques that directly reflect the professional issues and dilemmas confronted by particular officials, and second, to create a less cumbersome scoring system. Much of this work is reported in Rest and Narvaez (1994) and applies to professions such as medicine, veterinary medicine, accounting, teaching, nursing, and dentistry. In these studies, context-relevant dilemmas are constructed, and a series of 12 choices is presented for each dilemma. The choices represent different stages of moral reasoning, cross-validated by faculty familiar with the stage and sequence system. This approach has produced a substantial research base with studies totaling well over 5,000 (Rest and Narvaez 1994). Most importantly, there has been a series of consistent outcomes across professions. Table 1 outlines these findings, which support the theoretical assumptions of morally adequate behavior by those who selected principled reasoning statements as solutions to context-relevant dilemmas.

These studies merged the two highest stages (Mill and Kant) into a single index; the P score for principled, or postconventional reasoning systems. Assessment and prediction of moral behavior was improved by such a combined score, as reported in table 1. Adults who reason through difficult dilemmas based on concepts such as the greatest good or the golden rule are more likely to act in accordance with a democratic conception of justice.

From this background, we originally created an instrument, the SSMS, for studying the reasoning levels of public administrators in this country (Stewart and Sprinthall 1991) and then in Poland (Stewart, Sprinthall, and Siemienińska 1997). We were particularly interested in comparing the profiles of reasoning given the major differences between an old democracy and a very new one. As we analyzed these findings, we also sought an opportunity to broaden the inquiry to include Russian public administrators.

For the Polish study, we modified some of the issues based on input from our professional colleagues in Poland. We followed the same procedures for Russia. In both countries, these colleagues received the dilemma case studies as directly relevant to the work of administrators, particularly the first two issues, promotion and granting favors. The third issue, data recreation, was considered novel in both countries, but viewed the same way in this country. Thus, we had two familiar issues and one novel issue as dilemmas with a similar understanding in all three countries. Our Russian colleagues from the Academy suggested we change the favor in the second dilemma from a weekend vacation to a European cruise. In Poland, the opportu-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Researcher</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Medical doctors</td>
<td>Self and Baldwin (1994)</td>
<td>Higher levels of reasoning. MDs more likely to match treatment to needs of patients, and meet commitments for research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountants and auditors</td>
<td>Ponemon and Gabhart (1994)</td>
<td>Higher levels of reasoning associated with fraud detection and willingness to &quot;blow the whistle,&quot; lower levels associated with under reporting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurses</td>
<td>Duckett and Ryden (1994)</td>
<td>Higher levels of reasoning was the most important predictor of competent clinical practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dentists</td>
<td>Bebeau (1994)</td>
<td>Low levels of reasoning virtually excluded adequate clinical performance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>Chang (1994)</td>
<td>Higher levels predicted greater empathy, respect for student rights, more flexible teaching methods, more objective and greater student achievement gains.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 In fact, these research noted that a high level of moral reasoning, “virtually excludes the possibility of being a poor performer, and conversely, that a low level of moral reasoning virtually excludes the possibility of performing well” (Self and Baldwin 1994, 151).
nity to buy new furniture was seen as a significant favor. With these few exceptions, however, the focus of the instrument was received as most relevant and then translated and back-translated into either Russian or Polish. The three stories adapted for the Russians were as follows:

**Promotion**

Ivan Pavlovich was hired to revitalize a somewhat inefficient division in a city office. Soon after becoming department head, he held a meeting with all division personnel and announced that all future promotions would be based on demonstrated merit. The former director’s practice of promoting based on friendship would be discontinued. Ivan Pavlovich issued a written statement to confirm this new policy.

About a month later, his boss told him that he expected Sergey, an individual on Ivan Pavlovich’s staff, to be promoted. Sergey was a marginally effective worker and there were several other employees in the division much more deserving of promotion. Ivan Pavlovich pointed out to his boss several of the reasons for not wanting to promote Sergey at that time. But the boss responded that he really would like to see Sergey promoted. Ivan Pavlovich’s ability to create more promotional opportunities for his staff depended on his cooperation in this situation.

**Friends in the Government**

In this ministry, like in many other agencies, private businesses are contracted to provide goods and services. Alexandre Semenovich deals directly with these representatives and has become good friends with one of them, Pavel Petrovich. Their wives have become friends as well and their families enjoy one another. Alexandre Semenovich occasionally joins Pavel Petrovich for lunch, and Pavel’s company pays for it. This has always been a common practice in the country.

However, a dilemma arose recently when Pavel Petrovich invited Alexandre Semenovich and his family to join him on a cruise around Europe, which had been organized by his private company. Alexandre Semenovich knew it would be a great trip and his wife really wanted to go. He also knew that the public could see it as a favor for large contract that the ministry had just awarded to Pavel Petrovich’s company.

**Data Recreation**

Yuri Ivanovich is the head of the Retirement Benefits Department in a city government. He was appointed to this position recently and has soon discovered that some payment data were accidentally deleted from the department computer file. There was no way to retrieve these data within the system. Yuri Ivanovich contacted regional branches of the retirement benefits charged with inputting these data originally and asked them to recreate the data. However, soon regional branches started to complain bitterly about the burden of this task.

The central administration of the Ministry of Social Defense that supervises the work of the department wanted to keep the recent data loss quiet, and the ministry’s representative advised Yuri Ivanovich to devise a scheme to recreate data based on the assumption that certain relationships existed between the data elements. But Yuri Ivanovich argued that this would result in some people receiving more retirement benefits than they should and others receiving fewer. The ministry’s representative felt that to meet payment deadlines of regional branches, there was no choice. Yuri Ivanovich was told to recreate the file as best he could.

Respondents were asked to read the stories and decide which plan of action they would follow. Then they were asked to review a list of alternate considerations and indicate which they considered most important under the circumstances. This list of considerations comprises a set of alternatives that present a forced choice between different conceptions of justice. The levels were devised from the extensive theory and research on Kohlberg’s work on moral/ethical development. Examples of the levels are listed below.

**Stage Score Definitions**

1. **Concern for obedience and punishment**
   To avoid punishment one must be obedient—fear of punishment is a major motivator.

2. **Concern for cooperation and reciprocity in a single instance**
   Cooperative interactions are entered into because each party has something to gain. “Let’s make a deal.” It is the exchange that makes it fair. Bargains are struck to achieve self-interest.

3. **Concern for enduring personal relationship**
   Maintaining good relationships over time is valued; approval of others is important. Be kind and considerate and you will get along with others—reciprocal role taking; inner disposition is important.

4. **Concern for law and duty**
   Authority maintains morality; everyone in society is obligated and protected by the law; respect for the authority of law is part of one’s obligation to society.

P (5 and 6) **Concern for abstract principles of societal cooperation**
   This mode of reasoning envisions the mind of a hypothetical rational person—what agreement would a hypothetical group of rational people accept? Impartiality is central.
If a respondent consistently selected stage four (law and duty) items across the three dilemmas, we inferred that this concept of justice is preeminent in the person's thinking. If, on the other hand, stages five or six, usually labeled P, was consistently selected, we assumed that principled morality is the dominant factor in that person's thinking. The scores were calculated by summing the number of times relevant items were chosen as the first, second, third, or fourth consideration and weighting these ranks by 4, 3, 2, and 1, respectively. The score is typically expressed as a percentage, though the scores can be considered parametric (adapted from Rest 1986, 196–97).

This instrument has been validated both theoretically and empirically in a series of studies (Stewart and Sprinthall 1991, 1993). Using the Cronbach Alpha technique, the reliability was estimated in three samples between $r = +.53$ and $r = +.67$ and can be considered comparable to other more established measures of this type (Rest 1986).

### Data Collection

The data were collected in two phases. In December 1998, the survey was administered to 113 public officials who were enrolled as students at the Russian Academy of Public Service. Table 2 displays the profile of these study participants.

Respondents were from 11 of the 12 regions, with only the Kaliningrad Oblast not being represented. Half of the respondents were from the central (Moscow) region, and 10 percent were from the western (St. Petersburg) region. Each of the 11 regions represented had at least two survey respondents. Eighty-two percent of the respondents were from the central (Moscow) region. Each of the 11 regions represented had at least two survey respondents. Eighty-two percent of the respondents were from cities of more than five million people, while 20 percent were from cities with populations of fewer than 100,000 people.

All of the respondents were relatively new to their current positions, with the date of appointment or election to positions ranging from 1985 to 1998. A majority of the respondents (55 percent) had assumed their positions in the last three years, with only 6 percent in their positions more than 10 years. Eleven percent of the respondents had been elected to their current position, while 89 percent were appointed. In the Russian Federation, there are five classifications of state ranks of the state service. The lowest rank, junior state rank, was represented by 18 percent of respondents. Senior state rank (the second classification) had 29 percent, leading state rank (the third classification) was represented by 28 percent of the respondents. The two highest state ranks, chief state rank and highest state rank, were represented by 19 percent and 5 percent of the respondents, respectively. Men were a strong majority, representing 71 percent of the respondents. All of the respondents had at least a bachelor's degree or professional degree, with 31.5 percent having a technical degree in engineering or science. The group was relatively young, with 46 percent in their 30s and 43 percent in their 40s.

The officials were asked to complete the survey in small groups of approximately 10 individuals. Stewart introduced the project to each group and a Russian associate translated, assuring each participant that we would answer any questions. Respondents were assured of anonymity, and no one from the Russian Academy of Public Service was in the room while the officials completed the questionnaire. Only two of the 113 questionnaires were unusable due to incomplete responses.

In the second phase of data collection, we conducted seven focus groups in the fall of 1999, when we probed patterned differences between Russian, United States, and Polish officials that emerged in our analysis of the structured interviews. The focus groups included 39 individuals (24 females and 15 males) who were selected from the Russian Academy of Public Service. The focus groups were conducted in Russian with simultaneous translation in English. A member of the research team typed the English translation as it was provided. The sessions were taped, and the English translation of the Russian was then checked and corrected by a third translator who had not been in the sessions.

### Findings

The first task of the study was simply to assess the ethical-reasoning scores of this sample of Russian public administrators and to note differences between them and similar Polish and U.S. respondents.
In this Russian sample, the preference was strongest overall for principled reasoning (41 percent), indicating a marked ease with which Russian public administrators both identify and are drawn to abstract principles that theoretically undergird democratic systems. As assessed by the composite score, our Russian respondents sharply preferred principled reasoning over “law and order” reasoning, in which they registered a markedly lower score of 30 percent. Table 3 compares the Russian, Polish, and U.S. responses.

When we examine the three stories upon which the composite score is based, one striking difference emerges. As table 4 demonstrates, respondents were strongly drawn to principled reasoning in the promotion and data vignettes, but dropped precipitously in their P scores on the “friends in government” story. In the friends vignette, respondents indicated a preference for moral reasoning, motivated by concern for obedience and punishment as the preferred choice. Thirty-three percent of the public administrators made this choice, providing the lowest moral-reasoning score to emerge yet in our studies of public officials. Analysis of the individual items from which the scores were composed suggests that Russian officials are strongly motivated by a recognition that accepting bribes could result in a prison sentence, and this harsh reality may simply overwhelm other avenues of reasoning. Below, in our discussion of action choices, we address this issue further.

Perhaps the most striking finding in the SSMS score distribution is the relatively low stage four scores for the Russian sample. In contrast to findings in Poland and the United States, where stage four (law and order) reasoning is the preferred choice of public officials, Russian public administrators record markedly low stage four scores (29.9 percent), in contrast to 47 percent for Polish officials and 48 percent and 47 percent for two U.S. samples.

Having established that the Russian officials surveyed differ markedly from U.S. and Polish officials in their strong preference for principled reasoning (in two scenarios) and their seeming selection against stage four reasoning, we looked at demographic factors (age, gender, education), organizational factors (levels of responsibility, elected versus appointed, tenure in position), context (size of city, region), and attitude toward decommunization as factors that might explain the variation in moral-reasoning patterns.

Perhaps due to the small sample size, our analysis indicated that most of the variables bore no relationship to moral reasoning. It is noteworthy that, unlike in Poland, moral reasoning did not vary by whether the respondent was elected or appointed. However, four factors merit specific discussion: gender, attitude toward decommunization, length of tenure in position, and educational background.

### Gender

While there were not statistically significant differences between male and female moral-reasoning styles, the pattern evident in Poland emerges in Russia as well. Women are more likely to select one of the two highest stages of moral reasoning than their male counterparts (74.3 percent versus 70 percent) and, within the two highest stage scores, women are more likely to select principled reasoning than are men (42.9 percent versus 40.6 percent). In light of this finding, future research should probe statistically significant differences that might be revealed in a larger sample size.

What did emerge from the focus groups were deeply entrenched attitudes about gender differences that have implications for how Russians perceive the political process. The dominant view among public administrators was that men are better suited to politics than women (54 percent agreed; 22 percent disagreed), with men believing this much more strongly than women (63 percent of men and 35 percent of women agreed). While some participants advanced both social roles and active discrimination as the reason behind men’s advantage in the political domain, the most common interpretation focused on women’s more principled nature—an orientation judged by participants to be incompatible with political activity in Russia. One male respondent noted, “Politics in Russia is considered … ignoble which is why women are not in a hurry to become involved in politics.” Another woman elaborated on this point: “There are no good rules; we don’t know exactly what is good and what is bad in politics. Women [who go into] politics are inclined toward rules and principles … so women are eliminated quickly in political life. Politics is a game without any rules in our society.” Still another agreed, “Women try to rule by justice and when they [can’t] … they leave politics on their own or are forced to leave.” Juxtaposing this discussion with the finding of a strong preference for principled reasoning
overall for these Russian respondents, it seems that it is women's propensity to act on their principles that makes them inappropriate candidates for political roles. This raises important questions about the relationship between beliefs and action choices, which we address below.

Decommunization

In Poland, we found the legacy of communism was a politically divisive topic among current public administrators. Should individuals affiliated with the former communist government be “screened” to determine whether their prior involvement compromised their ability to serve in a democratic regime? Alternatively, should a “thick line” be drawn under the past and all be given an opportunity to participate fully in the new democratic regimes (Stewart and Stewart 1995)?

Obviously, the issue of “decommunization” in Russia is posed in a very different context. First, communism was a twentieth-century, not a post–World War II phenomenon. Second, virtually everyone active in government before, during, and after the fall of communism and the introduction of democratic processes had communist credentials of some kind. Still, the basic question of how to handle the specter of the non-democratic past is an issue for contemporary public administrators. Through five questions we probed beliefs that respondents held regarding decommunization. As table 5 reveals, this sample of public administrators showed a strong opposition to decommunization, with 82 percent rejecting a statement that participants in the prior regime should not be appointed to current posts, 96 percent indicating that all expertise had to be utilized, and 74 percent rejecting the view that the public could not have confidence in leaders from the communist past. In contrast to Poland, where public officials took a sharp pro-decommunization stand on these questions, the Russian public administrators were unwilling to jettison their history. On two questions, however, the Russian respondents provided responses that suggest a realistic assessment of the political landscape they face. Forty-four percent of respondents recognized that individuals who had participated in the former regime may lack a commitment to democracy and capitalism, a response that was significantly related in this sample to law and duty, or stage four reasoning. And only 25 percent believed that the records were accurate enough to permit a fair and just screening process if it were undertaken.

The clear conclusion from this analysis is that the drive for decommunization, often a significant political factor in former communist countries in the Soviet orbit, is not an issue for public administrators in the Russian Federation. Continuity with the past is an accepted and inevitable feature of Russian democracy. But because we know that growth in one’s capacity to engage in moral reasoning requires some level of dissonance, the nearly complete absence of this dissonance may be cause for concern. It also highlights the enigma of the high-principled reasoning scores in the Russian sample.

Tenure in Organizational Position

A statistically significant relationship appeared between time in position and principled reasoning. Public officials who had held their positions for two years or fewer were more likely to select principled choices than their more experienced counterparts. Respondents who had been in office two years or fewer scored 43 percent on principled reasoning, while their more experienced counterparts, with tenure of four years or more, recorded only 23 percent (p < .031). We know from our analysis of the age variable that this is not simply an effect of age, because there is no relationship between age and reasoning styles. We also note that this relationship did not appear in either our Polish or U.S. studies. Rather, based on our focus group discussions, it may simply be an accommodation of the more experienced administrators to what focus groups referred to as “the Russian reality”—discussed below as a belief that today, principles can’t actually guide practice in Russian public life.

Education

Finally, a statistically significant relationship between moral-reasoning style and educational background appeared in this sample. Respondents with technical educations were more likely to prefer stage four reasoning than their non-technically educated colleagues (35.7 percent versus 27.2 percent, [p < .003]). There was less difference for principled reasoning, with non-technically educated respondents scoring 42.5 percent and technically educated scoring 39 percent. Because we also found an education effect in relation to moral reasoning in Poland, we note the continuing importance of educational interventions in moral development. Future research that probes the absence of a rule-of-law orientation in Russia should note

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Table 5</th>
<th>Attitudes Toward Decommunization in Russia (percent)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Favor decommunization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous participants should not be appointed</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use all expertise</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communists lack commitment to democracy</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public cannot have confidence in communism</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Records not accurate</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p = < .046
this apparent greater capacity of the technically educated cohort to identify law and order as the moral basis for action as well as a lower capacity for principled thinking.

**Behavioral Choices and Focus Group Discussion**

In addition to the main finding that denotes the levels of judgment selected by the administrators, we expanded our analysis by examining the recommended courses of action selected by the participants. This is sometimes referred to as the action choice and was developed by Thoma for Rest’s “defining issues test.”

Table 6 presents the findings from our analyses of the action choices in each dilemma and the relationship between the action choice and the principled-reasoning score ($P$ score). We were interested in several analyses of these choices. First, what did the profiles look like on an overall basis, and how did the profiles relate to levels of principled reasoning and to discussions in the focus groups? A behavioral choice by itself, of course, is most easily subject to social conventions and may not reveal substantive information. For that reason, we created further comparisons (table 6).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dilemma</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>$P$ Score</th>
<th>ANOVA to $P$ Score</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Should Sergey be promoted?</td>
<td>Promote</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>F=2.63 &lt; .07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Can’t decide</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Don’t promote</td>
<td>70**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Should Alexandre accept the cruise?</td>
<td>Cruise</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>F=3.73 &lt; .02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Can’t decide</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Don’t cruise</td>
<td>70**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Should Yuri recreate the data?</td>
<td>Recreate</td>
<td>61**</td>
<td>F=3.29 &lt; .04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Can’t decide</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Don’t recreate</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>

In the first scenario, there is a substantial consensus to resist the pressure to promote an unqualified staff member and a trend indicating that such a choice is related to the level of principled reasoning. The higher the reasoning, the greater the likelihood of refusing to promote. However, the discussion in the focus groups seemed to indicate this choice represented what the participants called a “double” answer, providing a socially acceptable response. At the same time, nearly all seven groups mentioned a common practice called “telephone” appointment, through which department heads or others higher up would simply call the administrator and strongly suggest that particular individuals be hired, regardless of their qualifications. In fact, in one group, this was referred to as the “law of the telephone.” This suggests that Russian administrators are well aware of the discrepancy between what they should do and the realities of the current bureaucratic hierarchy. Still, in this scenario, which contains a clear “right” choice, the level of principled reasoning is much higher among those who choose this option.

In the second scenario, there was an even greater number who rejected the bribery pressure and selected *Don’t cruise* ($N = 82$) as the best choice. The relationship between that choice and principled reasoning, however, was ambiguous because higher levels of reasoning were related to the *Can’t decide* option ($F = 3.73, p < .02$). The discussion in the focus groups seemed to indicate that the question of bribery generated substantial dissonance, especially at a feeling level. The problem appeared to evoke both hypocrisy and hostility. Those higher up in administrative positions were seen as routinely accepting such bribes without negative consequences. For participants in the survey, however, most of whom were middle-level managers, there was a strong suggestion that they would be fired or in jail for such an activity. Punishment, as one put it, is “very strict,” or as another noted, “The profit is less than your loss.” Also, it was noted that the higher ups are able to accept large bribes when they are kept quiet; such a quiet bribe would work because, as one noted, “In Russia, there is not a fear that everyone is going to court.” The implication is that middle managers might take the heat while the superiors avoid negative reactions. Those who can’t decide may manifest the greatest ethical complexity in their thinking.

In these two scenarios, then, the focus group discussions definitely clarified the different meanings between the denoted action choice and the real agenda that confronted these administrators. They were clearly aware of the choice based on democratic principles of fairness and equity at an ideal level. Simultaneously, they were also very much aware of the actual procedures in place and the discrepancy between the ideal and the real.

In a third scenario, a majority favored recreating the file, and there was a significant relationship between that choice and the level of principled reasoning ($F = 3.29, p < .04$). Again, however, the discussion in the focus groups was needed to clarify the meaning of these choices. It turned out that many believed the issue presented was not a genuine dilemma. They indicated that the Russian solution to such a problem would be to ensure that everyone would receive some minimal amount. This, they said, would be a “humanistic” solution, so that especially the pensioners would get something. Apparently, the idea that such a recreated database might reduce benefits to some deserving recipients did not cause much dissonance among the administrators. There was, instead, almost a passive acceptance that such procedures may not work with a high degree of accuracy. As one person put it, as long as there was some minimum distribution, “If people receive less than they deserve, that’s just fine—in fact, that would be normal.” Thus, in the Russian context, there is no clear "cor-
rect” decision in this scenario. Those who took the position that it is better to have a modestly beneficial outcome by recreating the data have higher principled reasoning than those who would refuse to recreate the data and jeopardize providing any benefits.

From these analyses, then, we can see the importance of examining the action choices in light of the open-ended discussions in the focus groups. The discussion provided an in-depth understanding of the discrepancies between the ideal and the actual choices in the first two scenarios and important information about how the third scenario was reconstructed to fit the current and previous administrative cultures of the country.

Discussion of Findings

Highly Principled Reasoning Scores

The first issue to address in discussing these findings is the Russian respondents’ strong preference for principled reasoning in two of the three scenarios, in comparison with Polish and even U.S. respondents. Because this is a mode of reasoning that we still aspire to in more democratically mature public administrative systems, how might this finding be explained? The focus groups provided some insight.

When presented with this finding and asked why, the focus groups provided two lines of explanation: One was cynical, and one was more hopeful about the future. The cynical explanation was simply that these choices were not sincere, that people answered in order to position themselves favorably. For example, they commented that respondents answered as such because, “They look better in their own eyes by answering like this.” Others said, “People are answering as if they were at a press conference or in front of the TV camera—guided by a standard answer.”

One explained that “when you complete a survey you are doing official research, [thus] you know that this will be recorded … and, according to tradition, … it is better to say one thing and do another. This is the reason a lot of people in Russia pick some principled solution… They know in real life they would choose another solution.”

When we countered that the responses were anonymous thus individual “positioning” didn’t make sense, the response was cynical again. Respondents smiled, glanced at one another, and said little. Bashkirova and Hesli (1993) have noted the problem identified here of Russian respondents wanting to have a “good performance” in interview settings. This explanation, however, begs the question of why Russians are more inclined to feign conscientiousness than administrators in other countries.

But a strong majority of focus group participants held a more favorable perspective. Many respondents indicated that these principled responses represented an ideal, not to be confused with what people would actually do. Many focus group participants believed the principled response reflected that public officials know what they should do and long for a system where these principles would prevail. One participant noted, “Ideas such as justice mean a lot to us.” Another indicated they chose principled responses because they “wanted their work [to be] like that.” Some explained that principled reasons are selected because they reflect the Russian dream of democracy. “It is the ideal. A specific feature of our Russian life is a dream about the bright future.” Several participants seemed to agree that the historical experience with ideology prepared Russians to select an ideal as a rationale for behavior. “For Russians, what is important is ideology, to follow some abstract principles.” They were comfortable with this choice, even recognizing that there was a “disconnection between real life and ideals.”

On the one hand, it is heartening to find this population of Russian public administrators so able to identify the principled basis for action in these ethically conflicted situations. We know such cognitive capacity is a prerequisite to moral action. However, their apparent willingness to accept a disconnection between the principles that should undergird the system and bureaucratic life as it is actually experienced is obviously troublesome. This phenomenon has been cited by legal scholars as an impediment to the rule of law in Russia (Ahdieh 1997, 37). This disconnection was particularly evident in our respondents’ assessment that women are less suited than men for political roles because women try to act on their principles. It may also explain why public officials with longer tenure in their jobs are less likely to select principled responses.

The Problem of Stage Four

The levels of reasoning as presented in table 7 indicate a substantial difference between Russia and both Poland and the United States in the selection of stage four “law and duty” reasoning. In both Poland and the United States, stage four was the model level at basically the same degree (47 percent to 48 percent). This means that, in general, when confronted with an administrative problem, those officials are largely guided by the rule of law rather than by other levels of reasoning. In a sense, that finding was something of a surprise, given the substantial difference in democratic histories of the countries. However, it indicates that in both countries, administrators approach such problem solving with highly similar patterns in spite of some obvious historical differences.

Table 7 Stage Four Reasoning (percent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Poland (n = 485)</th>
<th>United States (n = 136)</th>
<th>Russia (n = 111)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>29.9</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td></td>
<td>48</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td></td>
<td>47</td>
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</table>
When we examined the Russian responses, however, we found that stage four scores were 18 percent lower. This indicates that less than one-third of their selected reasons as a basis for action were guided by law and duty concepts. To illuminate reasons for such a difference, we again turned to the focus group discussions. Here, we found substantial narrative that helped explain such a discrepancy. In fact, the groups frequently mentioned that there is very little respect for the rule of the law. "Laws here don't work well," one commented. "Laws aren't kept here," another volunteered. "Our laws contradict each other," "laws reflect the ruler at the time," and "laws change and reflect the boss' views" or "here, laws neither protect nor defend" were representative comments. In fact, one administrator noted that many parts of the current civil code have not been adopted by the Duma (the Russian Parliament). As a result, many still rely on the code from 1964 during the Communist era. It is clear that what we consider the essence of the rule of law, with the opportunity for a fair trial and equality before the court system, has a completely different meaning to the public administrator in Russia at the present time. Russian administrators in this study view the law as arbitrary and a tool of the ruling class without safeguards for either middle-level administrators or common citizens.

These findings are reminiscent of two earlier studies: one in Poland during their communist era, and one in Brazil during one of their governments ruled by a military junta. In Poland, as reported by Jasinska-Kania (1988), there was also an absence of stage four reasoning in profiles of students and adults during the communist regime. She reports that there was great distrust of the "so-called" rule of law, because the laws themselves were administered so arbitrarily as to reflect the interests of the ruling groups. Similarly in Brazil, Paulo Freire (1973) reports the absence of stage four reasoning in his levels of critical consciousness—for instance, intransitive and semi-intransitive parallel Kohlberg’s stages one and two, naive transitive is equivalent to stage three, and critical conscious is similar to Kohlberg’s levels of principled reasoning. Thus, research in Brazil under an authoritarian regime yielded similar results as research from Poland during communism, that is, the relative absence of stage four reasoning. Such a low regard for legal codes, of course, has significant negative consequences for any attempt to manage a country in transition from an authoritarian to a democratic framework. It is a particular problem as expressed in the daily work of public officials whose principal task is to implement policy as articulated in law.

The Problem of Context

When we developed the SSMS, we deliberately chose to use context-relevant issues for public officials. We did not want to use general dilemmas, because we were convinced we would learn more about levels of ethical judgment by posing issues and problems that would have direct relevance to the daily tasks that officials might face. The results from both the United States and Poland had indicated that not only were the reasoning profiles highly similar, but also that the stage-typed reasoning was the same across each of the three dilemmas. For example, stage one, two, or three reasoning was rarely employed on any of the dilemmas. This indicated that fear of punishment, bribery, and social conformity were almost never selected as the most important issues in seeking a resolution to an agency problem. Also, these profiles indicated a stage and sequence progression from less adequate to more morally adequate reasoning patterns, with no substantial reversals across the varied dilemmas.

The results from the Russian sample, however, contained a major difference on one of the dilemmas, the profile of responses to the "friends in government" scenario (table 8). In that case, almost one-third of the reasoning levels indicated that punishment in the form of jail time or loss of employment were key factors in the decision making. Only slightly more than one-quarter of reasoning levels represented either a principled level or a stage four law and duty orientation. Such a profile of low-stage reasoning among adult populations is unusual when compared to other research in this mode. For example, neither Rest (1986) nor Kohlberg (1981) ever reported such a level from cross-cultural or longitudinal studies with large samples of adults.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasoning (percent)</th>
<th>One, Two</th>
<th>Three</th>
<th>Four</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>No response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>32.6</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In seeking explanations for such an unusual finding, we again turned to the focus groups. We found that across all seven groups, the discussion of the issues in the "friends in government" problem engendered substantial dissonance, especially at an emotional level. This situation prompted comments about a double standard—that individuals at the top can get away with accepting such favors, while they would go to jail or lose their positions. Implicitly, they felt that such punishment should be handed out to all officials as an effective means of controlling such behavior. Also, they felt that laws or concepts of the greatest good for the greatest number would not sway such officials. As we pointed out previously, there is very little regard for the legal code as a means of redress. In the ide-
ology of the government in power, bribery is seen as effective and usually well hidden. The focus group participants projected a sense that they were attempting to do the right thing as relatively youthful and committed public officials, yet it is difficult to accept the apparent hypocrisy of different sets of rules according to position. In our view, this may have caused these officials to feel that only draconian measures would work in the current situation of bribery and corruption. This also is a reminder of the importance of employing dilemmas that represent the real issues confronted by officials rather than generic dilemmas deliberately removed from professional tasks. As these middle-level officials seek to create a political legitimacy and can recognize and employ principled reasoning, it will be extremely important to sponsor and nurture the development of an ethical environment at the highest levels of government. We know that the officials in our samples are striving to reason at high levels and select appropriate action choices. If the conditions can be created to establish a rule of law as a complement to such principled reasoning and behavior, there may be a real opportunity to anchor government policies more firmly in an emerging democratic tradition. An alternate explanation is that accepting bribes is not wrong because high-ranking officials do it and others deserve the extra benefits. They refuse only because they fear getting caught and the severity of the punishment. Unlike the attitudes of officials in other countries, far more administrators are inclined to do the “right” thing for the “wrong,” (that is, ethically immature) reason.

Implications for Theory, Research, and Practice

A number of issues derived from the differential profile of ethical reasoning by the Russian participants hold implications for theory, research, and practice.

Theoretical Issues

The major theoretical question derived from our results focuses on the universal core values and, specifically, the universality of the invariant sequence of reasoning. The SSMS instrument is based on the Kohlberg/Rest method of assessing moral reasoning. Generally, when standard dilemmas are used as the assessment method by either Kohlberg or Rest, the sequence is almost always consistent—an even progression through the stages from the less adequate to the more adequate levels of justice reasoning. Of course, nearly all of these studies were conducted in a wide variety of Western democracies. Both longitudinal and cross-sectional studies confirmed the steady progression through the sequence based on age, education, and role-taking opportunities. However, researchers also uncovered some interesting anomalies. The tribal culture of the Atayals indicated that children progressed though the early stages in a manner that paralleled the results for Western societies. During adolescence, however, the developmental sequence was arrested. The elders insisted on the use of magical thinking (a kind of animism) and severely punished any incipient use of formal logical thought (Kohlberg 1984). A forceful, comprehensive nondemocratic adult culture can inhibit the growth of universal justice reasoning. Even in democratic societies, subgroups can be indoctrinated in a manner that restricts their developmental progression in particular domains. For example, Sapp (1986) and Peatling (1977) found evidence of a ceiling effect in religious thought on the part of some highly fundamentalist religious groups.

In a sense, these findings are similar to our Russian data. To be sure, the adults in our sample have learned to reason logically at principled levels, and certainly the long history of their achievements in arts and science indicates that the adults, in general, have progressed to very high levels of cognitive process. Vygotsky (1962) clearly demonstrated those highly developed abilities in his work in Russia, even during the Lenin–Stalin eras. The systematic gap in the transition from stage three (social conformity) to principled thought may indicate that consistent experience with prior and current regimes has taught Russian public officials to distrust concepts of law as a stepping stone to further higher ethical reasoning. Theoretically, this could indicate a content and stage interaction in any particular domain. Recall that we deliberately selected content issues that administrators confront on a regular basis rather than questions about general ethics. Thus, our context-relevant issues probably caused them to view the problems in terms of their own domain of professional responsibility.

We may conclude that in arenas with context-relevant questions, there may be a gap in the sequence based on both history and current events. Although it certainly is not definitive, it is interesting to speculate on the differences in responses according to story content. The Russian sample produced low stage four scores on the first two problems. The focus group discussions confirmed that these issues were central to their own experience, such as the promotion question and the bribery question. On the third issue about the database, they indicated an unfamiliarity with the problem and the stage four scores rose 11 to 15 points over the first two stories. The implication is that the theoretical assumption of an invariant sequence of reasoning must be tempered by the reality of the relationship between story content and the relevant life experience of our research participants.

Research Issues

From one vantage point, this research is part of an ongoing process by which we are trying to understand the moral-
reasoning capacity of public officials in postcommunist countries as they undertake the exercise of administration inherent in their public roles. Our findings have revealed some important contrasts between Poland and Russia in that regard and confirm the view that history and culture make a difference. The European-style democracy, with its Western style of public administration, provided some historical context for developments in Poland but is entirely absent in Russia. In this context, our findings raise serious questions about the viability of democratic institutions in the Russian Federation, at least in the near term.

But an equally significant implication of this research stems from the gap revealed between ethical reasoning and actual practice in Russia today. While it is heartening that public officials in this study were able to select principled reasons as a basis for action, the findings also highlight the need to develop additional assessment methods to predict the relationship between stage of reasoning and behavior with greater accuracy and subtlety. As we have pointed out in an extensive review (Stewart, Sprinthall, and Shafer 2000), the stage–behavior link is positive yet does not account for other important factors. Rest, Narvaez, Bebeau, and Thoma (1999) have suggested that the level of ethical reasoning is one of four interrelated domains in predicting moral behavior. Interpersonal sensitivity, moral motivation, and ego strength are all equally important in addition to ethical reasoning. Thus, research in this area needs to move toward a multimodal system of assessment to improve our ability to predict human behavior in what is an extraordinarily complex system, the exercise of administrative discretion within a public service setting.

Practice

Lastly, we are also interested in the question of professional development, that is, practical applications. In the case of Russia, this poses a set of unusual questions. Research in established democracies such as the United States has shown that levels of ethical reasoning and behavior can be positively affected through an extensive dialogue method at the high school, college, and professional levels (Rest, Narvaez, Bebeau, and Thoma 1999). Given the similarity in profiles between the United States and Poland, we have argued elsewhere that the same effects would hold (Stewart, Sprinthall, and Siemienska 1997) because there is a consensus focused on either the rule of law or democratic principles as the guiding forms of reasoning. In a broad sense, government is seen as an instrument of the people. Public administrators in this context can discuss important ethical dilemmas in work settings and in professional organizations. Ethical codes can be developed and revised to promote greater civic responsibility. The challenge in practice is to create the time and programs for public officials to have those learning opportunities.

If our findings from the sample of Russian administrators are valid, however, a different set of problems emerges. There is significant variation in ethical reasoning according to dilemma content. In fact, in one dilemma, stage four and P responses constituted barely 50 percent of the total responses. This huge spread was consistent with the focus group discussions. In those meetings, it was noted that administrators do not discuss such issues openly in their work settings. Instead, they work out methods to handle such problems as "the law of telephone" and "quiet" bribes, either by passive acceptance or by developing their own kinship system to counter the orders from above. How to nurture a democratic ethic in such an authoritarian yet anomic atmosphere looms as a major issue. Certainly, one positive indicator is their ability to reason at relatively high levels of principled thought, particularly in the first and third case studies in the SSMS. Thus, we are not dealing with a ceiling effect, but with almost the complete range of thought from punishment to principled reasoning. Whereas in mature, democratic societies, officials can rely on the law as the foundation for principled thinking, in Russia there is a gap in the stages of moral development that some cross but many do not. This very gap has profound implications for practice.

Conclusion

Our objective has been to describe our findings on moral reasoning among a sample of Russian public officials, to point out differences in comparison with earlier studies of United States and Polish officials, and to suggest some broad implications for theory, research, and practice. We found that Russian officials tend to express a higher preference for principled reasoning and markedly lower preference for stage four reasoning than their U.S. or Polish counterparts. Consistent with the United States pattern, however, were trends indicating that females tend to select principled reasoning more frequently than males. Thus, a larger sample of Russian respondents might uncover statistically significant differences, as were found in Poland. In fact, of all the demographic variables considered, only two were statistically associated with differences in moral reasoning: Officials newer to their offices had higher P scores, and technically educated respondents reported higher stage four scores in Russia. Finally, the drive for decommunization, a strong feature in Poland, is simply not an issue for public officials in the Russian Federation.

Perhaps the most difficult conundrum of this analysis resides in the response of these administrators to their current administrative challenges. Respondents expressed an alarming willingness to accept a disconnection between principles that undergird the system and bureaucratic life as they experience it. But simultaneously, our respondents
seem willing to accept severe means to deal with failure to abide by the principles in particular cases, as illustrated by the responses to the scenario on "favor" trading.

From the perspectives of theory, research, and practice, this study of Russian administrators challenged us on all fronts. First, the theoretical assumption of an invariant sequence of movement across stages, fundamental to the Kohlbergian tradition, is challenged by the reality of a stage gap in this Russian sample. The interaction of life experiences of the public administrators and story content makes a difference. Next, for research, this study points to the need to build better assessments of the relationship between moral reasoning and behavior that capture the reality of highly stressed administrative situations. Finally, from the perspective of practice, this study portrays the enormous challenges faced in the daily life of Russian public administrators and highlights the crucial role of administrative and legal structures in supporting ethical action. Today, the challenges to practice are daunting for these public servants.

In the Russian context, the problems of reform are substantial because there are no obvious points of intervention or champions to intervene. While it is certainly true that the comparison countries in this study are vulnerable at times to many of the system breakdowns described here, it seems to us that the difference between the work experience of Russian public officials and their counterparts in the United States or Poland is profound. For the Russian official, the question is fundamental: Where are the support structures to promote and protect administrators who act in accord with the democratic ethic? At this juncture in Russian history, the overall prospects appear to be stark. Can the nation move from its authoritarian past and avoid the prospect of alienation while re-rooting its institutions in democratic form? Many years ago, Arendt (1958) warned of the difficulties created when a people remain rootless, alienated, and atomized.

Our sample of Russian public administrators appears to be caught in the middle. They understand democratic principles on one hand, but seem painfully aware of the contradictions posed by their work experience on the other. It may not be an overstatement to say that the resolution of this real-life dilemma may determine the immediate future for the country as a whole.

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**Acknowledgments**

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1. The Stewart-Sprinthall Management Survey (SSMS) is patterned after more general measures of moral judgment from the original work of Lawrence Kohlberg and James Rest. In the SSMS, administrators were asked to respond to three actual ethical quandaries that individuals encounter in U.S. public administration. The content of the three dilemmas in the instrument was created by Stewart, based on her lengthy experience in problem-solving discussions with executives in a public-sector executive development program. The initial test of the instrument and a discussion of its potential applications appear in a chapter published in 1991 (Stewart and Sprinthall 1991). Subsequently, city and county managers were studied in North Carolina and Florida. That work and the methodology involved are summarized in the Handbook of Administrative Ethics (Stewart and Sprinthall 1994). These studies provide theoretical/construct validity and empirical support for the instrument as a measure of ethical reasoning in public administrative decision making (Stewart and Sprinthall 1991, 1993, 1994). Under a grant from the Division of International Programs—USSR/Eastern European Cooperative Science Program of the National Science Foundation, we studied the mode of ethical reasoning reported by 485 local government officials in 12 towns in two provinces in Poland in 1993 and 1994 (see Stewart, Sprinthall, and Siemien ska 1997.)

2. During a visit to the Russian Academy of Public Service in fall of 1996, Stewart conducted a preliminary review of the English version of the Polish questionnaire, with Russian colleagues to assess the appropriateness of its wording and content in the Russian context. In this review, Russian colleagues judged the instrument appropriate. Some minor changes were made in the SSMS stories to fit the Russian situation; however, the basic tensions in the story and the story line remained unchanged. Colleagues at RACS translated the questionnaire into Russian. The Russian version was back-translated into English and, after adjustments for accuracy, re-translated into Russian. Next, a team of faculty from the Academy analyzed the re-translated version in October 1998. The objective was to assure that a broader group of individuals who both knew the respondent population and understood survey research could assess the effectiveness of the instrument. In these discussions, one individual believed the questionnaire might require the respondents to be high-level experts on the civil service; the others believed it would be understandable to respondents. The consensus of this group was that most respondents would not answer the questions on party affiliation. Finally, the revised questionnaire was administered to a focus group of eight respondents who were then students in the Academy.

In this session, participants were asked to raise their hands if they did not understand the questions they were being asked, and they were told the researcher would talk with them individually in each case. A group discussion followed the completion of the questionnaire. These officials indicated that they had no problems answering the questionnaire; they indicated that the “stories” fit the Russian context and that all of the other questions made sense to them. They indicated there was nothing offensive in the questionnaire, and they did not mind answering the demographic questions. However, they thought they would be more convinced that anonymity would be assured if we asked for “rank” and “profession” rather than position. The group also thought that geographic region would be an important factor in determining variation in responses and suggested it be added. Beyond these items, the students simply wanted to discuss the stories in the SSMS component of the questionnaire. We accepted all of the suggestions of the focus group as clarifying improvements on the instrument.

3. The Russian Academy of Public Service only admits students who hold university degrees. They enroll in PhD programs, second degrees, or short-course certificate programs. Students who come to the Academy are typically civil servants, ministers, or elected officials. Their employers recommend them, and the cost of their attendance is covered by state subsidy. For a full year, the cost of attendance is about $3,000. About 15 percent of the students are now self-paying and admitted directly by the Academy. Most of these are working for nongovernment officials or are in business.

4. The focus groups were selected from the same population as the survey sample, students at the Russian Academy of Public Service. We did attempt to secure a higher proportion of women than appeared in the survey sample so that we could construct some predominately female and predominantly male groups. This helped us to explore the gender issues raised in the data analysis. We did not collect demographic data on the participants because we were attempting to gain insights rather than confirm findings. These focus group findings will inform the development of the next phase of this research, which will survey a significantly larger sample across the Russian Federation on administrative practice.

5. Party affiliation was collected but not analyzed due to limited response. Seven respondents indicated that they belonged to a party, five named the party, and all five were members of different parties.
References


Moral Reasoning in the Context of Reform: A Study of Russian Officials


