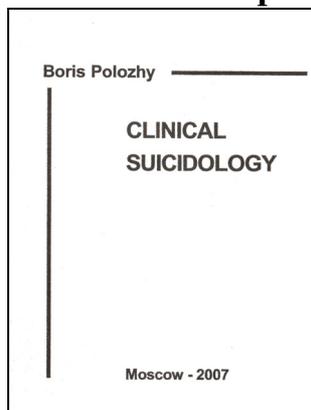


Review Paper

**CLINICAL SUICIDOLOGY
(Ethnocultural Aspects)**



Polozhy B. *Clinical Suicidology (Ethnocultural Aspects)*. Serbsky Centre for Social and Forensic Psychiatry, Moscow, 2007

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CONTENT

FOREWORD
Chapter 1 ETHNIC AND SPECIFICITY OF SUICIDAL BEHAVIOUR 1.1 Suicide rate indicators in different countries of the world 1.2 Completed suicide rates in the national entities of Russia
Chapter 2 ETHNOCULTURAL PECULIARITIES OF SUICIDES IN THE TOTAL POPULATION 2.1 Socio-demographic characteristics of suicidal persons belonging to finno-ugric and Slavic nationalities 2.2 Characteristics of completed suicides in finno-ugric and slavic subpopulations
Chapter 3 ETHNOCULTURAL PECULIARITIES OF SUICIDAL BEHAVIOUR OF MENTAL PATIENTS
Chapter 4 ETHNOCULTURAL ASPECTS OF THE PREVENTION OF SUICIDES AND ORGANIZATION OF SUICIDOLOGICAL ASSISTANCE 4.1 Ethnocultural approaches to the prevention of suicides and organization of suicidological assistance in the total population 4.2 Ethnocultural approaches to the prevention of suicidal behaviour of mental patients

The monograph deals with the ethno-cultural aspects of suicidal behaviours. The Author focuses specifically on the ethno-cultural factors determining, to a considerable extent, the moral and

ethical attitude towards suicide, thus leading to the possibility of premature mortality in the Russian population.

Suicide rates are particularly high in Baltic and Scandinavian countries compared to African, South European or Middle East Arab Countries.

The analysis focuses on those ethnic groups with the highest suicide rates: The Finno-Ugric, the Baltic and the Germanic group.

This study illustrates how, beyond all the different factors with a potential impact on suicidal behaviour (climatic, geographic, socio-economic and religious factors) the ethno-cultural root shows a sufficiently clear and consistent link with suicide rates. Understanding and taking into account the ethno-cultural factors is therefore of utmost importance for developing practical measures of suicide prevention and treatment for suicidal behaviours.

The Author offers an in-depth analysis of the link between traditionally accepted worldviews and principles of religious morality that may or may not influence the attitudes towards suicide within the ethnic groups included in the study.

Beside some psychological characteristics of the individual, such as heightened sensitivity, introversion, auto-aggressive ways of responding to stressful situations, significant cultural factors as traditional religious beliefs construct shared precepts that make it possible for an individual to consider suicide as a quite acceptable act, which does not contradict the principles of religious morality. Buddhism in Buryats, Shamanism in Nenets and Koryaks, some Christian ideas in Komi-Permyaks are a fanciful mixture endorsing a continuous process of rebirth of the soul, such that fear of suicide doesn't arise.

These cultural factors are paralleled with other kinds of suicide, as the altruistic suicide or the heroic suicide of the fanatical suicide bombers.

Furthermore, some very pragmatic contextual factors are taken into account. For example, in the Finno-Ugric group one of the most important characteristics of suicidal behaviour is alcoholic intoxication at the point of committing suicide as well as pre-existent mental conditions.

In addition to the study of facilitating factors for suicide, the Author suggests an ethno-cultural approach to the prevention of suicide and a possible way of setting up the organization of assistance to the whole population.

The suggested psychotherapeutic interventions are aimed at achieving a wider self-knowledge and developing a new constructive practice of communication in society.

While the nationality of the patient is not particularly important from the point of view of psychotropic drug therapy, the same does not apply to psychotherapy. On the contrary, here the ethno-cultural characteristics of the patient are of utmost importance.

It goes without saying that we entirely agree with the guidelines for suicide prevention and for the treatment of suicidal behaviours that this short but incisive monograph suggests.

Reviewed by Goffredo Bartocci