Theses and Dissertations

2013

The Social Construction of Orphanhood in Contemporary Russia: Mass Media Analysis

Marina Kudasova
Lehigh University

Follow this and additional works at: http://preserve.lehigh.edu/etd

 Part of the International and Comparative Education Commons

Recommended Citation

The Social Construction of Orphanhood in Contemporary Russia:

Mass Media Analysis

by

Marina Kudasova

A Thesis

Presented to the Graduate and Research Committee

of Lehigh University

in Candidacy for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in

Comparative and International Education

Lehigh University

April 2013

THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF ORPHANHOOD IN RUSSIA

THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF ORPHANHOOD IN RUSSIA

This thesis is accepted and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements of

Master of Arts in Comparative and International Education, College of Education, Lehigh

University.

THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF ORPHANHOOD IN CONTEMPORARY

RUSSIA: MASS MEDIA ANALYSIS

MARINA KUDASOVA

Date _____

Thesis Advisor

_____

Dr. Iveta Silova

Committee Members

_____

Dr. Peggy Kong

_____

Dr. Heather Johnson

Department Chair

_____

Dr. George DuPaul

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to my academic advisor, Dr. Iveta Silova, for her constant support, constructive feedback and her patience and optimism that made this research a pleasant journey of academic discovery. I want to greatly thank my thesis committee members, Dr. Peggy Kong and Dr. Heather Beth Johnson for their invaluable comments and suggestions that made my thesis a much stronger piece of scholarship, and for being such wonderful people.

I want to thank all the professors at Lehigh University with whom I had a chance to work or learn from. Special thanks to Dr. Laurence Upton, for his kindness and patience in explaining statistical analysis for me. I am thankful to Dr. Sothy Eng, who has also provided an opportunity for me to improve and train my research skills.

In addition, I would like to thank my friends who were always there for me to listen about my research, cheer me up, and give advice. Especially, I would like to thank Dr. Alla Korzh, Aman Karamlou, Fatih Aktas, Fauzia Nouristani, Victoria Orazova, Olga Mun, Cici and Leary Pakiding, who were being constant supporters of my research. I want to express my warmest appreciation to my mother, Galina, who is the greatest role model in my life, who deeply instilled in me a feeling of care and love for others.

Lastly, I would like to thank children from *Yantarik* orphanage in a Kaliningrad region, who inspired me to do this research and introduced me to their rich world of orphanhood. I devote this thesis to all the orphans in Russia and worldwide, expressing my sincere and fundamental belief in their agency, talent, and humanity. With all my heart I hope to see them succeeding in life and realizing their highest dreams and aspirations. With great love.

Table of Contents

List of Figures and Tables

Tables

Figures

Abstract

Historically, orphans in Russia have been objects of negative stereotypes. They have been portrayed as delinquent, dirty, violent, and unintelligent. Given the fact that mass media has a powerful influence on the production of knowledge and dominant visual representations, this study reveals the ways orphans have been portrayed in Russian mass media during the period 2007-2012. Using critical analysis of texts and images from a sample of TV channels, newspapers, and Internet materials, the study identifies the main themes and issues raised with regard to orphans in mass media, while discussing broader meanings and implications of these representations for orphans' lived realities. Following an overview of the historical, political, economic, and cultural contexts, the study reveals that orphans are mainly portrayed in a negative way. Yet, there are some attempts to create a more positive image of orphans and some narratives focused on placing orphans in families and solving their problems. Despite the progress, however, the study suggests that both negative and positive representations may pose dangers to orphans' identities, as well as hamper their ability to socialize and interact with the world. The comparison of mass media discourses with government policies suggests that the future of orphans in Russia seems unstable and unclear.

Key words: Russia, orphan, orphanhood, social construction, mass media.

The Social Construction of Orphanhood in Contemporary Russia:

Mass Media Analysis

Healthy, kind, polite, good looking, and smiling children—this is what I observed in one of the orphanages in the city of Kaliningrad, Russian Federation in 2006. At that time, I was leading an educational project "Window to the World," which exposed me to the world of orphanhood. Together with my colleagues from Germany, India, and the United States we were organizing a series of cultural presentations and social events for *detdomovtsy* (orphans). Having no previous experience of working with children who were left without parental support, I expected to see terrible conditions and hear heartbreaking stories, such as depressed, poorly dressed children, dilapidated institutions, and strict caretakers. Despite the pessimistic predictions, there was nothing shocking or unpleasant in the appearance of the orphaned children, institutions themselves, or attitudes of the caretakers. The staff was welcoming and friendly, and the *detskiy dom* (orphanage) was well equipped and clean, with freshly painted walls, pictures, and flowers.

Regardless of my actual experience of working with orphaned children, Russian society often portrays orphans as dirty, unhealthy, poor, delinquent, and unintelligent. In 2001-2002, Kuznetsova (2003) conducted research revealing the social perceptions of orphaned children in Saint-Petersburg, Russia. The study surveyed 1000 people, asking them to indicate two adjectives and two verbs that first came to their minds when thinking about *vospitannik detskogo doma* (the habitat of the orphanage, or orphaned child). Of 3739 words collected, 759 (19%) had positive connotations, 770 (19%) neutral, and 2210 (55%) negative. Among the most frequently recalled adjectives associated with

orphans were *poor, dirty, hungry, abandoned, scared,* and *dumb*. The most common list of verbs included *help, steal, drink* (assuming alcohol), *pity*, and *vandalize*.

The negative image of orphans has been also discussed by other researchers (Minchella, 2008; Astoiants, 2006; Schmidt, 2009; and Fujimura, Stoecker & Sudakova, 2002). Notably, the negative stereotypes have been identified to be one of the key barriers in adoption, as well as successful adaptation and integration of the orphans into the mainstream society. According to Shakhmanova (2010), for instance, about 30% of the orphans who left the *detskiy dom* while reaching their 18th birthday (the official age of maturity in Russia) became alcohol or drug addicts, another 30% joined criminal ranks, 10% committed suicide, and only about 20% managed to live a more or less a normal life.

Considering the statistics and taking into account the high number of orphans in post-Soviet Russia – a number that has reached the level of the World War II with approximately 700,000 children being placed in *detskiye doma* and about 100,000 children joining the rank of orphans each year, (State Data Bank on Orphans in Russia, 2011) – it seems vital to analyze the factors that dramatically affect orphans' lives. As such, the analysis of the social construction of orphanhood seems to be one of the keys in understanding the negative trends described earlier. Indeed, Kuznetsova (2003) identified that about 58.7% of the respondents from her research based their perceptions of *detdomovtsy* on information taken from the mass media. In comparison, only 27.8% of the participants articulated their opinion based on their personal experiences with orphans. These results indicate the power of the mass media to produce knowledge and socially construct the image of the orphans in contemporary Russia.

Although the role of the mass media in the social construction of orphans (and the stereotypes associated with orphanhood) is generally acknowledged, there is surprisingly limited scholarship devoted to the analysis of the mass media. To date only one study (Astoiants, 2006) has directly addressed the topic by analyzing political discourse about orphanhood during the Soviet and post-Soviet periods and discussing the implications of such discourses for social integration and exclusion of orphans. Using state archives (including the newspapers *Pravda* and *Izvestiya*, and radio programs), Astoiants (2006) provides a great overview of the changing political discourses during the period from 1917 to 2005. While the significance of her research is indisputable, TV and Internet sources, some of the most widely used sources of telecommunication and information today, were not taken into consideration.

This study aims to fill the gap in literature devoted to the social construction of orphanhood through a critical discourse analysis of the mass media's portrayal of orphans in modern Russia. The main objective of the study is to analyze the most recent (2007-2012) mass media discourses about orphans. In particular, the research study aims to answer the following questions: How are orphans portrayed on Russian TV, newspapers, and Internet? How is the problem of orphanhood being formulated in the mass media, and what are the main "messages" that are being delivered to the audience? What are the possible implications of such representations? How does the discourse in mass media relate to the current government policies? In addition, the research seeks to explore the shift in current mass media discourse, if any, and place these findings into historical perspective.

Chapter I discusses theoretical perspectives on the social construction of knowledge and reality. The main postulates of Berger and Luckman, Michel Foucault, Kenneth J. Gergen, and Serge Moscovici are reviewed. The role of the mass media in the process of social construction and the literature devoted to the social construction of orphanhood are also presented. Chapter II is devoted to the historical background on orphanhood in Russia covering the period from 1706 to 2012. Chapter III presents the sample and methods of the study, which included 120 video news from two national TV channels, *Rossiya* (Russia) and *Perviy Kanal* (First Channel); 40 videos from YouTube; 120 articles from the newspaper *Izvestiya* and State Data Bank on Orphans; 68 Internet materials from Google, Rambler and Yandex; and 1259 static images across the sample. Fairclough's critical discourse approach was utilized as a method of the analysis. The concluding chapter summarizes the major findings, presents conclusions, and places the study in the broader literature on the social construction of orphanhood in Russia.

This study contributes to the existing literature on the socially constructed nature of orphans and orphanhood by highlighting Russia's contextual uniqueness and thus contributing to the existing scholarship that acknowledges a divergence of the views on orphans across various geopolitical contexts, different approaches to care, and various global policies around the orphans (Adebe, 2009). Similar to other contexts, the ideas of "care" and "dependency" are central to the social construction of orphanhood in Russia; yet, the ways in which these ideas are understood and acted upon are culture and context specific. Russia represents a unique case of a historically strong "institutional care" of orphans, compared to traditional approaches where extended families, churches, and communities serve as primary care providers for orphans. By carefully examining the

historical, political, economic, and cultural context, the study reveals the social constructed nature of orphans in Russia, which should be understood and treated differently from orphans in Romania, Cote d'Ivoire, Zimbabwe, and any other countries, for that matter. An awareness of this contextual specificity is imperative for understanding policy responses to the phenomenon of orphanhood, the socialization process of orphans, as well as their ability to cope with marginalization and stigmatization.

Chapter I

Social Construction of Knowledge: Theoretical Context

Social construction is a complex term. It almost inevitably involves philosophical discussions of the nature of reality and knowledge. Broadly speaking, the term social construction is used by scholars to indicate that there is some sort of phenomena, which is not predetermined by nature, or any other scientific assumptions or laws such as by God or by genetics, but is rather constructed and reconstructed in the process of social interaction. Social constructionists' view is often opposed to the essentialist theory that, in contrary, describes the nature of things as predetermined and independent from the society.

To understand the broader theoretical context of social constructionists' thoughts, I have reviewed some of the major scholarship that discusses how different scholars operationalize the social construction and what are the key concepts that have been already developed. Essentially, I also have considered the various approaches to the social construction of knowledge and reviewed the main implications of such theories for the society in general and for current research in particular. In this chapter, I do not attempt to document the full development of the social constructionists' thoughts, as this is the area for a separate dissertation; rather, I am trying to look at several key theories, including Berger and Luckman's (1966) *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in The Sociology of Knowledge,* which is central to the research, as well as the contributions by Michel Foucault, Kenneth J. Gergen, and Serge Moscovici.

Berger and Luckmann's (1966) scholarly work is justifiably recognized as fundamental in theories of the social construction of knowledge and the reality. These

intellectuals linked together two notions – sociology of knowledge and the social construction of reality – illustrating that the terms are interconnected and mutually reinforcing. In Berger and Luckmann's (1966) terms, "the sociology of knowledge is concerned with the analysis of the social construction of reality" (p. 3). Further, I will review in detail their theory and concepts developed in the treatise on sociology of knowledge.

In very simplistic terms, Berger and Luckman (1966) observed a pattern where each and every individual is in a continuous process of interaction with others and the world. From these interactions, according to scholars, people construct knowledge about themselves and the reality around them. On the base of such observations, Berger and Luckman (1966) heavily focus their attention discussing the concepts of a socially constructed nature of reality and knowledge. The reality as they state, has two forms: objective and subjective.

By objective reality Berger and Luckmann (1966) mean the reality that once was socially constructed by one generation but subsequently passed to another. For the following generation, in that case, the reality or existing order seems natural and objective and the process of social construction almost unnoticeable. Given the fact that the process of social construction is inextricably linked with the society and its cultural norms, scholars emphasize the importance of historical and social contexts not only in the process of social construction, but also in the process of deconstruction. To put it differently: in order to understand how knowledge once was developed, one should examine the historical events that preceded the emergence of this knowledge, and analyze social and cultural contexts.

Furthermore, Berger and Luckmann (1966) demonstrate the processes by which knowledge is created and how it becomes accepted as a norm or as taken-for-granted reality. As was already mentioned, knowledge arises out of day-to-day interactions that lead to the creation of a stock of knowledge, which gradually becomes "habituated" in the society. Further, habitualization leads to "institutionalization" - the process in which habitualized knowledge becomes available to all the members of the society. At a later phase, institutionalized knowledge becomes "legitimate":

> Legitimation "explains" the institutional order by ascribing cognitive validity to its objectivated meanings. Legitimation justifies the institutional order by giving a normative dignity to its practical imperatives. (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 86)

According to Berger and Luckmann (1966), legitimation occurs at several levels. First, the "incipient legitimation" takes place, which can be described as a transmission process of a particular experience into the vocabulary (p. 87). The second phase "contains theoretical propositions in a rudimentary form," which is the creation of proverbs and sayings (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 87). The third stage of legitimation is the creation of a "differentiated body of knowledge" (p. 88). For example, when the notion of children's rights has attracted its own specialists, advocates, scientists, and build institutions around it, Berger and Luckmann (1966) would argue that the concept of children's rights has become "legitimate" in the society. The "symbolic universes" constitutes the final stage of legitimation. Here, "The symbolic universe is conceived of as the matrix of *all* socially objectivated and subjectively real meanings; the entire historic society and the entire biography of the individual are seen as events taking place

within this universe" (Berger & Luckman, 1966, p. 89). Legitimation becomes the final stage of a creation of reality since it "puts everything in its right place" (p. 91).

Berger and Luckmann (1966) describe the process from habitualization to legitimation as a pattern from "There he goes again," indicating a repetitive event that leads to habitualization, and consequently to "There *we* go again." Then on a later stage of institutionalization, the credo becomes "This is how these things are done" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 54, 56).

Berger and Luckmann also note that the universe, which was once created, should be maintained. Usually, the elite group exercises its power and efforts in order to maintain and constantly legitimize the existing institutional order or, in other words, to keep the status quo. They also discuss the mechanisms that are historically being used by those in power. For example, one of the "oldest" mechanisms of universe-maintenance has been mythology and theology (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). Today, however, one could argue that the mass media became another powerful tool not only in maintaining the universe, but also in the process of social construction of reality. To quote Gurevitch and Levy (cited in Gamson, Croteau, Hoynes, & Sasson, 1992), the media has become "a site on which various social groups, institutions, and ideologies struggle over the definition and construction of social reality" (p.385).

By and large, these are the main characteristics of the objective reality. Berger and Luckman (1966) distinguish a subjective reality, which can be understood as a way each and every individual adapts and "deals" with the objective reality. The main processes and notions to discuss with regard to subjective reality are socialization, and conversation.

Berger and Luckman (1966) believed that there are two types of socialization that an individual is subject to. Primary socialization takes place in childhood, when the objective reality is not usually questioned and accepted as natural. Second socialization is a more complex process in which an individual is trying to find his or her own place and role in society. At this stage, a person can become a subject of diversified versions of reality where an individual may challenge the existing order.

Conversation, on the other hand, is used to maintain a subjective reality. Using Berger and Luckmann's expression (1966), "The most important vehicle of reality-maintenance is conversation" (p. 140). Verbal communication is, therefore, persistently constructing reality and reinforcing existing knowledge. Conversation, according to scholars, has also the ability to change and reconstruct the subjective reality. Thus, as stated, language analysis and especially conversation analysis should be given appropriate consideration in social constructionists' studies.

Another important idea is that identity is formed by social process. According to Berger and Luckmann (1966):

Identity is, of course, a key element of subjective reality, and like all subjective reality, stands in a dialectical relationship with society. Once crystallized, it is maintained, modified, or even reshaped by social relations. The social processes involved in both the formation and the maintenance of identity are determined by the social structure. (p. 159)

To summarize, Berger and Luckmann's theory is based on the assumption that knowledge is a socially constructed phenomenon that arises in day-to-day interactions; the historical and social contexts should be given the importance

while understanding the processes of construction and deconstruction of

knowledge; the knowledge passes different stages until it becomes legitimate in

the society; legitimate and institutionalized knowledge requires maintenance; the

role of language is important in understanding the process of socially constructed

knowledge; and lastly, an individual takes part in the process of social

construction, but at the same time, he or she is also influenced by that process.

During the 1970s and 1980s, social constructionist theory was transformed by

constructionist sociologists engaged with the work of Michel Foucault (1926–1984). A

French historian and philosopher, Foucault is widely acknowledged for the introduction

of such notions as *discourse* and *power/knowledge*. Foucault, as many other social

constructionists, believed that knowledge is not a simple reflection of a reality, but rather

that "truth is a discursive construction and different regimes of knowledge determine

what is true and false" (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 13). In *Archaeology of Knowledge*

(1972), Foucault examined the rules that make some statements look true and others not

within a specific historical period. Along with Berger and Luckman, Foucault considered

historical and cultural contexts to be an integral part of the social constructionists'

analysis. In his later works, Foucault developed a genealogical method, where he focused

on a theory of power/knowledge, arguing that power is always tied with knowledge and

that the power is a productive force (as opposed to Marxian tradition of power as

oppression) that does not belong to certain groups or individuals, rather it is spread

throughout the society.

The concept of "social construction" is also widely used in the field of

psychology (Gergen, 1985; Moscovici, 1988). For example, Guerin (1992) defines the

social construction of knowledge in the following terms, "social construction of knowledge—knowledge arising out of the interactions of people in communities rather than from interaction with the nonsocial environment" (p. 1423). Similarly to sociologists, psychologists Gergen (1985) and Moscovici (1988) view the knowledge as a socially constructed phenomenon that arises from the human's interactions. Yet, Gergen places an explicit emphasis on language, by emphasizing that "we generally count as knowledge that which is represented in linguistic propositions" (cited in Guerin, 1992, p. 1424). As observed by Guerin (1992), Gergen repeatedly assumes that knowledge refers to language use; while, in contrary, Moscovici treats the images in the process of social construction as important as the use of the language. Moscovici has also introduced a term *social representations,* which, unlike Durkheim's *representations collectives,* states that in contemporary times, the social representations could be sustained not directly through social interaction, but rather through the media or by different subgroups (Guerin, 1992). In addition, Moscovici developed the term "virtual world," implying that most of knowledge in the modern world is obtained not through the actual experiences with the environment, but through verbal communication.

Despite the similarities of views on social construction between sociologists and psychologists the latter place more stress on understanding the consequences and implications of social construction of knowledge. In fact, "social psychologists argue that, although cooperation, competition, and the like are important, it is the way that one perceives, or thinks about, these social processes that partly determines the behavior" (Guerin, 1992, p.1423). Consequently, social psychologists take the social construction of knowledge further by analyzing and predicting human behavior.

To draw a conclusion, social constructionists' approaches vary in terms of their emphasis (on language, social interaction, the role of discourse, or its social consequences), ideological coloring (from very strong Marxian traditions to relatively neutral Moscovici's), and the foci of the analysis (language, discursive and non-discursive practices, images, etc.). Yet there are four features that are common to all the social constructionist approaches. According to Burr (cited in Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002), these features include (1) a critical approach to taken-for-granted knowledge, (2) historical and cultural specificity, (3) a link between knowledge and social processes; and (4) a link between knowledge and social action (pp. 5-6).

The overview of the social constructionists' theories demonstrates that the existing knowledge and reality are socially constructed in the processes of social interaction. Numerous scholars also described the complexity of these processes, and showed the wide range of actors and mechanisms that construct, reconstruct, maintain and sustain the reality. Importantly, it was demonstrated how the knowledge forms attitudes and opinions about certain things, which, in turn, leads to certain actions or particular behavior. Berger and Luckmann (1996) also made an assumption that social construction has a great effect on a human's identity. All of these findings have a great implication to this study. First and foremost, I hypothesize that the concept of orphanhood is a socially constructed phenomenon. Second, the stock of negative knowledge around the orphans affects the orphans' identity and their lives. Third, using the tools that have been developed by the social constructionists it is possible to identify the major actors and mechanisms that shape the image of an orphan in modern Russia. Therefore, following the social constructionists' premises, I focus more specifically on

the role of mass media in the social construction of knowledge and reality. I also review the works that touch upon the mass media and the portrayal of orphans.

The Role of Mass Media in the Social Construction of Knowledge and Reality

The mass media plays a vital role in the process of social construction, since it conveys images, knowledge, and meanings to the broader audience. Usually, scholars tend to emphasize either negative or positive role that the mass media has to play. For example, in "Media Images and the Social Construction of Reality," Gamson et al. (1992) state in a very colorful and conveying way that the mass media promotes apathy and cynicism, rather than active participation:

> By now the story is familiar. We walk around with media-generated images of the world, using them to construct meaning about political and social issues. The lens through which we receive these images is not neutral but evinces the power and point of view of the political and economic elites who operate and focus it. And the special genius of this system is to make the whole process seem so normal and natural that the very art of social construction is invisible. (p. 374)

Gamson et al. (1992) analyze the mass media using Norman Fairclough's approach to discourse analysis, since they considered the process of information production, media ownership and consumption; they treat images, as equally important as texts; and assume that the discourse in the mass media is not politically neutral. In addition, these scholars (1992) focus on three main features of the mass media, which are hegemony (using Gramsci's term), framing and frame transformation, and the fragmentation effect. To put it simply, first, they believe that the mass media all over the world is becoming a hegemonic power in the hands of elite groups to defend their

interests. Second, they contend that the information depicted in the mass media comes to us not in a pure form, but is politically framed. And lastly, they point to the power of the mass media to highlight one aspect of reality or event, and ignore the others, thus, presenting information fragmentally.

The mass media ("technology of reproduction") was also blamed by Jean Baudrillard to be leading to the "implosion of representation and reality" (cited in Gamson et al., 1992). According to Baudrillard, the mass media substitutes the reality - it creates the reality that has no real foundation in experience. This statement overlaps with Guerin's (1992) idea that due to the recent massive expansion of the mass media and formal education, individuals are getting more and more, using Skinner's terminology, "intraverbal" type of knowledge: the knowledge that arises not from personal experiences, but from verbal communication.

On the other side, there are scholars who consider mass media as a positive force. One of the examples of almost "blind" belief in the positive role of mass media could be found in the scholarship by Zatsepina (2010). She believed that mass media plays a vital role in objectively reporting on social problems and creates a space for incorporating different opinions on social issues that lead to a successful solution of various problems. As Zatsepina (2010) states, "mass media as the sphere of social activity forms the foundations of civilized society, contributes to the solution of social problems, helps people to make informed decisions based on reliable and relevant information" (translation by the author, p. 2776).

Besides, the legitimizing role of the mass media is widely discussed by the social problem constructionists. Specifically, there are a number of scholars who, following

social constructionists' premises, state that the social problems are socially constructed and are determined in a collective manner. In "Social Problems as Collective Behavior," Blumer (1971) implicitly claims that in order for any social issue to fall into the category of a social problem, the society collectively should determine that it is a problem. According to Blumer (1971), social problems are articulated in five stages: (1) the emergence of a social problem, (2) the legitimation of the problem, (3) the mobilization of action with regard to the problem, (4) the formation of an official plan of action, and (5) the transformation of the official plan in its empirical implementation. Mass media plays an important role in almost every stage, but especially in the stage of legitimation and mobilization. According to Blumer (1971), mass media is one of the mobilizers of a society to act on the problem. Blumer, however, does not necessarily stress the role of mass media to socially construct problems, but rather to legitimize them and mobilize the society to act upon them. In contrast, more contemporary scholars (e.g., Gamson et al., 1992) place a heavy accent on the power of mass media to construct knowledge. Some Russian scholars also note that the mass media has the power not only to legitimize problems, but to socially construct them (Simonova, 2009; Zhuravleva, 2003).

Overall, the role of the mass media in the process of social construction is widely discussed not only by social constructionists, but by the general pool of researchers who study orphanhood in Russia and worldwide. Some of their propositions will be reviewed further below.

Mass Media and the Social Construction of Orphanhood

One of the interesting studies that looks at a global representation of orphanhood is Abebe's (2009) article "Orphanhood, Poverty and the Care Dilemma: Review of Global

Policy Trends.*"* The article examines the divergence of the views on orphans worldwide, different approaches to care, and global policies around the orphans. One of the important conclusions is that conceptualization of orphans varies across the countries (the finding that contributes to our assumption that orphanhood is a socially constructed phenomenon); however, the ideas of "care" and "dependency" are central to the social construction of orphanhood worldwide (Abebe, 2009). Despite the diversity in views of orphanhood around the globe, why are the concepts of dependency and care so persistent? Moreover, Abebe (2009) points out that the global media produced the representation of orphanhood as a "crisis-childhood" and "ticking time-bomb," which often goes hand in hand with the discourse on disability. According to Adebe (2009), such representations complicate the socialization process of orphans, affect their ability to cope with marginalization, and generally ignore children's agency and resilience. On the one hand, the concepts of dependency and care seems appropriate when talking about orphans, yet on the other, they might totally overthrow the orphans' agency, which in turn, leads to marginalization and stigmatization. Then, the following question should be addressed, how to reach the balance?

Abebe's findings overlap at some points with the research conducted by Astoiants (2006) that examined political discourse on orphans in Russia during the Soviet and post-Soviet times. She illustrated how different discourses lead to either social exclusion or social integration of orphans in the society. It is worth repeating that Astoiants' (2006) scholarly work is the only research found that addressed the representation of Russian orphans in the mass media. However, as was already mentioned, she did not take into account TV sources and the Internet – the most spread sources of telecommunication.

In particular, Astoiants (2006) distinguished three periods within Russian history: (1) 1920-1926, (2) 1941-1945, and (3) 2002-2005.[1] Astoiants (2006) identified types of discourses that prevailed during each of the indicated periods. For instance, the analysis of 81 documents for the period of 1920-1926 from the state archives revealed four different types of discourses: danger for society (*sotsialnoy opasnosti*), social sympathy (*sotsialnogo uchastiya*), social responsibility (*sotsialnoy otvetstvennosty*), and social utility (*sotsialnoy poleznosti*). Each of the discourses required certain actions and evoked different reactions from the public (see Table 1 below). For instance, the discourse of orphans as a danger to society implied the depiction of orphans as dirty, unhealthy, and delinquent. With such a representation, it was generally suggested to apply more strict measures towards orphans that included punishment and isolation. In contrast, the discourse of social utility involved images of orphans as active and productive citizens, thus leading to social inclusion and corresponding "positive" government.

The period of 1941-1945, as stated by Astoiants (2006), was under the credo of mono-discourse - the discourse of social unity, which was aimed to unite the nation under the circumstances of war. During this time every individual was of value to society. Orphans were portrayed as the sons and daughters of Soviet heroes, whose mothers and fathers died defending the motherland.

The third period covers contemporary times (2002-2005). Astoiants (2006) analyzed 45 documents - radio programs, and political statements. Her findings show that there were three types of discourses: first, the discourse of danger for the society (which has not changed since 1920[th)]; second, a discourse of social self- justification (*sotsialnogo*

---

[1] These periods match with our historical overview of the revolutionary Russia, Soviet Russia, and post-Soviet Russia that will be discussed further.

opravdaniya) that involved the search for guilty parties, such as parents, government, etc.; and, third, the beginning of a new discourse of social partnership and integration. In my research, it would be investigated whether the new discourse of a social partnership and integration, as noted by Astoiants (2006), has been strengthened in 2007-2012 or replaced by other discourses.

Table 1

The Dynamics of Political Discourse about Orphanhood:20s of the XX century up to present

1920-1926		1941-1946		2003-2006		
Types of discourse	**Attitude to orphans**	**Types of discourse**	**Attitude to orphans**	**Types of discourse**	**Attitude to orphans**	Exclusion
Discourse of social danger	Exclusion and alienation			**Discourse of social risk (danger)**	Exclusion and alienation	
Discourse of social sympathy	Recognition of defectiveness			**Discourse of self-justification**	Search for the guilty	
Discourse of social responsibility	Orphans as an object of rendering assistance and help					
Discourse of social utility	Social integration of orphans	**Discourse of social unity**	The Soviet people is a common family also orphans are the children of all soviet people	**Discourse of social partnership**	Integration of the society in solving the problems of orphans	Inclusion

Source: Astoyants, M.S. (2013). The Changing Dynamics of Political Discourse About Orphans in Soviet and Post-Soviet Periods. Adopted and reproduced with the permission of the author.

To date, Astoiants (2006) has been the only researcher who examined the representation of orphans in such a detail. However, the pool of researchers that conducted studies on the problem of orphanhood in Russia repeatedly highlighted the influential role that mass media has to play in shaping the image of an orphan (Ezhova & Porezkina, 2004; Prisyazhnaya, 2007; Kuznetsova, 2003). In all of the above-mentioned studies, it was suggested to combine the efforts of the government and the mass media in constructing positive images of the orphans; or more specifically it was recommended to examine the psychological effects that mass media has on orphans (Creuziger, 1997).

Strikingly, many researchers themselves contribute to the production of a negative image of orphans. For example, Zezina (2001) describes orphans of 1990 in the following terms, "They are generally backward in development, and they easily serve as the breeding ground for the manifestation of a variety of forms of deviant behavior. Begging, prostitution, theft, and swindling come to be the means by which abandoned adolescents survive, and these activities often determine their future lives" (p. 44). Or, as depicted by Shakhmanova (2010), "As a rule, residents of children's homes [orphanages] suffer from serious health problems. They are carriers of a whole spectrum of both congenital and acquired ailments, and often are born with narcotic or alcohol dependency. Many suffer from serious psychological deviations that stem from the consequences of hospitalization, mental traumas that they have experienced in a troubled home or in living on the street" (p. 72). Markova (2011) describes orphans following the same line:

> Currently, four out of five children in Russia's social rehabilitation
>
> institutions are "social" orphans, whose parents are still alive. Many of these
>
> children are losing their ability to learn in school, and the use of alcohol and

narcotics, and early onset of sexual activity, are damaging their future life.

These children are involved in a wide variety of criminal and harmful

activities; about 20 percent of prostitutes are minors; and the sex industry is

exploiting them through involvement in pornography. (p. 85)

Stunningly, Fujimura et al. (2005) list the following options when discussing

the prospects of livelihood for orphaned and street children: the military option, the

crime option, the prostitution option, prison life, the adoption option. I was struck by

the fact that the options are so limited. How about having normal life? How about

being successful? How about having a family? It is hard to believe that all the

children who were born under the shadow of orphanhood have to fail in their lives

unless adopted. The current statistics show that at least 10% of orphans are able to

live a normal life. Then, why there is a tendency to silence their stories? Why there

is a tendency to generalize and portray orphans as masses of criminals? Why there

is no emphasis on factors that forced them to choose delinquency? Why is the

agency and resilience of children ignored not only by the mass media, but many of

the scholars as well? Thus, I believe that analysis of the social construction of

orphanhood within the field of academia also deserves special attention, and

alternative approaches should be developed while discussing orphans.

Chapter II

History of Orphanhood in Russia (1706-2012)

Given the importance of social and historical contexts underlined by the social constructionists, I devote a separate chapter to the history of orphanhood in Russia. The historical background provides an invaluable framework within which the social representations of orphans have formed and changed over time. I divide the history of orphanhood into four main periods: prerevolutionary Russia (1706-1900); revolutionary Russia (1914-1930); Soviet Russia (1941-1956); and post-Soviet Russia (1991-2012). The latter three periods are often named as the three waves of orphanhood in Russia, as each of the periods indicates a major political shift or historical event, such as World War I, the Civil War, World War II, and the collapse of the Soviet Union. All these events resulted in a large number of orphaned children. To note, some of the researchers draw a line between the period of 1914-1917, and 1920-1930 and name them as two separate waves of orphans. Yet, in my understanding, the gap between the two periods is insignificant; thus, I prefer to combine the period of the World War I and Civil War into one. The indicated years are used to draw symbolic distinctions between the periods rather than to signify the established historical boundaries. The historical background on orphanhood in Russia is presented based on the scholarship of Ball (1992), Fujimura et al. (2005), Green (2006), Minchella (2008), Pantiukhina (2009), Creuziger (1997), Ezhova and Porezkina (2004), Markova (2011), Nazarova (2001) and others.

Prerevolutionary Russia: Genesis of the First Shelter and the Concept of Childhood

The first shelter for "babies born of shame" (children who were born outside of marriage) was founded in 1706 in the Kholmovo-Uspenkii Monastery near Novgorod

(Pantiukhina, 2009). Such necessity arose out of the ghastly trend of mothers abandoning and even killing their "illegitimate" children, children born outside the marriage. Society placed a strong stigma on individuals who had "illegal" intimate relations that resulted in pregnancy. In response to this problem, Tsar Peter I (1672-1725) established hospitals to care for the foundlings (Fujimura et al., 2005). In 1763, Betskii, under the rule of Catherine II (1762-1796), proposed an establishment of an educational type of institution - *vospitatel'niy dom* (a childcare home or a home for children's upbringing). Such homes were open for children who were born outside the marriage, and those abandoned by their parents (Pantiukhina, 2009). The institutions were privately run and not controlled by the government. Their main functions were food and shelter provisions, as well as trade education. Education was one of the primary goals since these measures were aimed to integrate marginalized and abandoned children into society. Despite good intentions, such homes were often lacking material and financial support and had poor hygiene, resulting in a high rate of mortality. Historian David Ransel notes that in 1764 about 81% of children who lived in those childcare homes died, and in 1767 percent increased up to 99% (as cited in Minchella, 2008). Already at that time children living in childcare homes were under the great shadow of stigma. As noted by Fujimura et al. (2005), it was a great sin of that time to have a child born outside of marriage, thus, almost immediately such children became objects of shame in the society too. As follows, the history of marginalization of orphaned children in Russia started as early as the beginning of the 18th century.

Minchella (2008), however, states that there was a tendency to adopt orphans in prerevolutionary Russia. In most cases, relatives or extended family members would

adopt an orphaned child when the biological parents were unable to take care of them anymore. The main reasons for adoption were to secure a male heir in the families that had no children or only daughters, or as a mean of acquiring an additional worker in the family. Thus, the preferences in adoption were given to males of older age, while the younger children were considered as a burden to a family, since they could not contribute much to households. The adoption was more encouraged within peasant and merchant families compared to clergy. Interestingly enough, adoption was also a means of making an illegitimate child stay with biological parents. Already at that time the act of adoption was kept confidential, since families did not want to disclose it.

The period of pre-revolutionary Russia was marked by another significant event that had a great influence on the social construction of orphans. According to Fujimura et al. (2005), Leo Tolstoy, a famous Russian writer, was one of the first influential figures who formulated the concept of an ideal Russian childhood in the early 19th century. In his book *Childhood* (1852), Leo Tolstoy depicted childhood as a period of innocence, happiness, and joy:

> Oh the happy, happy, never-to-be-recalled days of childhood! How could one fail to love and cherish memories of such a time? Those memories refresh and elevate the soul and are a source of my best enjoyment. (cited in Fujimura et al., 2005, p. 58)

The presence of a family and loving and caring parents were considered integral features of a happy childhood and gradually penetrated into the daily life, becoming a standard for a cheerful childhood. Consequently, children who did not have one or both parents did not meet Tolstoy's standard; and, in principle, these children were denied the

possibility of being happy children. Thus, we might assume that since the establishment

of a concept of an ideal childhood, the orphans immediately fell into the category of

children with broken and miserable lives. It could be argued that it has since become

impossible to imagine a happy child without the presence of parents even in

contemporary Russia.

The events that occurred in the beginning of the 20th century continued to change

the way the Russian society viewed orphans and also led to the modification of the

policies around the system of orphan care.

Revolutionary Russia: The Establishment of the First System of Orphan Care

The period of 1914-1930 was marked as a time of sorrow and chaos, since the

nation continuously faced such dramatic events as World War I, the October Revolution,

and several waves of famine. World War I destabilized the country, forcing a huge male

population to leave their homes to defend the motherland. As a result, female-headed

households were struggling to get any sort of provision for their children. In addition, the

government was organizing a massive evacuation of people from the war-zones to safe

places. The process of evacuation was chaotic and spontaneous, with a poor system of

tracking who had been evacuated and where they had relocated. The war took a countless

number of lives in combat zones, others died from hunger or various diseases. Millions of

children were left without any support, devastated by the loss of their parents, the war,

violence, and the hunger.

Huge masses were moving to regions in the Russian Far East (near Ural or

Volga river) to secure food and safety. The government response to this critical situation

was insufficient and ineffective, but quite understandable considering the hardship that

the country faced. The officials tried to organize shelters for refugees, including children. Yet such shelters lacked financial support from the state, and overcrowding was a common problem in such boardinghouses. Children were often rejected, thus having no other choice, but resort to a street life.

The Civil War and October Revolution of 1917 added further burden to the country that had not yet time to recover from its previous wounds. The bloodshed and hardship continued, along with an increase in the number of orphaned children. As Ball (1992) expressed, "No spectacle in Soviet cities more troubled Russian and foreign observers during the 1920s than the millions of orphaned and abandoned children known as *besprizornye*" (p. 247). According to the state archives, by the beginning of 1920, there were approximately 28,000 homeless children in the Kuban' region alone and another 30,000 in Siberia (as cited in Ball, 1992). Economic and social instability forced thousands of *besprizorniki* to join the ranks of thieves and prostitutes, and to commit various petty crimes in order to make a living.

In 1921, the situation had worsened since the horrific famine covered the regions along the Volga river from the Chuvash Autonomous Region and the Tatar Republic through Simbirsk, Samara, Saratov and Tsaritsyn provinces to Astrakhan' and further to Viatka province, Cheliabinsk and the Bashkir and Kirghiz Republics, including Orenburg, Ufa and Perm' provinces, and some parts of Ukraine (Ball, 1992). The famine affected children and families in various ways. First, the famine took away millions of lives and many people died from hunger. Furthermore, government food supply programs favored youth over the adults, thus allowing children to observe their parents slowly fading away from malnutrition. In addition, poverty, lack of financial aid and food

supplies forced families to abandon their children in order to survive. Families also hoped

that the government would help abandoned children. The revolution, civil war, and

famine resulted in leaving between 4 to 7.5 million children orphaned (Ball as cited in

Minchella, 2008, p. 19). Given the high rate of reported criminal activities among

orphans during this time, the Soviet state began to directly associate orphans with

delinquency and criminal behavior.

The rising number of orphans along with the increasing rate of juvenile

delinquency forced the state to strengthen the policies around orphan care. As such, the

government established a Ministry of Social Assistance, which developed the first system

for the protection of orphans on a state level (Zezina, 2001). The ministry was

responsible for helping and supporting homeless, abandoned, and orphaned children. The

approach that the officials undertook in addressing the issues of orphanhood was mainly

based on Marxist traditions. For example, the Soviet government was willing to demolish

family as a unit, and shift the role of child upbringing from families to the state. Also,

public policies were in favor of placing children within foster and boarding institutions,

while, abolishing adoption. The state wanted to raise a generation within socialist

traditions and strongly promoted such ideology within the institutions of orphan care.

During 1920-1926, different public figures, educationalists, and writers (such

A.V. Lunacharskii, N.K. Krupskaia, A.S. Makarenko, and M.N. Pokrovskii) begin to

discuss various forms of proper upbringing of children, focusing on the collective, labor,

or the individual. However, the Soviet government soon realized that the goal of the state

replacing the need for families in the process of child's upbringing was too ambitious. In

1926, the government passed a law that encouraged and allowed adoption. However,

according to Minchella (2008), this law did little to secure the lives of orphans. Most of the families were struggling to get enough provision, food, and supplies for themselves, thus, they were generally not able to take additional responsibility for taking care of an orphan child. As a result, orphaned children stayed in orphanages or shelters, returned to the streets, or tried their luck in the labor market. Each of their option was full of challenges. The shelters continued to possess a poor level of hygiene, had limited provision available, and were overcrowded. To find a job was also not an easy task. As Ball (1992) explains:

> First, the unemployment rate among teenagers remained high after the introduction of the New Economic Policy (NEP) in 1921. NEP itself bore some of the responsibility for this because it required state enterprises to operate profitably. Stirred by the new discipline, these establishments often cut expenses by dismissing staff-with women and adolescents representing a disproportionate number of the layoffs. In many types of production, labor laws stipulated that juveniles work fewer hours per day than adults, with lower output norms but at the same wage scale as their older coworkers. Moreover, the preceding years' turmoil deprived youths of adequate schooling and labor training and thus of qualifications needed to compete for jobs. (p. 266)

In this way children were being abandoned by almost everyone – the family, the state, employers – and had practically no other option, but to join street gangs and make living by stealing or doing other illegal activities. Given the fact that the number of children roaming the streets was high, the government and the public started to apply a new term to the street and orphaned children - *beznadzorniki* (left without control or

abandoned). Consequently, the list of terms used to describe children who were left without parental support due to their death or abandonment expanded to include such terms as *besprizorniki, besnadzorniki, homeless, street children*, and *orphans*.

In the later decade, the situation more or less stabilized and the trend of *besprizorniki* declined. The official government continued to set ambitious goals, aiming to end *besprizornost* (street, abandoned children) by 1931. Meanwhile, a report from the Children's Commission showed that about 7,000 to 8,000 *besprizornikov* were registered in the train stations and other public places during 1928-1929 (Ball, 1992). In addition, many researchers believed that the number of abandoned and street children declined because many of them died not being able to make a proper living or obtain food, shelter, or healthcare.

Unfortunately, the period of revolutionary Russia was not the end of the history of orphanhood and World War II caused a second wave of neglected and abandoned children in Russia.

Soviet Russia: Orphans - Children of the State?

World War II brought countless deaths and family break ups, resulting in another dramatic increase of orphans in Russia. While the exact number of orphans is uncertain, some statistics suggests that there were about 700,000 children placed in orphanages and 400,000 with families under foster case or adoption by 1947 (Green, 2006). The government responded to the situation by issuing two decrees in 1942-1943 "On the Placement of Children Who Have Been Bereft of Parents" and "On Strengthening Measures to Combat Children's Homelessness, Lack of Supervision, and Hooliganism." These decrees aimed to eliminate homelessness among children by placing them in

families or in orphanages, as well as to establish special governmental bodies to address the issue (Zezina, 2001). Based on these documents, special committees were created, which were directly responsible for placing orphans within families (preferably), finding jobs, or assigning them to the orphanages. Furthermore, various ministries were monitoring and controlling the situation, such as ministries of education (the children's homes), healthcare (orphanages and children's homes of the hospital type for the handicapped), labor reserves (trade schools and factory training schools), and internal affairs (children's rooms, colonies)" (Zezina, 2001). The government established special centers that worked towards finding families for children who were separated during the wartime relocations. In addition, internal affairs established children's rooms in railway stations, river ports, and other public places in order to track homeless children and place them into orphanages.

During this period, government funding of orphanages was negligent, thus, the childcare institutions were responsible for self-sustainment through cultivation of gardens and livestock. Meanwhile, various public organizations were encouraged to help orphanages and almost every orphanage was sponsored by *Komsomol* (youth communist party), professional and labor unions, or *kolhozy* (villages). Some orphanages received real help, while others had a sponsor only on the paper. The success in finding provision was largely dependent on the motivation and professional skills of their directors, who had to use their creativity and entrepreneurial skills to get adequate provision for children. Since the country was already economically and socially devastated, mobilizing the necessary resources and funding was a tough mission to accomplish. As reported by many investigators, orphanages were in very poor conditions, with no food, heat, clothes,

and supplies. The staff was paid poorly and their salaries were insufficient to sustain their

own families. As a result, the food that was aimed for orphans was often stolen by

administration – a fact that was repeatedly reported by various investigation commissions

all over the country.

What is of importance for this study is that the Soviet government along with the

Soviet press depicted orphans as the children of parents who died as heroes defending the

country. Moreover, the act of adoption was exalted as an act of humanity and patriotism.

The government issued a law that granted adoptive parents the same rights as biological

parents. At that time, orphans were considered to be "the children of the state" and it was

the responsibility of the whole society to take care for them (Green, 2006). Based on the

analysis of the public discourse during that period, Astoiants (2006) also notes that the

discourse on unity dominated the press. However, Green (2006) pointed out the

dichotomy of the discourses between the press and public, since the association with

delinquency that was attached to orphans from the period of World War I remained

during World War II:

> Decades of propaganda, of posters draped across orphanage walls, thanking
>
> Stalin 'for our happy childhood,' failed to convince the Soviet people that
>
> the children of the camps, the children of the streets, and the children of the
>
> orphanages had ever become anything but full-fledged members of the
>
> Soviet Union's large and all-embracing criminal class. (Applebaum as cited
>
> in Green, 2006, p. 80)

As we can observe, despite the positive images that the press was trying to convey

to the audience, the society still held the images of orphan as delinquent. Perhaps this can

be explained by the high number of orphaned children and their constant presence on the streets. As a result, the actual public experience of seeing and dealing with orphans was different compared to the idealized image that the Soviet press was trying to project.

Post-Soviet Russia: Emergence of Social Orphans

With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the economic, social and political instability shook the country as an earthquake, resulting in another wave of orphaned children. According to some estimates, the number of orphans in the early 1990s had reached the number of World War II, which was about 700,000 orphans. By the end of 2011, the total number of orphans was 654,355 children, suggesting that the rate of orphanhood was fairly stable during the last decade (State Data Bank on Orphans in Russia, 2011). With such a high number of orphans, the Russian government continued to develop programs and policies concerned with orphanhood. The post-Soviet period was marked by a wide range of changes in the perceived nature of orphanhood, forms of care, and adoption policies.

In particular, these changes were accompanied by the emergence of a new term - social orphanhood, which was broadly defined to include children who had one or both biological parents alive, but who were left without parental care and support, or abandoned. Today, four out of five children in orphanages are social orphans (Markova, 2011). This discursive shift is important, because it extends the traditional definition of orphanhood beyond children who lost their parents due to their death. In addition to the term social orphanhood, however, the current law sill operates with such historical definitions of orphans as *beznadzorniy*, *besprizorniy*, *deti-siroty* (orphans), children who are left without parental support or social orphans (see Table 2 below).

Table 2

*The Official Definitions Used to Describe Abandoned Children in Russia**

Category	Definitions
Beznadzorniy (unsupervised child)	A juvenile, whose behavior is not monitored or controlled by the parents or other legal representatives or officials due to improper performance of duties with regard to child's upbringing, education, and (or) care; (in red. Federal Law of 01.12.2004 N 150-FZ).
Besprizorniy (homeless, unsupervised child)	An unsupervised child, with no place of residence and (or) shelter; (Federal Law from 24.06.1999 N 120-FZ)
Deti-siroty (orphans)	Individuals under the age of 18, with one or both parents died. (Federal Law from 21.12.1996 N 159-FZ)
Deti, ostavshiesya bez popecheniya roditeley (children who are left without parental support)	Individuals, under the age of 18, who were left without care by one or both parents due to the actual absence of parents or deprivation of parental rights, the restriction of parental rights, the recognition of parents as missing, handicapped (limited capability), being under treatment in hospitals; due to the actual death, imprisonment, being in custody for suspects, or due to the parental refusal to raise children or to protect their rights and interests, the refusal of parents to take their children back from of educational, health institutions, institutions of social protection and care, and other similar institutions; and in any other cases in accordance with the law. (Federal Law from 21.12.1996 N 159-FZ).

* Translation by author.

In addition to the introduction of the notion "social orphans," the mechanisms of placing a child into an orphanage have slightly changed. Currently, there are two main vehicles that could place a child into an orphanage. The first mechanism activates when the parents decide to abandon their children (in most of the cases this happens right after the birth of a child); and, second, when parental rights are terminated by a special Guardianship Committee, which consists of several inspectors who monitor families at risk and investigate the living conditions of children. The Guardianship Committee has the right to appeal to the court in order to terminate parental rights. If the trial is initiated, a child is placed into a provisional shelter, where he or she can stay up to six month. The court might make a decision to return the child to his or her biological parents, which in

2005 constituted 70.6% of the cases (Schmidt, 2009). In an opposite sequence of events, the child will be relocated to an orphanage. Since most of the parents who lost their parental rights were identified as alcohol or drug addicts, lived in financial hardship, or were unemployed, society attached negative stereotypes to their orphaned children by ascribing to them a notion of children with *plohiye geny* (bad genetics). This fact causes a lot of challenges for orphans, leading not only to marginalization, but also stigmatization at educational institutions, work place, and in the society in general.

The main responsible governmental bodies that supervise the system of orphanhood in contemporary Russia include the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Labor, and the Ministry of Science and Education. The Ministry of Health monitors baby homes (orphanages for abandoned babies under the age of 3, and care institutions for children with multiple disorders); and the Ministry of Education oversees orphanages for children aged 4 to 18 years old. Thus, the main emphasis of work with orphans under the age of 3 is healthcare; while the education and upbringing is the priority in work with orphans above the age of 3.

Other developments in the area of orphan care resulted from international cooperation. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the boarders were opened up and numerous international scholars, officials, and just ordinary people were able to visit Russia. For the first time in history, already in the early 1990s the Russian government allowed foreign parents to adopt Russian children, with the USA, Italy, and Spain being among the top foreign countries adopting Russian children.[2] In 2011, for example, about

---

[2] In 2011, the United States adopted 956 Russian children, Italy 798 children, and Spain 685 children. Overall, since foreign adoption has been allowed about 60,000 Russian children have been adopted by US families alone, yet the exact number is unknown. This number was mentioned in the statement made by a US official in response to the *Dima Yakovlev Law* (http://russian.moscow.usembassy.gov/pr122812.html),

3,400 children were adopted by foreign parents compared to 7,416 orphans that were placed within Russian families (State data-bank on orphans in Russia, 2011). The attitude towards foreign adoption underwent a series of diversifications.

In the early 1991, when foreign parents had just started to adopt Russian children the law was almost "passive" to these processes, and there were no clear regulations on how the parents should be chosen, and what were to be the responsibilities of the parties. Adoption agencies were established to help foreign families with the documentation, often making a business out of it. After a decade, foreign adoption began to gain a negative reputation. The press focused on cases where Russian orphans were abused or killed abroad by their adoptive families, especially in the United States.

One of the most famous cases was that of Artem Saveliev, a Russian orphan who was adopted by Torry Ann Hansen from Tennessee. On April 8, 2010, his adoptive mother sent the boy back to Russia by plane with the letter addressed to the Ministry of Education with the request to cancel the adoption. This case evoked a huge uproar in the political arena and within the Russian society. It resulted in a one year moratorium on the adoption of Russian children by citizens of the US.

Minchella (2008) attempted to explain the existing tensions between Russian and American governments around the issue of adoption in the following terms. First, the tensions were possibly caused by the raising demographic crisis. Explained in Minchella's (2008) terms, the Russian government, faced with a declining population, attempted to address the demographic issue by passing bills supporting families to have children and by encouraging Russian families to adopt orphans. At that time, the Soviet

---

and also discussed by Pavel Astakhov, Children's Rights Commissioner for the President of the Russian Federation, in the interview to with radio *EHO Moskvy,* who expressed concern that the number might be even higher.

discourse on viewing children as a national treasure temporarily re-emerged. The press

started to increasingly highlight negative cases of foreign adoptions with the intention to

encourage Russian families to adopt Russian children. Several officials proclaimed

foreign adoption as a "cultural genocide" (Minchella, 2008). Second, the official policy

at that time was directed towards the building of a national identity through recreation of

traditional values, including the value of the family. Thus, the internal adoption was

viewed as a patriotic act, while foreign adoption was considered as a shame for the

country.

The tensions between the two governments found its culmination in a *Dima*

Yakovlev Law that was passed by the Russian government on December, 2012 and came

into power on January, 2013, ending the adoption of Russian children by US citizens.

Many have argued that the law was a response to the *Magnitsky Act*, which was passed

by the US Congress on November-December, 2012.[3] The two laws are highly politicized,

reflecting contentious relations between Russia and the US, thus, many experts and just

ordinary people recognized a political battle between the two countries, while the orphans

themselves became a tool in the policy game.

In addition to foreign adoptions, international cooperation resulted in the

development of an alternative to a traditional system of institutionalized care, including a

growing emphasis on family placements or foster care (see Figure 1 below).

---

[3] The Act was initiated in response to the death of a Russian lawyer and an auditor Sergey Magnitsky who
alleged that prominent Russian tax officials had committed fraud. Magnitsky died while in prison amid
much speculation that Russian state actors may have played a role in his demise. In a symbolic show of
solidarity with oppositional figures like Magnitsky, the US government's Magnitsky Act attempts to punish
individuals supposedly responsible for Magnitsky's death by prohibiting them from entering the US. The
list of those individuals targeted in Magnitsky Act was just realized in early April, 2013.
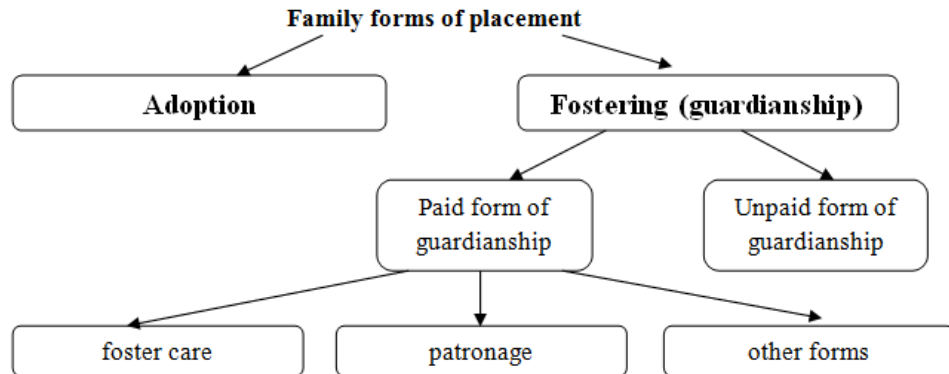
Figure 1. Family forms of placement of orphans in Russia. The illustration shows different forms of family placement of orphans in Russia. State Data Bank on Orphans in Russia (2012), translation by author.

In 2011, the main form of family placement was found to be unpaid guardianship (constituting 60.3% of all cases), paid guardianship (23.7% of the cases), adoption by Russian families (11%), and foreign adoption (5%) (State Data Bank on Orphans in Russia, 2011). It is important to mention that children of a younger age, under the age of three, had a greater chance of being adopted by a family; while older children and children with disabilities had the least chances of being adopted.

Each of the placement forms has its own benefits and drawbacks. For instance, in the case of family placement, there were many cases when an adopted child was returned back to the orphanage. Even though there was no official statistics found on the exact number of "returns," this fact is broadly discussed on TV, newspapers, and in academia. One of the main reasons for parents to return children is believed to be the absence of proper training for adoptive families. Families often feel unprepared for adoption and unaware of the possible challenges associated with it. Only recently in some of the regions in Russia special courses for adoptive families have been implemented.

The paid forms of family placement are also criticized by the general public for two reasons. The first reason revolves around the suspicion for the motives to adopt/foster a child. The public questions whether the main motive for foster care is a child's wellbeing or the financial benefit. As Markova explains (2011):

Unfortunately, monetary payments as an incentive can play a negative role. In a number of depressed regions, upbringing for orphaned children has become an industry that constitutes the only source of income possible. (p. 91)

Another criticism is that there is "discrimination" against low-income families with biological children over the families who are willing to adopt an orphan. To clarify the point, people find it unfair that the government is ready to finance families who are ready to foster an orphan, while at the same time not providing equal support to low-income families with biological children. Hence, even though the family forms of placement have been greatly developed in the past two decades, there are still improvements and changes needed.

One of the most problematic systems of orphan care is believed to be the traditional form of institutionalized placement - an orphanage. Orphanages represents an educational institution for the upbringing of the orphans, where children live until their age of maturity. Such traditional institutions are being widely criticized for their neglect of children, non-stimulating environment, and a closed nature of the institution. For example, Astoiants (2007) compared the Russian system of orphanages with Erving Goffman's concept of total institutions, referring to isolated social institutions in which the lives of its participants are controlled and monitored.[4] Similarly, Nazarova (2001)

---

[4] For the sake of comparison, Erving Goffman was mainly applying the concept of total institutions to prisons, mental health institutions, and monasteries.

compared Russian orphanages with the concept of a "disciplinary society" developed by

Michel Foucault:

> The system of orphanages in Russia reflects Michel Foucault's concept of
>
> disciplinary society. Children are isolated and supervised on several levels: in the
>
> orphanage itself, and in hospitals, including the mental health hospitals. The latter
>
> is often used as a mean to punish orphans for inappropriate behavior. (translation
>
> by author, p. 71)

To be more specific, the daily routine in an orphanage is subject to a strict

discipline and regime. Astoiants (2007) describes how orphans live under a strictly

prescribed regime, in an environment where nothing belongs to them individually, but

everything is rather collective. As a consequence, orphans do not value the property, and

express carefree attitude towards the collective belongings.

Along these lines, the orphanage system is often held responsible for promoting

passivity and dependency among its habitats (Shakhmanova, 2010). Distinctively,

children in orphanages are not allowed to perform the daily duties, which are the integral

part of every family routine. For example, orphans are neither allowed nor trained to cook

(except for a few institutions that do organize additional training for orphans), clean their

rooms, to buy groceries, and pay for utilities. The daily regime is also crafted by the

administration, and orphans generally do not know how to manage their time and become

involved in activities of personal interest to them. Because all of the duties are carried out

by paid personnel, the orphans usually perceive themselves as passive receivers. This

attitude is further reinforced by public opinion of orphans as children with predetermined

bereaved fate, who should be pitied and helped, ignoring their agency and resilience.

The real problems begin when an orphan is transitioning from the orphanage into adult life. What happens with an animal who used to live in the zoo and is then suddenly placed back into the wild? Perhaps, all of us know that, in most cases, the animal dies. While it is not the best comparison, it unfortunately applies to what is happening with orphans in Russia. For 18 years, the government provides everything orphans need: food, home, services, education, and clothes. After reaching the age of maturity, it is orphan's responsibility to organize households, find the provision, find a job, and pay for utilities. In most cases, orphans are not trained to perform all of these duties. On top of that, their ability to socialize and communicate with the society is greatly suppressed by the isolated nature of the orphanage (Prisyazhnaya, 2007). Thus, it comes with no surprise that orphans face huge challenges while obtaining a job, or trying to solve any of the problems that require interaction with people or with the bureaucratic system. By and large, the traditional system of orphan care not only fails to prepare a child for an independent life, but also makes him or her vulnerable in the face of criminals, perpetrators, and manipulators. For instance, Glazkova (2006) describes cases when the orphanage graduates become victims of "black realtors" or other criminal groups that forcibly take away orphans' apartments or convince them to participate in illegal activities, including prostitution and theft. In such situations, orphans are usually unable to obtain any help and do not know how to act in such extreme situations.

As seen from the examples above, orphans face many challenges in their independent lives. After graduation there are almost no services or agencies for orphans to obtain a consistent help or mentoring. There are a couple of NGOs that are helping orphans and a few governmental initiatives that provide some sort of help to orphanage

graduates; however, it is not happening nationwide. Nazarova (2006) conducted a research on the post-graduate life of the orphans. She made a number of interviews with the orphan graduates in which she asked children to depict examples of a successful life. Interestingly, most of the respondents mentioned a job, an apartment, a car, and a family as symbols of a favorable life. From her study, Nazarova (2006) concluded that not many were lucky to have such a life, indeed, only a few. On the contrary, orphans did mention that many of their peers were imprisoned, or had started to abuse alcohol or use drugs. Many of the graduates expressed a wish to return back to the orphanage to be under the institutionalized care again.

The problem of diagnosing orphans as mentally ill is also worth mentioning (Cherkasov, 2004; Glazkova, 2006; Cox, 1997; Rusinova, 2006; Fujimura et al., 2005; Parfitt, 2003). While not being exposed to any sort of educational programs in the baby houses, the younger children are still being tested at the early age on intellectual abilities. No wonder that these children are likely to score low on the tests. These tests are often used to diagnose children with mental problems or disabilities. Children diagnosed with disabilities face incredible challenges to successful development, as regards education in particular. Currently, there are four different types of institutions that serve orphans with "visual impairment; audio impairment; movement deprivation; speech development defect; the defect of cognitive sphere; the complex defect of mental development" (Schmidt, 2009). The last two categories are the most serious, since they might place an orphan within the category of "uneducable" children and a diagnosed child would not be exposed to any type of education. These are highly marginalized children who have no

hope of obtaining education or finding a job. Furthermore, such children are dependent on the mental health or other social institutions for the rest of their lives.

In a very compelling study, Glazkova (2006) accuses orphanages of misdiagnosing children to get additional funding from the government by serving "mentally ill" children. She also blames the staff that – just like criminal groups – force orphans to sign papers before the graduation stating that they (orphans) express their wish to live in the mental health institution after they graduate from the orphanage. The staff motives are to take away the apartment, which is the property of an orphan by allocating them into the mental health institution. Allegdly, the personnel was trying to convince orphans that life in the mental health institution was very favorable since the institution provides all the services, and children will not to have to worry about anything. After all, children were not aware that in the institution they would be assigned one pair of shoes and one pair of clothes for a couple of years; they would share the room with others for the rest of their lives; and they would not have almost any opportunity to get married and have their own families (since it is strongly discouraged and almost banned in the institution). Children were also misinformed about the fact that the prospective employer would not be willing to employ someone who's residential address is a mental health institution. The inner environment and discipline respresents another major concern, which was broadly discussed by human rights activists.

Although there are many drawbacks in the system of orphan care in post-Soviet Russia, there are positive sides as well. One of them is that the current system of orphanages receives a significant financial support from the government. Certainly, it is for the first time in the history of orphanhood in Russia that such a claim can be made.

The positive change can be attributed to the stabilization of a Russian economy that was seriously challenged during the past century. In 2011, GDP in Russia was estimated to be 2.383 trillion US dollars, placing Russian economy number seven in the global arena (Central Intelligence Agency, 2011). And even though there was no official data found on how much the Russian government spends per orphan, the number which is announced by government officials in the mass media is impressive. For example, Pavel Astahov, Children's Rights Commissioner for the President of the Russian Federation, in the interview on radio *EHO Moskvy* mentioned that some of regions, such as Krasnoyarskiy kray spends nearly 2 million rubles per year per orphan (which is approximately 67,000 US dollars a year). In comparison, the average monthly salary in Russia constitutes 24,000 rubles, which is equal to about 800 US dollars (ROSSTAT, 2011). The announced amount of money allocated to orphans created a space for intense public discussions and debates. For instance, in one of the message forums on the website of *EHO Moskviy* people were very surprised and even shocked by this declaration:

> Those children should live in luxury. Can you imagine...TWO MILLION a year per orphan. Those funds could have gone to the families, and should be paid to foster parents in the amount of 170 thousand rubles per month. People would fight to take children from the orphanages. (Forum *EHO Moskvy*, translation by author)

Others were very skeptical about two million allocated per orphan, expressing a concern that money does not reach the recipients and is being pocketed at different administrational levels. Some individuals witnessed that orphans did not have everything they needed, such as appropriate clothes for various activities, such as sport and hiking.

Even though it is a public opinion, which cannot be treated as facts, the official version implies that the orphanages are well supported. My personal experience also aligns with the official version, since I observed quite satisfactory conditions for orphans in Kaliningrad city. However, my experience is geographically limited and orphanages in the rural areas or located in the far regions of Russia may look and be funded differently.

In addition to funding, social services for orphans expanded. For instance, orphans are now eligible for receiving monthly subsidies, have the right of obtaining a higher education (even though only very small percent are using this privilege), have the right of getting an apartment after reaching 18 years old, and the range of other services, such as discounted rate for utilities, medical treatment, and so on. In other words, Russia has a very good foundation for effectively addressing the issue of orphans - it has appropriate financial resources and legal mechanisms of orphan protection and care.

Conclusion

The historical overview shows how the social construction of orphanhood in Russia has been constantly evolving. The changes in the portrayal of orphans occurred under the influence of historical, cultural, economic, and political contexts, and other factors such as parents' background, government position and official policies towards the orphans, mass media portrayal, and the actions/activities that orphans were involved themselves. Each of the periods could be characterized by the prevalence of some factors over the others. To visually illustrate the point, I have created figures that reflect the major forces that contributed to the portrayal of orphans for every period. From these visual representations, it is becoming clear that as time has passed, the social construction of orphanhood has become more and more complex.

For example, as concluded from the literature on prerevolutionary Russia (1706 - 1900), the cultural context and parents' "background" were the most influential forces in determining the portrayal of orphanhood during that period as illustrated below (see Figure 2). At that time it was culturally inappropriate to have intimate relationships outside the marriage. And in cases when such relations resulted in "illegitimate" children society was not only bringing shame to the parents, but also not accepting the offspring. Such stigma, in turn, forced parents to abandon their newborns. When society realized that the majority of children who became habitats of the newly established shelters were abandoned by the parents who violated cultural norms, the society immediately attached negative associations to these children. What is interesting to note is that during that time other factors such as government and the individuality of the orphans were not playing such a significant role in the process of the social construction of orphans. Negative associations that emerged with regard to orphans heavily relied on the cultural norms and beliefs of that time.
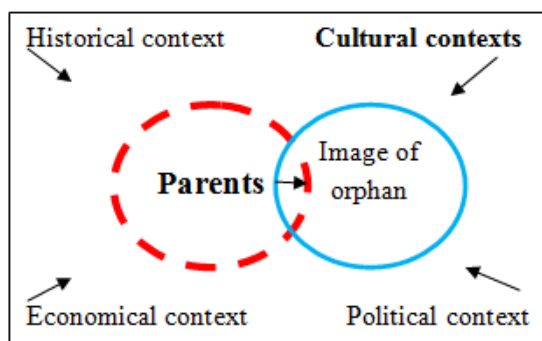
Figure 2. Main factors in social construction of orphanhood during prerevolutionary period (1706-1900), developed by author. Red dash circle indicates the major factor influencing the image of an orphan. The highlighted (bold) text indicates that the factor(s)/context(s) that had a greater weight in portraying orphans.

In contrast, during the period of revolution and World War I (1914-1930) cultural context and parents' background were almost swept away by other forces.

Immensely, historical and economic contexts, along with government position, and the

activities that orphans were involved in contributed much more to the portrayal of

orphans as criminals and delinquent. As seen from Figure 3 below the image of orphan

was very much influenced by the two major factors- orphans actions and government

position, which are in red circles. Orphans' actions here refer to the activities that orphans

were taking part in. Since society witnessed that a high number of orphans were involved

in criminal activities the public attached unpleasant associations of delinquency and

crime to the orphans. Government also started to play an active role in the social

construction of orphans during that period. Notably, one could claim that government, for

the first time in the history, legitimatized orphanhood as a problem for society.[5] Such

formulation is still relevant nowadays since orphanhood was perceived as nothing more

than a problem. Yet, I go further in showing that there are factors that influenced the way

the government portrayed orphans and the way orphans acted - the factors which are

usually not taken into much consideration by the public (in black circles). For instance,

orphans became involved in criminal activities not because they were born criminals, but

because they found no support from the society. Also the government position of

portraying orphans as problematic was influenced by the high number of orphans in the

society, along with historical and economic factors. The wars, waves of famines,

revolutions devastated the country- ruined the infrastructure, and destabilized economy.

Having no resource to handle the existing situation with a growing number of children

left without parental support, the government had almost no choice but to perceive and

---

[5] According to Berger and Luckmann's (1966) conception of a social construction of reality, I would argue that during the period of Prerevolutionary Russia the knowledge about orphans was legitimized in the society, since it involved not only the habitualization of discourses on orphans that was accepted as natural, but also the establishment of institutions of care, and special governmental bodies to deal with the orphans.

present this issue as problematic. Thus, I believe that it was not orphans themselves that

should be considered problematic, but that the situation that emerged during that time

was problematic.
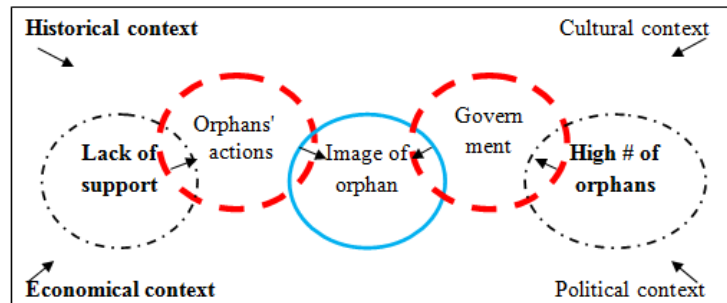
Figure 3. Main factors in social construction of orphanhood during the revolutionary period (1914-1930), developed by author. The red dash circles indicate the major "visible" factors that influenced the image of orphans; black dash-dot circles reflect factors that influenced the factors in red dash circles.

During the Soviet times (1941-1956) I identified four main elements determining

the portrayal of orphans (see Figure 4). In particular, the background of parents started to

play a considerable role again, since society acknowledged that the parents of orphans

were mainly those who died defending the motherland. Since the parents were perceived

as heroes, the children also gained some positive associations. This positive attitude was

reinforced by the government's position and the press, who portrayed orphans as children

of the state. The official view was influenced by the historical, economic, and political

contexts where the government had to address the strategic issue, such as to unite the

country in the times of war. Also, while lacking enough resources to handle the

continuing crisis with orphans, the state tried to replace their responsibility of care on the

shoulders of Soviet citizens by trying to promote a discourse where the whole society

expected to contribute and help the children. Yet, such affirmative position did not bring

a real change in the quality of orphan care. No surprise then that orphans continued to be

involved in the illegal activities in order to make living, which in turn consolidated even

more the image of an orphan as a criminal. What it also interesting in that period is the emergence of the "historical image" of an orphan, which was legitimatized during the revolutionary period. This historical image started to affect orphans' "contemporary" image. For instance, as concluded from the literature, despite governmental efforts to develop a positive image of an orphan, society still holds the image of a historical orphan from Revolutionary Russia.
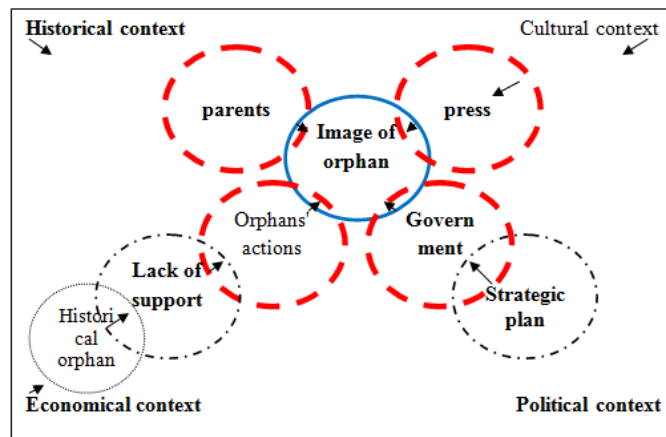
Figure 4. Main factors in social construction of orphanhood during Soviet period (1941-1956), developed by author. Red dash circles indicate the major factors; black dash-dot circles indicate factors influencing factors in red dash circles. The grey dot circle indicates the emergence of a new factor.

The social construction of orphanhood in contemporary Russia is even more complicated as presented below (see Figure 5). By 2012, the government was able to significantly reduce the number of orphans who lived in the street, and place them under different forms of care. Orphans, as the result, almost disappeared from the streets. With sufficient funding allocated to orphanages, children started to get adequate clothing, food, and provision. The level of crimes committed by the orphans before the age 18 notably dropped as well. Currently it is almost impossible, in my opinion, to distinguish an orphan in the crowd of people based on the appearance. Since the orphans became almost "invisible" for the public, the society, sequentially, started to gain more and more

knowledge about them from the virtual sources, mainly from the mass media. Certainly, with the rapid expansion of telecommunication technologies, such as TV, Internet, and radio the mass media has become one of the dominant sources of information, and the most powerful mechanism of social construction.
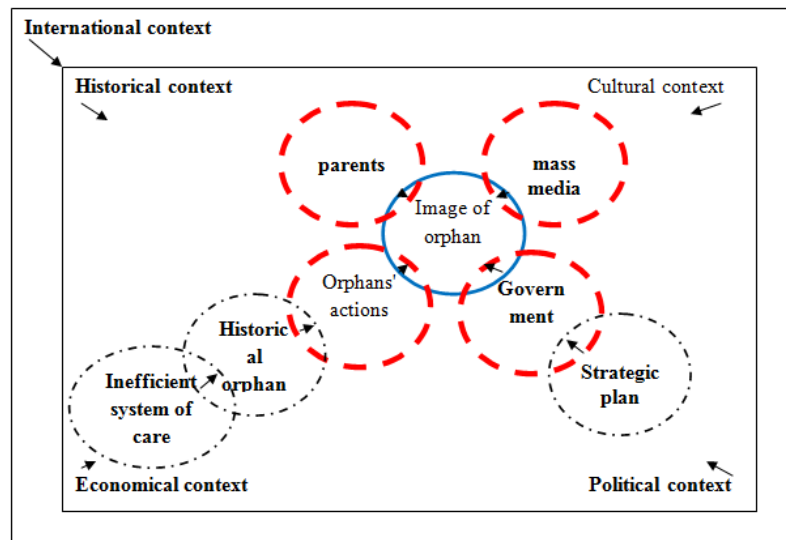
Figure 5. Main factors in social construction of orphanhood during Post-Soviet period (1991-2012), developed by author. Red dash circles represent main factors; black dash-dot circles reflect factors influencing factors in red dash circles.

The government also continued to (re)construct the image of orphans. Since the country, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, had to solve strategic issues, such as demographic crisis and recreation of national identity, the orphans again started to serve as a field for politicians to promote their agendas. Furthermore, the international community added its own portion of pressure to the Russian government, thus changing the way the officials view and approach the orphans. Especially with regard to foreign adoption, the issue of orphans became too politicized in contemporary Russia as demonstrated by the existing tensions with the US.

In addition to the mass media and the government, parents' background continued to play considerable role in portraying orphans. Given the fact that most of the

contemporary Russian orphans are social orphans who have been either abandoned or forcefully taken by the state from alcoholic or drug addicted parents, the society assigned the stereotype to orphans as children with bad genetics (Ezhova & Porezkina, 2004). Lastly, the reports in the mass media convey the idea that most of the orphanage graduates are becoming criminals, alcohol or drug addicts, or commit suicide. Such representation adds nothing more but negativity to the already defective image of the orphan. However, as was studied by Astoiants (2006), the political discourse during 2002-2005 was marked by emergence of a discourse of social partnership that had a potential to positively affect not only the image of orphans, but also their lives.

Chapter III

Sample and Method

The main objective of the study is to analyze the most recent (2007-2012) mass

media discourses about orphans in Russia. The years were chosen purposefully. As stated

by Schmidt (2009), 2007 was officially announced by the government as the Year of a

Child, which was interpreted by many as a year of deinstitutionalization of traditional

forms of institutional orphan care. Thus, the study analyzes whether such a policy claim

has contributed to any changes in the discourses on orphans in the mass media or whether

it had no real effect. This research seeks to explore the shift in current mass media

discourse, if any, and place these findings into the historical perspective comparing the

results with Astoiants's scholarship (2006). More specifically, the research also aims to

investigate the following questions:

- How are orphans portrayed on Russian TV, newspapers, and Internet?

- How is the problem of orphanhood being formulated in the mass media, and
  what are the main "messages" that are being delivered to the audience?

- What are the possible implications of such discourses?

- How does the discourse in mass media relate to the current government
  policies?

Sample

The sample was composed of several mass media archives from 2007-2012

years. In particular, the study drew on the analysis of different types of media, including

published press, TV, and the Internet. The sample included (1) one independent

newspaper *Izvestiya*[6] and the collection of the newspaper articles that were archived on the website of State Data Bank on Orphans in Russia[7]; (2) two national TV channels *Perviy Kanal* and *Rossiya*; (3) images and materials from the most widely used Internet search engines, such as Google, Rambler, and Yandex; and (4) videos from YouTube. All of the sources were accessed on-line through the official websites.[8]

Newspapers. The sample from the newspapers included articles and photographs that were published during the period of 2007-2012. The articles from the newspaper *Izvestiya* were identified through the official online archives using the engine search with the key words *detdomovets* (habitat of an orphanage) and *sirota* (orphan). The search identified about 25 references using the key word *detdomovets*, and 580 items when entered the word *sirota*- a total of 605 references. For the analysis, about 10% of the articles were chosen, which constituted 60 articles. For the purposes of this study, every 10th article was chosen for the analysis. However, it is important to emphasize that the search engine provided reference to the articles even if the key words were mentioned once. Thus, the identified article might have had little or nothing to do with the actual issue on orphanhood. In such cases, the article following the identified article was chosen.

---

[6] *Izvestia*, established in 1917, is one of the oldest newspapers in the country. It is considered to be an independent newspaper with the main focus on social, political and business issues. The publisher produces around 150,000 copies daily.

[7] The State Data Bank on Orphans is a government initiative aimed at collect all the important information on orphans in Russia. The website has general statistics on orphans and adoption. It also provides the legal documentation associated with orphans, and, in addition, it has the collection of articles (devoted to the theme of orphanhood) which were pulled out from various newspapers across Russia. Thus, our choice in analyzing this source was justified by two reasons. First, the collection represents diversity of newspapers that might provide the space for comparison across the discourses. Second, since the web-site was initiated by the government it will be interesting to see whether their choice of articles was biased in some way or another (if they favor official position, for instance).

[8] Izvestia-http://izvestia.ru/; State Data Bank on Orphans- http://www.usynovite.ru/massmedia/ Perviy Kanal - www.1tv.ru; Rossiya - www.vesti.ru/; Yandex- www.yandex.ru; *Google* - www.google.ru; *Rambler* - www.rambler.ru; *YouTube*- www.youtube.com

Regarding the newspapers from the State Data Bank on Orphans, a sample of 60 articles was chosen, comprising 10 articles from each year's archives (2007-2012) respectively, which is approximately 4% of the total population. The random sampling technique was used, with every 10th article being chosen for the analysis.

TV Channels. The main focus of the study was on the news broadcasted during the 2007-2012 years. The news from the TV channels *Perviy Kanal* and *Rossiya* was identified through the official websites using the search engine with the key words *detdomovets* and *sirota.* A total of 40-50% of the total video archives were chosen randomly for the analysis, which included 60 videos from *Rossiya* and 60 videos from *Perviy Kanal*.

Google, Rambler, and Yandex. Given that the most popular search engines in Russia are Google, Rambler, and Yandex, the study included results from each of the search engines after entering the key words *detdomovets* and *sirota*. More specifically, the sample incorporated the texts and images from the first pages identified in each of the websites. The sample materials from Google and Rambler were retrieved on March 10, 2013, and from Yandex on March 11, 2013. The sample composition is presented below.

Table 3

The Google, Rambler, and Yandex Sample Composition

| Source | Category | | | | | | |
	Online Dictionaries	NGOs	News	Movies and songs	Pictures	Other	Total
Google	7	4	8	3	401	2	425
Rambler	11	7	0	2	401	0	421
Yandex	10	6	4	1	401	0	422
Total	**28**	**17**	**12**	**6**	**1203**	**2**	**1268**

YouTube videos. YouTube was considered for the analysis since it contained a large collection of videos, which were shared by a diverse group of people. Also

YouTube is a very popular Internet destination for Russian people. The video clips were identified using the same key words *detdomovets* and *sirota*. The first identified pages were considered for the analysis. All YouTube materials were retrieved on March 11, 2013 with a total number of 40 materials. The sample included 11 links to news; 9 home videos; 2 documentaries; 2 TV shows; 6 movies; 9 songs, and 1 other material.

Summary. The total sample for this study included 120 video news from two national TV channels *Rossiya* and *Perviy Kanal*; 40 videos from YouTube; 120 articles from newspaper *Izvestiya* and State Data Bank on Orphans; 68 Internet materials from Google, Rambler, and Yandex; and 1200 static images. However, it is expected that the number of images would be higher since newspapers might include photos for analysis as well. Above all, videos would be analyzed as motion images that might add to the total number of images (visual representations) reviewed.

Table 4

Total Sample Composition

Source	Category	Sample
Rossiya	TV channel	60 videos
Perviy Kanal	TV channel	60 videos
Izvestiya	Newspaper	60 articles
State data bank on orphans	Newspaper	60 articles
Internet materials (Google, Rambler, Yandex)	Internet	68 links
YouTube	Internet	40 videos
Internet images (Google, Rambler, Yandex)	Internet	1200 images

Total number of materials: 1548

Method

The discourse analysis is one of the most frequently used methods in the social constructionists' research. Discourse analysis finds its premises in structuralist and post-

structuralist traditions that view language as the means of accessing the reality (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). The assumption is that language does not simply reflect the world, but rather actively constructs and reconstructs it. For example, after the severe hurricane that caused a lot of damage to a particular territory people may produce discourses trying to understand the natural disaster in different ways. One might assign a meaning to the hurricane through religious discourses, stating that it was God's will or punishment. Others might refer to a political discourse, saying that the recent increase of natural disasters is the result of hidden policies or military groups that are developing "weather" weapons. In other cases, people might refer to an environmental discourse ascribing the cause of the disaster to global warming or human's unrespectable activities towards nature. This example illustrates the essential social constructionist thought that there is physical reality that does exist (e.g., the hurricane as a 'real' phenomenon), but people might ascribe different meanings to the physical reality through discourses.[9]

Therefore, the role and the study of language is central to discourse analysis. However, Jørgensen and Phillips (2002) observe that there are variations in views among the scholars with regard to the attributed role of the discourse in the constitution of the world; and there are differences in the analytical foci. According to Jørgensen and Phillips (2002), there are three main conceptual views on the role of discourse in constituting the world. First, some scholars view discourse as *constitutive*. For instance, Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory highlights that all social practices are entirely

---

[9] Perhaps, people started to distinguish the physical reality from the socially constructed forms of reality already in the ancient times. For instance, Democritus, an ancient Greek philosopher, stated that "Nothing exists except atoms and empty space; everything else is just opinion." His phrase could be interpreted in a way that there is a material/physical reality which is subject to physical, biological, and any other universal laws - the reality that does exist independently from the society. However, the society has the ability to assign particular meanings to the existing phenomena, thus socially constructing it. Therefore, Democritus could be named as one of the first scholar who formulated the general premise of a modern social constructivists' theory, yet more detailed research is needed to fully support this argument.

discursive (cited in Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002). Second, many scholars viewed

discourse as *constituted*. Contrary to Laclau and Mouffe, for instance, Althusser believed

that meanings are embedded in the texts and people just passively decode them. In this

conceptualization, human's ability to actively construct and produce meanings is not

acknowledged. Third, some scholars view discourse as both *constitutive* and *constituted,*

arguing that discourse can both construct the reality, but can also be influenced by non-

discursive practices. Jørgensen and Phillips (2002) place Fairclough's critical discourse

analysis (CDA), discursive psychology, and Foucault's theory in this category.[10]

Regarding the analytical focus of discourse analysis, scholars tend to concentrate

on different categories, such as everyday discourse, daily conversations, texts

(newspaper, literature, scientific literature, etc.), images, or combinations of the above; or

on non-discursive practices. "The role of the discourse analysis is thus not to get

'behind' the discourse, to find out what people really mean whey they say this or that, or

to discover the reality behind the discourse...On the contrary, the analyst has to work with

what has actually been said or written, exploring patterns in and across the statements and

identifying the social consequences of different discursive representations of reality"

(Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002, p. 21).

I tend to identify myself with the group of scholars who treat discourse as both

constitutive but also constituted, since I believe that non-discursive practices are as

important as discourse itself. More specifically, my point of view is in favor of

Fairclough's critical discourse approach. For instance, besides the fact that Fairclough

views discourse as both constitutive and constituted, he also recognizes the importance of

---

[10]Jørgensen and Phillips (2002) urge that their division is arbitrary and therefore should be interpreted with caution.

images in the process of social construction, which is of interest to the study. In addition, Fairclough's three dimensional model of discourse analysis (cited in Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p.65-66) seems appropriate in our study. This model includes:

(1) A detailed linguistic analysis of the text, which includes the analysis of words and sentences.

(2) A micro-sociological analysis, which is a way to look and analyze the broader messages and meanings that are being produced by a particular discourses, texts, or images.

(3) Macro-sociological analysis, which takes the micro-sociological analysis further by examining social consequences of a particular discourse.

However, my approach diverges from Fairclough's on the issues related to ideology and power. In Fairclough's view, discourse has a very strong ideological coloring (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002,). It is produced and sustained by the dominant groups in order to oppress and marginalize others. In present study, I do not assume that the discourse on orphans in contemporary Russia is purposefully constructed to oppress them. And even if it might be the case, I want to make such a statement as a concluding point rather than a starting point. Also, since my sample includes sources from the Internet where a regular person might create a post or a video, it seems inappropriate to assume that ideology is present there.

Given that the sample consisted of different categories - texts (newspapers, and Internet articles), images and texts (TV program and Internet videos), and images alone (images in the Internet) – individual approaches were developed to analyze each of the sample categories.

Texts from newspapers and the Internet were carefully read at first. Then, linguistic analysis was performed. It included coding the words (adjectives, nouns, verbs) based on their emotional connotations, and thematically; then, the themes of the whole article was coded as well. More specifically, the major verbs, nouns and adjectives that are used to describe either orphans, or actions that are taken by the orphans, or by other groups towards the orphans were coded. The verbs were categorized on the basis of depicting orphans as passive or active; and adjectives were coded as positive, negative, or neutral in the way they described orphans. Also, adjectives and nouns were coded thematically. Throughout the analysis seven thematic categories for adjectives and nouns were developed, such as:

1) Adjectives and nouns that are related to illness/disease (e.g., *sick, handicapped*)

2) Adjectives and nouns describing positive behavior and character traits of an orphan (e.g., *kind, polite, helpful*)

3) Adjectives and nouns describing negative behavior and character traits of an orphan (e.g., *aggressive, violent, rude*)

4) Adjectives and nouns that portray an orphan as being abandoned, deceived or victimized (e.g., *abandoned, raped, cheated*)

5) Adjectives and nouns that portray an orphan as a Russian child/ citizen

6) Adjectives and nouns that portray an orphan as needy/hungry or lacking something (e.g. *hungry, homeless, powerless*)

7) Other - any other adjectives and nouns that did not fall into a particular category (e.g. *potential, former*)

The verbs were also categorized according to eight main themes that emerged during the actual analysis:

1) Verbs expressing violence, deception, and abandonment (e.g*., to beat, to rape, to deceive, to reject, to leave*)

2) Verbs expressing orphans as active agents with active life position (e.g., *to protect the rights, to appeal to court*)

3) Verbs expressing adoption and orphan upbringing (e.g., *to foster, to adopt, to raise*)

4) Verbs expressing support, care and provision (e.g*., to help, to support, to provide*)

5) Verbs related to "orphan management", possessing orphans as goods (e.g., to *exchange, to buy, to get, to return*)

6) Verbs related to study and education (e.g., *to study, to teach, to learn*)

7) Other

The general themes of the materials were coded according to the following categories that have been developed during the analysis as well:

1) Housing issues - the news that reported the issue of housing, such having terrible or no housing, or contrary receiving an apartment.

2) Foreign adoption - the news that reported on the issues devoted to foreign adoption.

3) Government laws, projects, initiatives - the news that were focused on the discussion, implementation, and critique of the government laws, projects, or initiatives.

4) Adoption and foster families - the news that discussed primarily the issues around adoption and foster families, etc.

5) Court and trials - the news that reported on trials involving orphans.

6) Charity initiatives - any charity initiatives and projects devoted to orphans.

7) Other - any other news that did not fall into the categories above (e.g. when president visited an orphanage; or when the church received a territory to bury orphans).

The analysis of the main themes, overall, helped to better understand the major concerns that the mass media raises: whether it is an issue with foreign adoption, charity, or some criminal news, and so forth. In addition, the titles of the news were coded as neutral, positive, or negative based on the message that they aimed to deliver or the way they depicted orphans. The titles were coded since there was an assumption that the reader or viewer might not read the whole article or watch a video clip, but just look at the title and build a perception about orphans. Lastly, I looked at the messages that were implicitly or explicitly delivered to the audience (e.g. if there was a call to adoption, help, attention, etc.).

TV programs and YouTube videos (the speeches, talks) were coded and analyzed in the same manner as texts. The video images from TV channels were coded thematically, either the background or image of an orphan. The themes that emerged during the analysis were: (1) terrible housing/ homeless orphan (2) court or police/ criminal (3) orphanage/ institutionalized child; (4) hospital/sick orphan; (5) happy adoptive family; (6) different background, but depicting orphan as needy, hungry, dirty; (7) other. However, there were cases when the background was negative, but the actual

portrayal of orphans was positive. Thus, the actual representation of orphans was coded separately as neutral, positive, negative. The images and pictures from the Internet were coded thematically in the same manner as images on TV.

At the end, at the macro-level, I examined whether the discourses were consistent throughout the newspapers, TV, and the Internet; and identified the main points of convergence and divergence of discourses. Further, implications of the revealed discourses were discussed. Finally, the findings were placed within the broader context and historical perspective.

Limitations

The study has several limitations, including its relatively small sample, reliance on electronic sources, "instability" of Internet sources, subjectivity in coding, as well as one-sided representation of the social construction of orphans.

First, the sample covers only selected newspapers, and TV channels, thus, the social construction of orphans in other mass media sources might slightly differ. As the result, some of the conclusions might be generalized and should be interpreted with caution. Second, the study has heavily relied on the electronic archives of videos and articles and it is possible that not every news item was uploaded on the official websites. Thus, it is possible that some news broadcasted or published about orphans was not even considered in the current study. Moreover, the choice of archiving some videos and news of the newspapers and TV channels electronically might be biased. For example, State Data Bank on Orphans is an official newspapers' archive on orphans in Russia, and it might support official view, and disregard news that departs from the government discourse on orphans. The same might (or might not) be true for other sources as well.

Even though, there is no practical opportunity to check a claim, it seems appropriate to recognize such probability. Third, the Internet represents a constantly changing and evolving space. The materials analyzed were retrieved once, and it is acknowledged that only a day later the same site might have shown different links and images when entering the same key words. Therefore, I tried to avoid any generalizations with regard to Internet sources. Fourth, coding of images, titles, and words (adjectives, verbs, and nouns) was made in a necessarily subjective way, since it was based on my personal understanding about what is positive, negative, and what is neutral. Although coding criteria were developed with the purpose to decrease subjectivity, there might have been a space for having personal biases. Lastly, the current study analyzes the social construction of orphans in the mass media and does not include data on how people might interpret the information, images, texts, videos that are produced by the mass media.

Chapter IV

Findings

The guiding research question of this study was to examine how mass media portrays orphans, understand how the problem of orphanhood is being formulated, and identify the main themes and issues raised by mass media. A broader goal was to convey the meanings and implications of such representations for children and the society at large. In this section, the major ways of constructing the image of an orphan are presented, including results from linguistic and image analysis. Further, the findings are analyzed in terms of major themes and issues raised in mass media. Following thematic analysis, the chapter discusses dominant mass media discourses in the context of government policies on orphans. Finally, the chapter concludes with the discussion of the broader meanings and implications of the dominant mass media discourses on orphans, as well as offers a historical comparison of the changing nature discourses about orphans in Russia.

I. Linguistic and Image Analysis: General Findings

This section presents results from linguistic and image analysis, drawing from a total sample of 340 adjectives and nouns, 742 verbs, as well as 1479 static images and motion images.

The linguistic analysis of the materials across TV channels, newspapers, and Internet revealed a gloomy picture. Among 340 adjectives identified, 244 (71%) had negative connotations and, in comparison, only 53 (16%) were positive and 43 (13%) neutral in their meanings. The analysis of headings and titles across the sample identified that 41% (141) of titles were neutral, 36% (127) either depicted orphans in a negative way or were

delivering negative messages or news, and only 23% (79) had positive messages. These findings indicate that individuals who did not even read the whole article or watched a video had a higher chance to either consciously or subconsciously associate orphans with some negative news or environment. Finally, the image analysis of 1479 motion and static images revealed that orphans were quite often portrayed negatively (in 36% of cases) or neutrally (35% of the cases). Positive depiction of orphans was found in 29% of the cases. Female orphans, however, were much more likely to be shown either in positive or neutral ways, while male orphans in negative or neutral ways.

	Adjectives	Titles	Images
■ Negative	71	36	36
■ Positive	16	23	29
■ Neutral	13	41	35
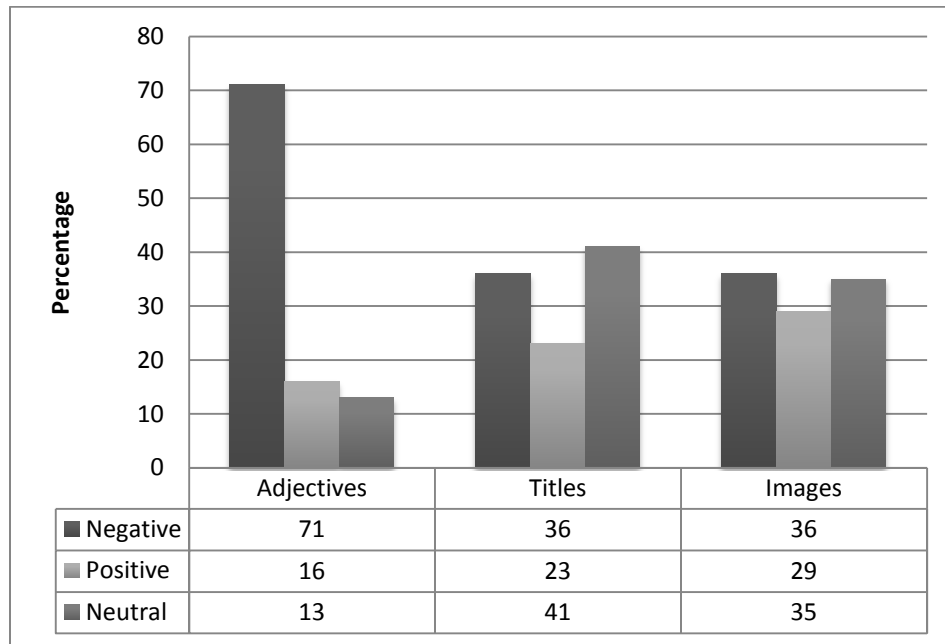
Figure 6. The percentage of adjectives and nouns, titles, and images based on emotional connotation. The graph illustrates the percentage of neutral, positive, and negative adjectives and nouns, titles, images.

The thematic breakdown of adjectives, nouns and images showed the overlap among some of three categories. For example, the themes describing orphans as being ill or needy were clearly expressed through adjectives, nouns, and images. The themes on

victimization, deception, violence, and abandonment were presented in all three categories.

Table 5

Thematic Breakdown of Adjectives & Nouns, Verbs, and Images

Adjectives & Nouns		Verbs		Images	
Theme	**%**	**Theme**	**%**	**Theme**	**%**
Illness and disability	19.7	To support, to care and to provide	31.3	Orphanage, institutionalized child	26.7
Negative behavior and character	17.4	To harass, to deceive, to abandon	22.1	Happy adoptive family, happy child	17.8
Needy, lacking something	17.1	To adopt and to raise	15.0	Needy, hungry, dirty	11.2
Victimized, deceived or abandoned	15.6	To manage	10.0	Court or police, criminal	6.1
Positive behavior and character	15.3	To express orphans' active life position	6.6	Terrible housing, homeless	4.9
Russian citizen or child	6.5	To educate, to learn	4.4	Hospital, sick or disabled child	2.8
Other	8.5	Other	10.6	Other	30.4
Total	**100.0**	**Total**	**100.0**	**Total**	**100.0**

Almost each of the analyzed sample categories had its own specific focus or theme. *Perviy Kanal,* for example, had the majority of adjectives and nouns, which described orphans as being sick or handicapped. For Rambler, Yandex and YouTube, it was more common to depict orphans as needy; for *Rossiya* and State Data Bank on Orphans, it was more typical to positively portray orphan's behavior and character traits. With regard to verbs, there was almost no variation across the sample found. In other words, the verbs of care and support were dominant across the sample, with the exception

of the State Data Bank on Orphans where the verbs of adoption and upbringing were the majority. However, there was a huge discrepancy among the sources when it came to visual representations. National TV channels - *Rossiya* and *Perviy Kanal* showed mostly positive images, such as good looking, neat, and intelligent orphans. While YouTube and other Internet sources had more images of orphans as being sick, homeless, and needy children. The most positive titles were found in the State Data Bank on Orphans, while *Perviy Kanal* and *Izvestiya* had negative ones in majority. All the Internet materials and YouTube tended to have neutral titles.

Portraits of Orphans

The nouns, adjectives, and verbs used to describe orphans created a very powerful portraits of orphans, which generally depicted them as (1) sick and disabled, (2) socially flawed, different, ill-prepared, and delinquent, (3) vulnerable, (4) abandoned, and (5) passive. These portraits were usually accompanied by images that contributed to the negative portrayal of orphans in mass media. There were some cases of positive portraits of orphans, which focused on specific individuals and cases rather than addressed the broader problem of orphanhood.

Sick and disabled. As seen in Table 5, the majority of adjectives described orphans as being ill or handicapped (about 20% of all cases). In particular, there were 42 cases identified that portrayed orphans as being ill or disabled. For instance, some news articles reported, "There are no healthy orphans. There are only sick or very sick (*Izvestiya*, 9)[11]; or "It is good if you can find a child without incurable diseases, whose mother isn't at least an alcohol addict, and not an HIV infected drug addict" (*Izvestiya,* 4).

---

[11] Here and after, all the quotes from the sample are translated by the author.

One interview for *Perviy Kanal* reported that the administration of one of the Russian orphanages claimed that "all orphan children are sick" (*Perviy Kanal*, 28). All of these quotes are very powerful statements that are ascribed to the entire orphan population.

In any other cases, mass media discussed or showed specific cases of sick or handicapped orphans. Mostly, sick and disabled orphans were used as examples of successful adoption, highlighting families that adopted children despite their medical conditions. In some cases, sick orphans appeared on mass media as a way to raise money or seek additional help from public. For example, one news story was devoted to Vera Drobinskaya who adopted seven disabled children (*Izvestiya*, 15).

Figure 7. Vera Drobinskaya with her adopted son, *Izvestiya*, 2012.

Perviy Kanal broadcasted a story where family adopted a seriously ill boy, "In the orphanage we were warned - a boy is seriously ill and he requires special care and constant medical support.... We did not sleep for the whole night, consulted with friends and doctors and decided if we are not going to take him- no one would. Nevertheless, we took him and never regretted about our decision" (*Perviy Kanal,* 28). Also, *Rossiya* shared a positive story of a seriously ill girl who after adoption became energetic and cheerful:

> Adults are trying not to recall what a child, suffering from severe mental and
>
> physical conditions, had to go through. Raili's parents were tragically killed, and
>
> the fate of the girl could have been different if she was not taken by a new
>
> family. Raili had to learn basic skills again, but love and care make miracles.
>
> The child, who could not walk independently, and who was afraid to talk, is
>
> now full of energy. Raili learned to read and write, and enjoys attending school.
>
> She even learned computer literacy. (*Rossiya*, 43)

State Data Bank on Orphans reported that sixteen HIV positive orphans were

adopted in Sverdlovskaya oblast, "Adoption of HIV positive children signals that there

was a shift in the public perceptions with regard to infection" (State Data Bank, 49).

Figure 8. Internet representation of a sick orphan. Identified through Google image search.

The discourse on disability was often present when charity events took place. For

example, there were several concerts organized to raise funds for children with cerebral

palsy, Down syndrome, and heart disease (*Rossiya*, 52). In Tver, there was a photo-fair

organized with the goal to raise funds for children with musculoskeletal system disorders

(State Data Bank, 52).

Figure 9. Representation of sick and disabled orphans.From newspaper *Izvestiya*, 15 and YouTube, 57.

From the cases above, one might conclude that despite the tendency to portray orphans as sick or disabled, the mass media is actually trying either to state that disability is not a curse and disabled children should be adopted or to present cases where individuals are actually trying to raise money and help orphans in need. Yet, in almost every case the situation is presented or being voiced by the adults, government, individuals, but not orphans themselves. Orphans are often portrayed as passive recipients of "help." The only few voices found, which can not be claimed to be representative due to their limited number, reveal a gloomy reality as described by a disabled orphan girl:

> You can not fight alone, especially, when there is no health, when the shackles
>
> of the disease can not be destroyed, when you are an outcast for everyone.
>
> Someone is always making decision on behalf of us, telling us where we
>
> should live, what we need and do not need. They build poorhouses, and help us
>
> indulgently-contemptuously. But all of these actions are aimed to make us sit
>
> in silence behind strong walls, high fences, separated from the society, to make
>
> us know our place in a very unmerciful world. Very often in my life I've heard
>
> the question: "What more do you want?" In this question I see, "What is the

use of you, the disabled, you are useless parasites, burden for the State.

(*Izvestiya*, 7)

While it seems uncertain whether or not the representations of sick and disabled orphans have real foundations in life, there are clear attempts by the mass media to overcome public prejudice against disabled or sick orphans and increase their chances of being adopted.

Needy. In many cases orphans were described as homeless, needy, or having nothing. For instance, on YouTube there was a video clip that showed how orphan with disabilities was living under the bridge:

A disabled orphan lives now on donations that are given by compassionate citizens. Homeless handicapped confesses that he is alive only with the support of compassionate citizens. Someone brings clothes for him, someone buys the food. (YouTube, 58)

In other cases, orphans were depicted as being in need of support, help, services, like in this case, "All of them are in need of psychological help" (*Izvestiya*, 13). The Internet was also rich in depicting needy orphans.

Figure 10. Representation of "needy" orphans on the Internet. Identified through Yandex and Rambler.

Furthermore, on YouTube there were numerous songs about orphans that reflected the discourse on orphans as needy. One of the songs came across about three times on YouTube titled "Orphans," performed by a well known Russian band - Lube (YouTube, 61):

...I do not have anyone, and no one to greet ...

I do not have anything, and have nothing to suffer from...

or another song performed by a popular band, Chizh and Co (YouTube, 62):

...Come closer, warm the orphan

And look at my bare feet...

Such a gloomy representation of orphans in the music indicates how deeply embedded the image of an orphan as poor, needy, abandoned in society is.

Socially flawed, different, ill-prepared, delinquent. A high number of adjectives and nouns fell into negative thematic categories that were quite often tight together, such as describing orphans as socially flawed, different, ill-prepared for independent life, and having negative behavior and character traits. The newspaper *Izvestiya* became a place for the majority of such representations, but also Internet materials (such as online dictionaries and Wikipedia) made their own contributions. For example, the online dictionary identified through Rambler search provided a definition of an orphan in the following terms, "Orphan is perceived as being socially and ritually flawed. Orphan faces plights and is unprotected, he is being deprived of guardians and protectors" (Rambler, 33). Russian Wikipedia devoted considerable attention combining all of the social stereotypes devoted to orphans:

There can be identified seven categories of social stereotypes about orphaned children 1) orphans - children with poor biological heredity and genetic predisposition to various diseases, including a tendency to manifest various deviations; 2) orphans are prone to mental disorders; 3) orphaned children have poor physical health and susceptibility to chronic diseases; 4) there is a tendency to manifest antisocial behavior; 5) orphans poorly adapt to the social environment; 6) foster children are ungrateful towards the adoptive parents; 7) social orphans are "poor," "unhappy," and "abandoned children." (Wikipedia, 56)

While there was no clear attempt to either support or reject those stereotypes, it seems unclear how the public might interpret this Wikipedia entry. Similarly, *Izvestiya* contributes to "myths" about orphans by suggesting that a child who grows up in the orphanage is a cripple for the rest of his life:

Orphan - is an individual who learned unconsciously that he is unloved. Orphans, even when grow up, always would differ from individuals who grow up in families. An orphan will never make up a feeling of love that he as a baby did not receive from his mother and father. Being "unloved" as a child and never taught the feeling of love, he will, by all means, try to prove to the world he is good. (*Izvestiya*, 5)

There is also an understanding, however, that the system of orphanages makes orphans different, "No matter how well-maintained is an orphanage it always remains a kind of incubator with artificial living conditions. While having everything ready for them, but

being in a closed prison-like environment, children are ill-prepared for the adult world"

(*Izvestiya*, 10).

Figure 11. A very typical image of an institutionalized child, identified through Rambler search.

Clearly, orphans are typically depicted differently from their peers that grow up in families. This is further explained by the following commentary in *Izvestiya*:

> Myths about orphans are very persistent. People say, for example, that they cannot do shopping, because they see products in a cooked form already in the dining room. Or another one: they grow up having everything ready for them and as the result they cannot even make a tea. (*Izvestiya*, 5)

In addition, there were numerous cases of depicting orphans' negative behavior or character traits. The majority of cases, once again were found in *Izvestiya*. The newspaper presented the most extreme stories, such as orphan being a killer; alcohol or drug addicts, or aggressive: "He is sleeping with hatchet, and with the age he is becoming more aggressive" (*Izvestiya*, 15). Google news also reported a case when an orphan caused fire or participated in street fights. In Wikipedia, similar information was published, "About half of the orphan graduates are lost for society: some become alcohol addicts, others become criminals" (Wikipedia, 56).

Figure 12. Orphan being taken by the police, identified through Yandex.

Vulnerable. Partly due to the drawbacks in the system of orphanhood and its failure to prepare orphans for independent lives, another discourse on orphans persisted, such as being vulnerable, orphans who can be easily deceived or victimized. Mostly, a discourse on vulnerability was discussed with regard to violence within the orphanage, housing issues, or foreign adoption. First, orphans were depicted as victims of physical abuse not only by the criminals, but by the caretakers themselves. A few of the reported cases revealed shocking details, when children with special needs were punished, "The inspection revealed that orphans, who were placed in a classroom for children with special needs, were regularly beaten. And as a punishment for deviant behavior, children were left without any food" (*Rossiya*, 46). In another orphanage, caretakers kept orphans in the toilet for two weeks as a punishment (*Rossiya*, 39). YouTube also revealed numerous cases when orphans were beaten in the mental health institutions (YouTube, 57) or harassed by the government officials (YouTube, 4) and orphanage administrations (YouTube, 59).

Figure 13. A victim of caretakers, who was placed into a mental health institution by force. From YouTube, 59

Rossiya also reported a case when caretakers were beating orphans with a mop (46). YouTube had a video where an orphan girl was forced to make an abortion at the time when a child was making movements inside of her, "They placed me in the cold..they were torturing me",- she said (57).

Second, orphans were portrayed as victims of "black realtors" or criminals who were trying to take advantage of orphans by taking away their apartments. It was a common belief that orphans were often not ready for their independent lives, thus being vulnerable in the face of criminals:

> When orphans reach the age of legal independence, they receive apartments
>
> from the government, and immediately becoming individuals at risk. Being
>
> without any further support from the state or caretakers, they are not prepared to
>
> face the realities of life. At best, they are being forced to agree on unequal
>
> housing exchange. But there are cases when apartments were exchanged for a
>
> laptop or a rusty car. (*Perviy Kanal*, 23)

Figure 14. A victim of "black realtors". From *Perviy Kanal*, 17

There was also another case, when, "Dmitry told that he fell into the hands of criminals immediately, as soon as he left the orphanage. Crooks tried to steal his documents needed to receive an apartment, but, fortunately, their scam failed. But the money that was stored in his savings, 350 thousand rubles, Dmitry lost." (*Perviy Kanal*, 29).

Third, Russian orphans were discussed as victims of foreign adoption. Across the newspapers, TV channels, and Internet materials, cases of abuse by foreign adoptive families were reported and numerous stories were discussed where Russian orphans were tortured or killed. News identified through Google search reported how Maxim Kuz'min was killed by his foster mother in the United States, who was feeding him strong psychotic medications" (Google material, 1).

Figure 15. Maxim Kuzmin, a victim of foreign adoption. From, *Rossiya*, 47

Perviy Kanal broadcasted at least four cases when Russian orphans were abused, even to the point of death, in the United States, "Parents were severely punishing children for any offense, and even invented a special technique - sisters were forced to pushup over the board with nails, run for many kilometers, and beat each other over the head for misbehaving" (*Perviy Kanal*, 24).

Abandoned. The discourse of orphans as abandoned children was persistent across the sample. For instance, on *Perviy Kanal*, orphans were depicted in the following way, "In a hospital... there were many seriously ill and abandoned children, children who were left by their biological mothers" (*Perviy Kanal*, 25). The channel *Rossiya* reported along similar lines, "Abandoned children: in hospitals there are hundreds of *otkaznikov* (abandoned, rejected children)" (*Rossiya*, 41). *Izvestiya* and State bank on orphans tended to depict orphans as abandoned, using the phrases such as "hopeless children and *otkaznichki* (abandoned)" or "they are being abandoned."

Figure 16. Abandoned and institutionalized orphans, Google.

The rest of the negative depictions of orphans were mainly associated with the senses of pity and sadness that were coming from the public, "I was hoping at least to

brighten, just a little bit, the life of disadvantaged children. I feel so sorry for these boys and girls. I can feel how badly they are lacking not only the parental attention, but quite often some basic things in their lives" (*Izvestiya*, 3).

Passive. Across mass media, orphans were generally portrayed as passive recipients of care and social services. The linguistic analysis of verbs revealed that majority of verbs depicted orphans as passive. Yet, orphans' passivity was not only expressed in terms of receiving services, but also as being objects who can be easily relocated, abused, and manipulated without facing any resilience. Such assumption is supported by the most frequently actions (verbs) which were taken with regard to orphans: *to bring up/raise* (30), *to adopt* (32); *to take* (13); *to allocate* (17); *to provide* (11); *to support* (12); *to help* (32); to protect (23); as well as, *to scoff* (8); *to beat* (10*); to abandon* (14); *to return* (17). The most frequently verbs that indicated actions done by the orphans were *to receive* (14) and *to learn* (9).

The mass media provided very little space to actually express and show orphans' agency. Indeed, the number of "passive" verbs outnumbered the number of "active" verbs across each of the sample categories. The verbs of care, support, and provision constituted the largest part of the identified verbs. Such a finding strongly correlates with Abebe's (2009) statement that the concepts of care and dependency are central to the social construction of orphanhood worldwide. Indeed, orphans were often depicted as children who should be protected from criminals, abusive families, who should be provided services and benefits, who should be taken care of. Indeed, the words of support were expressed by high-level government officials, including then president Dmitriy Medvedev. "I am ready to help by all means. This is very important," said Medvedev in

2009 during his visit to one of the orphanages (*Rossiya*, 36). Also, the discourse on care and protection was supported by the governors. For example, a governor of Moscow, Sergey Sobyanin, highlighted that orphans should be devoted attention and care, "It is important to provide for children, who were left without parental support, apartments. It is of course, essential, and it is significant help" (*Perviy Kanal*, 19). There was also news shown on TV where orphans were given free lawyers, "who would not only consult them, but also help them with documentation and present their interests in court" (*Izvestiya*, 14).

Another category of verbs consisted of "technical" words that were more related to the sphere of management or business, such as to return, to exchange, to buy, to take, and so forth. Indeed, a few times orphans were compared or stated to be "goods" and even though this theme was not very strong across the sample, the verbs that were used often related to business or management. For instance, in the newspaper *Izvestiya* there was a following formulations: the "orphan business" involves tons of money, "Orphans are goods both for foreigners and Russians" (*Izvestiya*, 12). *Rossiya* also builds upon the issue by stating that parents pay for orphans with cash or credit cards (*Rossiya*, 44). In *Izvestiya* it was written, "An orphan is an object of return or exchange" (*Izvestiya*, 8). Another article stated, "The prosecution believes that their colleagues from the United States had a good contact with the social services in Russia, without which it would not be impossible to develop a scheme to export Russian children abroad" (*Rossiya*, 37). *Izvestiya* also made the following statement where it was highlighted that orphans are merely "goods" that could be bought and sold:

Children are chosen as watermelons on the market: this one has colorless strips, and this one has wizened tail, hey, cut this one, let's see what is inside...And

kids are ready to do everything, just to please and impress the potential parents.

(*Izvestiya*, 5)

In contrast, orphans' active position was hugely undermined or just silenced by the mass media.

Positive depictions of orphans. Positive adjectives and nouns, as well as verbs in contrast, were not very common. However, it should not disillusion the reader, because positive visual representation of orphans on TV was sometimes much more powerful than the actual use of an adjective or a noun in a newspaper. For example, the positive portrayal of orphans on TV and YouTube exceeded the number of cases where orphans were depicted negatively. Out of 200 video images analyzed, 133 were positive. But coming back to linguistic analysis, positive adjectives and nouns were often used when specific cases of orphans were presented. In other words, positive description was almost never used when talking abstractly about orphans in general, with an exception presented by *Rossiya* channel, where a father who adopted children made a generalized statement, "Foster children are not a burden, they are the best companions. Children who grow up in orphanages are a 'golden fund.' They are very talented," he said (*Rossiya*, 34).

Figure 17. Smiling orphans, identified through Yandex.

In most other cases, a positive description was applied to a specific child or a group of children. For example, a State Data Bank on Orphans contained a news item

devoted entirely to an orphan boy who was very talented and healthy. That is how the story described him, "He is very responsible, thoughtful, honest and kind" (State Data Bank, 54).

Figure 18. Positive image of performing orphans, identified through Yandex.

Rossiya also showed an orphan boy who was described as being adoring and clever (35). *Perviy Kanal* broadcasted an initiative where professional photographers took pictures of orphans with the purpose of finding parents for them, "There is a desire to get to know these kids more. Parents see that the children are alive, active and emotional, happy, with character" (*Perviy Kanal*, 18).

It was very typical to see happy children who were adopted by family - such visual representations constituted about 18% of all cases.

Figure 19. Happy adoptive family and children, *Perviy Kanal.*

The analysis of verbs identified at least 7% of cases when the mass media presented orphans as active agents in a positive way, such as defenders, compared to negative orphans' activity when they are to kill or beat someone. In most of the cases, orphans were studying or defending themselves. There was a story of an orphan who got accepted to a well-known college, "Svatoslav, a former orphan, came from Arhangelsk. He said that he likes to study here." (*Perviy Kanal*, 30). Or, *Rossiya* showed a case when an orphan, who was a student at that time, "was able to defend her rights for having an apartment" (*Rossiya*, 39).

II. The Main Themes and Issues Raised by the Mass Media

General findings: Themes

The thematic analysis revealed three major themes across the sample, including adoption, housing, government initiatives and laws, followed by foreign adoption, trials, and charity events.

Table 6

Themes across Newspapers and TV Channels

Theme	Frequency	Percent
Adoption, foster families	71	29.6
Housing issues	42	17.5
Government laws and projects	40	16.7
Foreign adoption	27	11.3
Charity initiatives	21	8.8
Court and trials	19	7.9
Other	20	8.3
Total	240	100.0

There was some variation among the sources. The majority of news on *Perviy Kanal* was devoted to the housing issues, while government laws and initiatives were the main focus in *Izvestiya*. The theme of adoption became central in the State Data Bank on Orphans and *Rossiya* channel. In what follows, some of the major themes will be examined.

Adoption. The theme of adoption was one of the most prominent themes across the sample. More specifically, it involved discussion of positive cases of adoption, the importance of placing orphans within families, strengthening or weakening policies around the adoption, discussing progress and challenges, as well as dealing with controversy around foreign adoption.

Positive cases of adoption were present in each of the sample categories. Above all, the importance of placing orphans within families was regularly highlighted, "Government officials finally understood that children should be raised in families, and that is a right approach," stated a former orphan, activist, Alexander Gezalov (*Izvestiya*, 2). The State Data Bank also commented, "It is not a secret that effectiveness of the work of the stakeholders is measured by the number of orphans placed in the families" (State Data Bank, 55).

Also, there were mixed discourses on either strengthening or weakening policies around adoption. For example, one of the laws forbade individuals with criminal records to become adoptive parents. There was also a big push for requiring all the potential adoptive families to pass psychological-pedagogical test (State Data Bank, 50). On the other hand, there was a government initiative discussed that would allow adoption even for families that were renting apartments or living in very small houses (*Izvestiya*, 6).

Furthermore, some news reflected either progress or challenges with regard to adoption. For instance,

> Over the last three years in the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous District's due to active work of placing children with families, the number of children residing in orphanages decreased by 25.3%. At the same time the number of foster families increased three times. (State Data Bank, 53)

However, there was a place for pessimistic views as well, such as this: "In 2009, foster families returned back eight thousand adopted children" (*Rossiya*, 42). Other news reported that 24 children were abused/neglected to the point of death by their adopted families and 143 children were injured (State Data Bank, 51). The motives for adoption were also called into question:

> In Russia, there are about 700 thousand orphans. In the past few years, the government has intensively searched new parents for orphans and orphans were placed into foster case with families. Children, however, were taken not only because of the feelings of love or pity, but because of the benefits that came with them. And if healthy orphans are always in demand, children with disabilities were taken mostly by foreigners. (*Izvestiya*, 15)

The theme on foreign adoption was raised numerous times as well. The majority of the news related to foreign adoption was generally negative, with a few exceptions. Overall, foreign adoption gradually gained a status of being "a shame for the country" as clearly stated in the following news story:

> Foreign adoption must end, because it's a shame. Nowadays there are only a few countries that allow foreign adoptions and export their children. These are usually

weaker countries or countries with a specific population policy, such as China, where second child is illegal - what to do with him/her? Thus, they are given to foreign parents. Russia is not among these countries. We have low number of children ourselves, they all should stay in Russia. (Pavel Astakhov on *Perviy Kanal*,32)

Current president Vladimir Putin also emphasized that Russians should solve the problem of adoption themselves (*Rossiya*, 45). Furthermore, general dissatisfaction with foreign adoption was closely related to the secrecy and poor legislation attached to it:

There is no control there. Nothing. They always hide information about violence against Russian children in families. Why cannot they inform us? Look at their judgments: a fine, a suspended sentence, or generally exempt from punishment. A child died, but the autopsy revealed 80 injuries on his body. So how did the child die? Of course he was beaten! (an outraged Vladimir Zhirinovsky, member of the Russian State Duma and former presidential candidate, on *Perviy Kanal*, 16)

Housing issues. Housing issues were discussed in about 18% of all cases. Mostly, mass media reported news when orphans lacked housing, received terrible housing, or were cheated by "black realtors." At the same time, such news was generally followed by the cases when orphans received good apartments from the state. Most of the negative cases were reported by *Perviy Kanal* and most of the positive ones by *Rossiya*.

There was a common perception that it is simply a miracle if an orphan receives an apartment after reaching the age of maturity: "as a rule, orphans have to fight for what was guaranteed by law" (*Perviy Kanal*, 22) as in the following example:

The vast majority of grown up orphans are in terrible situations. The law promises for each of them more or less acceptable housing. However, local authorities do not care about poor orphans. It turns out that life deprived them from their parents, while officials throw them out on the streets. The court always supports orphans, yet not everyone will survive to celebrate a day of justice. (*Perviy Kanal*, 31)

Mass media reported cases when orphans received their apartments, but their houses were in very poor conditios, lacking such essential utilities as water, heat, and electricity. In the case of Catherine, "The old communal kitchen, mold on the ceiling, rusty pipes. But local authorities told Catherine as well as other orphans that it is the only thing they can count on" (*Perviy Kanal*, 26).

Rossiya, in contrary, showed many cases when orphans received apartments from the state. However, there was a tendency to politicize the issue or make it as a farce show. Apartments were often given after an orphan's appeal to the president, or once a political party helped an orphan to receive an apartment, or there was a special ceremony dedicated to present apartments to orphans. During one such public event, the governor of a Moscow region Boris Gromov said:

Education and housing are a start-up capital. When young orphans enter adult life, they already have everything they need. Everyone is under constant care of our Ministry of Education, and the social services. Every year we give about 300 apartments. (*Perviy Kanal*, 20)

Perhaps, many homeless orphans might have argued with such statement. Nevertheless, the fact that mass media does raise the problem of housing makes the audience believe that one day such a problem will be solved for every Russian orphan.

Mass media discourses and government policies. The year of 2007 was announced to be the Year of a Child, which was interpreted by many as a beginning of deinstitutionalization of orphans. The thematic breakdown of mass media news by year clearly indicates a pattern that reflects a response to government policies with regard to orphan care.

In 2007, the major focus was on government initiatives where all kinds of ideas and proposals with regard to orphan care and adoption were discussed. The year of 2008 presented a mix of different themes reported by mass media, with no clear focus. Perhaps, it might be explained by the economic crisis in Russia and the changes in leadership of the country. In 2008, Dmitry Medvedev was elected as a new President of Russia. Since 2008, adoption became the major discourse in mass media, and 2012, the year when government adopted the *Dima Yakovlev* law, experienced an increase in the news related to foreign adoption
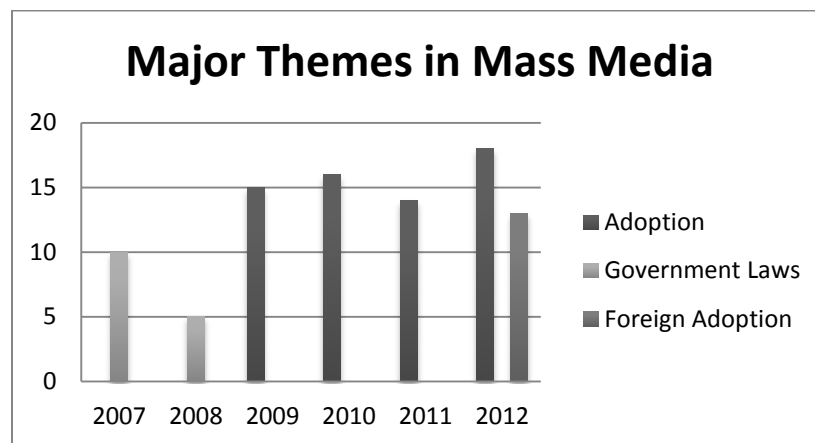
Figure 20. The major themes in mass media by year across the sample. The graph illustrates the most prevalent theme(s) for each of the indicated year.

Generally, mass media attempts to promote adoption, depict foreign adoption as something undesirable, promote discourse of orphans as Russian children or citizens clearly reflect government policies and a national strategy to rebuild Russian national identity through traditional values such as children, family, and religion. In this context, orphans have become a political tool used to address demographic crisis and solve other political issues that Russia is currently facing. Here is one of the examples of rebuilding a national identity through traditional values, "I believe that the state should take care of its children, women, and elders. This is sacral duty of any government, and the morality of the state is determined in the way how they treat children, women, and elders," said the leader of a communist party Genadiy Zyuganov. A similar statement was made by President Vladimir Putin:

> For centuries and today, there was neither spiritual nor state leader who has sent anyone abroad. They always fought for their national identity, fought for their language, for their culture ... So we should be very attentive, and, of course, it is necessary to support a proposal that is devoted to make everything possible within our own country to ensure a decent future for all our children, including those without parental support and orphans. (*Perviy Kanal*, 21)

The discourse on demographic crisis has evolved along similar lines, "For us, population growth is an essential element in ensuring the future of Russia," said an official deputy, "The state priorities are the following: let families have more children, let's overcome orphanhood" (*Rossiya*, 40). Another government official highlighted, "I want our children to grow up in Russian families. It is a shame to give our children...It is our gene pool, it is our nation, our children" (*Perviy Kanal*, 27).

Strikingly, there was an initiative to relocate Russian orphans into North Caucasian families due to the recent decline of Russian population in the region:

> The Federation Council is concerned with the falling program of returning
> Russian population to the North Caucasus republics. To reverse the trend, the
> deputy chairman of the Federation Council Alexander Torshin suggested
> relocating orphans from orphanages in the Far North and Far East to the south.
> (*Izvestiya*, 11)

By and large, there is a clear understanding that orphans are often used as a political tool and it is disappointing to realize that the attention that is currently being devoted to orphans is largely due to changing political circumstances in Russia. Orphans are used as a tool to rebuild national identity and address a demographic crisis. But what if Russia was currently overpopulated? Would government continue to solve the problems of orphans? Or would orphans continue to be ignored?

III. Implications and Historical Comparison

The depiction of orphans as being sick, ill, disabled, vulnerable, delinquent, and passive either consciously or subconsciously provokes negative associations. Thus, it might be hypothesized that the social construction of the image of a contemporary orphan would continue to marginalize children who are left without parental support or abandoned. Such representations might negatively affect orphans' self-perceptions, identities, and the ability to socialize and interact with the world.

Nevertheless, there are some attempts to create a more positive image of an orphan, and decrease public prejudice against disabled orphans, in particular. Strong emphasis on adoption along with government support allocated to adoptive families and

orphans might significantly increase the chances of orphans being adopted. However, some methods should be called into question. For example, several charity initiatives involved taking photos of children and placing information about them into public spaces or in the Internet:

> Many residents of Nizhny Novgorod and tourists certainly paid attention to the small-format posters posted in buses and trolley buses. These are portraits of children, often without smiles, but with expressive signature: "I'm waiting for my mom and dad all my life ..." or something like that. The poster has a phone for those who want to help these children, 434-14-44. (State Data Bank, 48)

Such methods have begun to be used by the Ministries of Education and social services more broadly. Currently, almost every region has a website with electronic profiles of orphans, where individuals can find video of a child, photos, their biography, interests, and medical condition:

> On the websites of the regional Ministry of Education, you can see photos of children - participants of the project and a summary of each of them. And the summary is not that short. In addition to age and external data, you can learn about the character, interests and inclinations of the child. (State Data Bank, 48)

Perhaps, such initiatives can be used as a powerful tool to attract public attention and find potential parents, yet it is striking that all of the details of orphans' private lives are publicly available. The websites could be seen not only by the potential parents, but by the classmates of orphans too, or by criminals, for that matter. Moreover, on TV there was a tendency not only to show an orphan, but also disclose his or her medical condition and even mention details of their background, such as this: "The newborn girl was found

in the Sverdlovsk region in the garbage. Natalia went to Yekaterinburg. Doctors warned once: the baby is blind and has brain disease" (*Perviy Kanal*, 25). Did anyone ask that girl if she wanted the whole country to know that she was found in the garbage and has a serious disease? Personally, I find such methods to be unethical, because they are violating orphans' right to privacy. Above all, such initiatives could lead to further marginalization and stigmatization of orphans. There is a high likelihood that orphans could be teased or bullied by their peers at school. Therefore, even while the intentions are positive, the broader implications of such representation should be seriously reconsidered. Otherwise, orphanages can be said to resemble a zoo, where children are playing roles of animals and everyone else is just gazing at them.

Furthermore, the general trend to strengthen policies around orphans and raise problematic areas might indicate that gradually problems of orphans would be solved and orphans would have more comfortable and secure lives. The broadcasted cases of criminals who once deceived orphans and were punished, along with the discussion on strengthening social protection of orphans, might result in the decrease of such negative cases.

Lastly, it is hypothesized that the government would continue to deal with a "byproduct" of orphanhood. All the policies are mainly focused on the adoption process and programs to support foster families and orphans. There is almost no news discussing the challenges of disadvantaged families coping with unemployment, alcohol, or drug addiction. By dealing with the "byproduct" of social orphanhood, the government may overlook the roots of a problem. It also means that the disadvantaged families might not be supported by the government, but, instead, their parental rights would be terminated.

The social construction of the contemporary image of the orphan in the mass media shows that the historical image of the orphan is changing. Still there is a common perception of orphans as being abandoned, vulnerable, and needy. The discourse of orphans as being criminals, on the other hand, is not very strong. Moreover, description of orphans as dirty and unintelligent is not common as well, compared to the historical image of an orphan.

While Astoiants (2006) identified three main discourses on orphans during the period of 2003-2006, such as danger for society, discourse for justification, and social partnership, surprisingly, the first two discourses were almost entirely absent during the 2007-2012 period. The emerging discourse on social partnership has strengthened, especially with regard to the cases of foreign adoption when the government began to appeal to the public to take a part in addressing the problem of orphanhood.

Chapter V

Conclusion

Kuznetsova (2003) revealed the existence of negative stereotypes about orphans in Russian society. She also documented that the majority of the research participants based their perceptions on facts produced by mass media. To further understand the role of mass media in the social construction of orphanhood, this the study examined the ways orphans are portrayed in contemporary Russia (2007-2012) drawing on a sample of two national TV channels (*Perviy Kanal* and *Rossiya)*, the newspaper *Izvestiya*, newspapers archived in a State Data Bank on Orphans, and Internet materials (Google, Rambler, Yandex) and YouTube. Using Fairclough's critical discourse approach and the three-dimensional model of analysis, the study identified major adjectives, nouns, and verbs which were to describe orphans, documented broader themes and messages articulated in mass media, and discussed possible implications of the existing representations of orphans.

Overall, the findings of this study revealed that orphans were mainly depicted negatively. They frequently appear as sick, needy, vulnerable, having negative behavior or character traits, being passive and socially flawed, and being different from the society. Orphans were mainly depicted as objects of care and support. The linguistic and image analysis showed that the majority of adjectives, nouns, and images were negative. The analysis of titles revealed similar results, which imply that individuals who would not even read or watch news in the mass media would probably associate orphans with negative facts and environment.

At the same time, there were some attempts to create a more positive image of an orphan. Especially, there was an attempt to overcome the prejudice of adopting sick and disabled children in the mass media. For instance, mass media showed how the government agencies, and independent initiatives through a series of projects aimed at portraying orphans positively in photos and videos – mostly by presenting colorful pictures and videos accompanied by the summary of child's interests, hobbies, character, and, well, medical condition. Despite good intentions, such practice should be urgently called into a question, since orphans' personal data is currently publicly available via the Internet, TV, and newspapers. It seems unethical, and perhaps even dangerous to share details of orphans' lives publicly. The information might be seen by orphans' classmates who might start bullying them, or criminals, who might use the information for their own purposes.

With regard to the major themes, orphans often appeared in the mass media news in the context of local and foreign adoptions, housing issues, government initiatives and laws, trials and charity events. Overall, the news was directed towards strengthening or weakening policies around adoption, banning foreign adoption, solving problems with housing, developing a framework for better social protection of orphans, and attracting public attention to the problem of orphanhood. The news also reported numerous challenges and imperfections with regard to orphan care. Yet, what is clear is a strong push for and discourse on adopting children by Russian families, including the adoption of sick and disabled children. Using Astoiants' (2006) terminology, a discourse on social partnership is currently prevalent in the Russian society. Although each of the mass media sources had its own focus on the issue of orphanhood, the broader mass media

messages reflected and followed the government policies on orphan care by emphasizing policies and reforms aimed at placing orphans within families.

Notwithstanding positive public policy attention to the issue of orphanhood, the findings revealed that orphans were often used as a political tool to resolve the demographic crisis, rebuild national identity, and solve other strategic and political issues. If this is indeed the case, it is very disturbing, since the attention devoted to orphans was mainly driven by external factors, such as decrease in population, and the need to recreate national identity based on traditional values of family, children and religion. What if Russia was overpopulated? Would government continue to develop similar policies, or would orphans be further ignored? It is striking to realize that the policies as well as discourses on orphans might easily change due to various political and socio-economic factors. Such assumptions demonstrate the sensitivity and the importance of considering political, economic, and cultural contexts while addressing the problem of orphanhood in Russia and worldwide.

Current mass media discourse on orphans did not reveal government plans to address the roots of the problem of orphanhood. Only a few of the analyzed materials documented an attempt to understand and address problems of low-income families and those suffering from alcohol and drug addiction. On the contrary, the discourse was devoted to the "byproducts" of orphanhood, in particular there was a push to place orphans within families and provide comfortable conditions and quality services for adoptive families and orphans. Thus, it seems very uncertain what would happen in a longer term if the population in Russia were to significantly increase thus restoring a sense of national identity, but the roots of orphanhood would not be addressed. Would

government continue to keep its promise and aspirations to help orphans? Or is there a risk for orphans to become a silenced and marginalized group of children again?

The need to address roots of orphanhood is only one of the implications of the thesis. Based on current mass media representations of orphans, it is likely that current social construction of orphans would continue to marginalize and stigmatize children. The depiction of orphans as being sick, ill, disabled, vulnerable, delinquent, and passive might negatively affect not only orphans' self-perceptions, and identities, but more importantly the ability to socialize and interact with the world. Yet, the attempts to create a more positive image of an orphan might lead to the increase in the number of adopted orphans, and more importantly, the elimination of the prejudice against adoption of disabled and sick children. Importantly, current methods of sharing personal information about orphans with the public might add to further marginalization and stigmatization. It increases the risk of orphans being bullied by their peers and becoming a target for criminals. A general discussion on strengthening policies around orphans might lead to successful solutions of many problems that orphans and adoptive families are facing. Lastly, the reported cases of orphans' abusers being punished by the government might potentially result in decrease of cases of violence and deception inside and outside the orphanages.

While the future of orphans, especially in a longer term, seems uncertain, the social construction of an image of contemporary orphans indicates certain positive changes compared to the images of a historical orphan. While depicting orphans as vulnerable and needy, the contemporary image of an orphan does not emphasize criminal activity or a lack of intelligence. The findings of this research revealed that historical

discourses on orphans as a danger to the society was almost entirely absent. On the contrary, the discourse on social partnership is being strengthened, which increases the likelihood for more Russian orphans to be adopted. Despite the progress with regard to the positive representation of orphans and system of care, it seems vital to refocus more directly on the roots of orphanhood (especially social orphanhood), which would be a more effective and long-lasting solution.

References

Academic literature

Abebe, T. (2009). Orphanhood, poverty and the care dilemma: Review of global policy trends. *Social Work & Society*, *7*(1), 70-85.

Astoiants, M. S. (2007). Orphaned Children: An Analysis of Life and Practices in a Residential Institution. *Russian Education & Society*, *49*(4), 23-42.

Astoiants, M.S.(2006). *Politicheskij diskurs o sirotstve v sovetskij i postsovetskij period: social'naja integracija ili social'noe iskljuchenie? Zhurnal issledovanij social'noj politiki* [Political discourse on orphanhood during the Soviet and post-Soviet periods: social inclusion or social exclusion? The Social Policy Research Journal]. *4*(4), 4.

Astoyants, M.S. (2013). The Changing Dynamics of Political Discourse About Orphans in Soviet and Post-Soviet Periods. Social Inequality & The Politics of Representation. *A Global Landscape, NY.: SAGE.*

Ball, A. (1992). The Roots of Besprizornost' in Soviet Russia's First Decade.*Slavic Review*, *51*(2), 247-270.

Berger, P. & Luckmann. T.(1966). The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge. *Garden City, NY: Anchor*.

Blumer, H. (1971). Social problems as collective behavior. *Social problems*, 298-306.

Carls, P. (2003) Internet Encyclopeida of Philosophy. Retrieved from http://www.iep.utm.edu/durkheim/ 12/29/2012

Central Intelligence Agency. The World Factbook. Russian Economy (2011). Retrieved from https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/rs.html

Cherkasov, J. (2004). The Forgotten Ones. Russian Life, 47(5).

Coser, L. A., & Rosenberg, B. (1968). Sociology of knowledge. *International encyclopedia of the social sciences*, *8*, 428-434.

Cox, C. (1997). Research, reform and new hope for Russian orphans and abandoned children. *Criminal Behaviour and Mental Health*, *7*, 111-116.

Creuziger, C. G. (1997). Russia's Unwanted Children A Cultural Anthropological Study of Marginalized Children in Moscow and St Petersburg. *Childhood*, *4*(3), 343-358.

Durkheim, E. (1912). 1965. *The elementary forms of the religious life*.

EHO Moskvy, Interview with Pavel Astahov (2011). *Novoe Rossiysko-Amerikanskoye soglasheniye po usynovleniyu detey* [New Russian - American treaty on adoption]. Retrieved from http://www.echo.msk.ru/programs/beseda/793300-echo/

Ezhova, L.V. & Porezkina, E.M. (2004). *Deinstitualizacija vospitanija detej-sirot: rossijskij diskurs i praktika // Zhurnal issledovanij social'noj politiki* [Deinstitutionalization of children-orphans: Russian discourse and practice// The Social Policy Research Journal]. V.2, 2.

Forum *EHO Moskvy*. Retrieved from http://www.forum-tvs.ru/index.php?showtopic=86479

Foucault, M. (1984). On the genealogy of ethics: An overview of work in progress. *The Foucault Reader*, 340-72.

Foucault, M. The Archaeology of Knowledge, 1972, London.

Fox, N. J. (1998). Foucault, Foucauldians and sociology. *British Journal of Sociology*, 415-433.

Fujimura et al., C. K., Stoecker, S. W., & Sudakova, T. (2005). *Russia's abandoned children: an intimate understanding*. Praeger Pub Text.

Gamson, W. A., Croteau, D., Hoynes, W., & Sasson, T. (1992). Media images and the social construction of reality. *Annual review of sociology*, 373-393.

Gergen, K. J. (1985). The social constructionist movement in modern psychology. *American psychologist*, *40*(3), 266.

Glazkova, N. (2006). Force People to Live There?. Russia's Orphanages Must Be Changed. *Russian Politics and Law*, *44*(4), 54-61.

Green, R. F. (2006). *"There will not be orphans among us": Soviet orphanages, foster care, and adoption, 1941--1956.* The University of Chicago). *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses,* , 302-302 p. Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/docview/304954749?accountid=12043. (304954749).

Guerin, B. (1992). Behavior analysis and the social construction of knowledge.*American Psychologist; American Psychologist*, *47*(11), 1423.

Jørgensen, M. W., & Phillips, L. J. (2002). *Discourse analysis as theory and method*. Sage Publications Limited.

Karl Mannheim. (2012). In Encyclopedia Britannica. Retrieved from http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/362586/Karl-Mannheim

Kuznetsova T.Yu. (2003). *Social'nye stereotipy vosprijatija vypusknikov detskih domov. Sociologicheskie issledovanija* [Social stereotypes and perceptions on orphans. Social Research]. (11), 84-88.

Markova, N. E. (2011). Social Orphanhood Under the Conditions of Depopulation. *Russian Education & Society*, *53*(5), 85-92.

Minchella, T. D. (2008). *Adoption in post-soviet russia: Nationalism and the re-invention of the 'russian family'. Masters Abstracts International,* , 3058-3058.

Moscovici, S. (1988). Notes towards a description of social representations. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 18,* 211-250.

Nazarova, I.B. (2001). *Vozmozhnosti i uslovija adaptacii sirot. Sociologicheskie issledovanija* [The ways and conditions of orphans' social adaptation. Social Research]. (4), 70-77.

Nemedi, D. (1995). Collective consciousness, morphology, and collective representations: Durkheim's sociology of knowledge, 1894-1900. *Sociological Perspectives*, 41-56.

Pantiukhina, E. N. (2009). The social and pedagogical protection of orphans in russia. *Russian Education & Society*, *51*(9), 40-50

Parfitt, T. (2003). Care of learning-disabled Russian children condemned. *The Lancet*, *362*(9392), 1291.

Prisyazhnaya, N.V. (2007). *Deti-siroty: postinternatnoe jizneustrojstvo. Sotsiologicheskie issledovanija* [Children-orphans: life after the orphanage. Social Research]. (11), 54-64.

ROSSTAT (2012). *Uroven' jizni naseleniya* [Standard of Living]. Retrieved from http://www.gks.ru/bgd/free/B13_00/IssWWW.exe/Stg/dk01/5-0.htm

Rusinova, V. (2006). I Was Born in Prison and Sent to an Infants' Home. *Russian Politics and Law*, *44*(4), 45-53.

Schmidt, V. (2009). Orphan care in Russia. *Social Work & Society*, *7*(1), 58-69

Shakhmanova, A. S. (2010). Social and pedagogical problems of the upbringing of

orphans in Russia. *Russian Education & Society*, *52*(5), 71-78.

Simonova, T.M. (2009). *Struktura social'noj problemy i ee analiz. Vestnik*

Cheljabinskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta [The structure and analysis of a

social problem. The Newsletter of Chel'abinsk State University]. (18), 103-107.

State Data Bank on Orphans. Retrieved from

http://www.usynovite.ru/adoption_/Sozdanie_priemnoy_semiy/

Zatsepina, I.A. (2010). *Ponjatie social'nyh problem i ih otrazhenie v mass-media.*

Sovremenniye problemy Massovoj kommunikacii [The notion of social problems

and its reflection in the mass media. The contemporary problems of mass

communication]. 2772.

Zezina, M. R. (2001). The system of social protection for orphaned children in the

USSR. *Russian Social Science Review*, *42*(3), 44-63.

Zhuravleva, Zh. (2003*). Izvrashhenec–zhertva–terrorist: Social'noe konstruirovanie*

rolevogo repertuara vich–inficirovannyh v mass–media. Rubezh (al'manah

social'nyh issledovanij) [Pervert- victim - terrorist: Social construction of HIV

infected individuals in the mass media]. (18), 178-189.

Sample references

1. Google material. *Operatsiya "Sirota" budet prodoljena* [The campaign "Orphan"

continues]. *Newspaper Utro*. Retrieved from

http://www.utro.ru/articles/2013/03/04/1104667.shtml

2. *Izvestiya,* (2011). *V Moskve zakryvayut detdoma radi blaga sirot* [The orphanages in

    Moscow are being closed for orphans' sake]. Retrieved from

    http://izvestia.ru/news/493752

3. *Izvestiya,* (2011). *Blagotvoritelniy vystrel* [Charity start]. Retrieved from

    http://izvestia.ru/news/370474

4. *Izvestiya,* (2010). *Stat' otstom za 27 chasov* [To become a father in 27 hours].

    Retrieved from http://izvestia.ru/news/359062#ixzz2LBfEPWFh

5. *Izvestiya*, (2009). *Chey dom bogache: otchiy ili detskiy*? [Which home is more

    wealthy: family or an orphanage?]. Retrieved from

    http://izvestia.ru/news/344342#ixzz2LBqnDUfB

6. *Izvestiya,* (2012). *Semyam bez jilya razreshat usynovlyat detey* [Families without

    housing will be allowed to adopt children]. Retrieved from

    http://izvestia.ru/news/542041

7. *Izvestiya,* (2008). *Kajdoye slovo zadelo za jivoye* [Every word struck a nerve].

    Retrieved from   http://izvestia.ru/news/343659#ixzz2LBr427GJ

8. *Izvestiya,* (2008). *Priemysh podlejit "vozvratu i obmenu"* [An adoptee is a subject to

    "return and exchange"]. http://izvestia.ru/news/333418#ixzz2LBtuAjuE

9. *Izvestiya,* (2007). *Priemniye roditeli, vernite detey v priyuty* [Adoptive families, please

    return children back to orphanages]. Retrieved from

    http://izvestia.ru/news/330537#ixzz2LBvRcXYW

10. *Izvestiya,* (2007). *Derevnya- SOS- schastlivaya semya* [SOS Children's Villages - one

    happy family]. Retrieved from

    http://izvestia.ru/news/325109#ixzz2LBwHclBm

11. *Izvestiya*, (2012). *Russkih sirot hotyat otdat' v Kavkazskiye semyi* [Russian orphans might be relocated to Caucasian families]. Retrieved from

http://izvestia.ru/news/541351#ixzz2LDBbwUYQ

12. *Izvestiya,* (2012). *"Rossirotprom" i ego podtantzovka* ["Rossirotprom" and its supporters]. Retrieved from

http://izvestia.ru/news/542140#ixzz2LCIPAqKL

13. *Izvestiya,* (2008). *Deti naydut priyut v podmoskov'ye* [Children will find a shelter in the Moscow region]. Retrieved from

http://izvestia.ru/news/339573#ixzz2LCMzH1ru

14. *Izvestiya,* (2012). *Pensioneram i sirotam dadut besplatnih advocatov* [Orphans and elders would be given free layers]. Retrieved from. http://izvestia.ru/news/522747 retrieved 2/17/2013

15. *Izvestiya,* (2012). *Vera i pravda* [Believe and the truth]. Retrieved from

http://izvestia.ru/news/514734

16. *Perviy Kanal,* (2012). *Gde "sirotskiye" dengi*? [Where is orphans' money?]. Retrieved from http://www.1tv.ru/news/social/222560

17. *Perviy Kanal,* (2011). *Hitriye rieltory protiv invalida*. [Sly realtors against the handicapped]. Retrieved from http://www.1tv.ru/videoarchive/36543&p=136

18. *Perviy Kanal,* (2011). *V Habarovske detyam-sirotam obresti novuyu sem'yu pomogayut professionalniye photography*. [The professional photographers are helping orphans to find a family in Habarovsk]. Retrieved from

http://www.1tv.ru/news/social/195192

19. *Perviy Kanal* , (2011). *Sergey Sobyanin vstretilsya s detmi-sirotami i vruchil kluchi ot novyh kvartir* [Sergey Sobyanin met with orphans and presented keys from new apartments]. Retrieved from http://www.1tv.ru/news/social/188926

20. *Perviy Kanal*, (2011). *Deti-siroty iz Podmoskovya poluchili kluchi ot sobstvennogo jilya* [Orphans from Moscow region received keys from their new apartments]. Retrieved from http://www.1tv.ru/news/social/188572

21. *Perviy Kanal,* (2012). *V Rossii podpisany "antimagnitskiy zakon" i Ukaz o pomoshi sirotam* [The anti- Magnitsky law and the law to support orphans were signed in Russia]. Retrieved from http://www.1tv.ru/news/social/223117

22. *Perviy Kanal,* (2010). *Polojennogo jil'ya vypusknikam detskih domov mojno jdat' do pensii* [Orphans might be waiting for the "guaranteed" housing until the retirement]. Retrieved from http://www.1tv.ru/news/other/151684

23. *Perviy Kanal,* (2010). *Perviy shag vo vzrosluyu bezdomnuyu jizn'* [First step into adult homeless life]. Retrieved from http://www.1tv.ru/news/social/150983

24. *Perviy Kanal,* (2010). *V USA suprujeskuyu paru podozrevayut v izdevatelstvah i izbiyeniyah priemnih detey iz Rossii* [In the USA the couple is suspected to abuse and beat their adopted children from Russia]. Retrieved from http://www.1tv.ru/news/world/160260

25. *Perviy Kanal,* (2010). *Semya kotoraya slojilas vsem bedam nazlo* [The family that was united despite any challenges]. Retrieved from http://www.1tv.ru/news/social/159106

26. *Perviy Kanal,* (2009). *Tysyachi sirot po vsey Rossii ne mogut poluchit' jil'yo. Kuda uhodyat b'udjetniye dengi?* [Thousand of orphans in Russia can not receive any

housing. Where does the money disappear?]. Retrieved from

http://www.1tv.ru/news/social/142274

27. *Perviy Kanal,* (2012). *Inostrannoye usynovleniye v Rossii vliyaet na sudby vzroslyh i detey* [Foreign adoption in Russian influences children and adults]. Retrieved from http://www.1tv.ru/news/social/223093

28. *Perviy Kanal* , (2009). *Pod Rostovom dlya mnogodetnyh semey s priyomnimi det'mi postroena Pravoslavnaya derevnya* [Near Rostov the orthodox village was established for families with adopted children]. Retrieved from http://www.1tv.ru/news/other/17304

29. *Perviy Kanal,* (2012). *V Permi zaderjany moshenniki, kotoriye deystvovali osobo tsenichnim sposobom* [In Perm the criminals, who were acting aggressively, were caught]. Retrieved from http://www.1tv.ru/news/social/217455

30. *Perviy Kanal,* (2010). *V znamenitom Nahimovskom uchilishe podvodyat perviye itogi eksperimenta* [The primary results of the experiment are being discussed in a famous Nahimovskiy college]. Retrieved from http://www.1tv.ru/news/social/152919

31. *Perviy Kanal,* (2007). *Redkomu vypuskniku detdoma udaetsya poluchit jil'yo, polojennoe po zakonu* [It is very rare that orphans receive apartments which are "guaranteed" by the law]. Retrieved from http://www.1tv.ru/news/other/86162

32. *Perviy Kanal,* (2012). *Otvet na amerikanskiy "akt Magnitskogo" vstupaet v silu 1 yanvarya 2012 goda* [The anti-Magnitsky law comes into power from January 1, 2012]. Retrieved from http://www.1tv.ru/news/social/223099

33. Rambler. *Dom svarogi. Slovar'* http://pagan.ru/slowar/s/sirota8.php

34. *Rossiya*, (2012). *Stolitsa Privolj'ya prinyala velotur v ramkah aksii "Mir bez sirot"* [The capital of Privolj'ya hosted a bike tour as a part of "World without Orphanhood" campaign]. Retrieved from http://www.vesti.ru/doc.html?id=829966

35. *Rossiya*, (2009). *Zvezdy vystupili v podderjku sirot iz Sochi* [Celebrities organized a concert to support orphans from Sochi]. Retrieved from http://www.vesti.ru/doc.html?id=250377&photo_id=311723&p=41&fr=1&date= 17.02.2009

36. *Rossiya*, (2009). *Prezidentu pokazali prazdnichniy kontsert* [The President was shown a concert]. Retrieved from http://www.vesti.ru/doc.html?id=239913

37. *Rossiya*, (2010). *V Germanii rassleduyut fakty nezakonnogo usynovleniya rossiyskih detey* [In Germany the cases of illegal adoption of Russian children are being investigated]. Retrieved from http://www.vesti.ru/doc.html?cid=549&id=360844

38. *Rossiya*, (2010). *Kvartiru sirote vernuli posle obrasheniya k Putinu* [The apartment was returned to the orphan after the appeal to Putin]. Retrieved from http://www.vesti.ru/doc.html?id=345311

39. *Rossiya*, (2010). *Primorskih detdomovtsev nakazali pereseleniyem v tualet* [Primorskiye orphans were punished by placing into the restroom]. Retrieved from http://www.vesti.ru/doc.html?id=344153

40. *Rossiya*, (2010). *Elena Mizulina: semya- eto zolotaya aksiya v rukah gosudarstva* [Family is a golden ticket in the hands of the government]. Retrieved from http://www.vesti.ru/videos?vid=310531

41. *Rossiya*, (2010). *Brosheniye deti: v roddomah- sotni otkaznikov* [Abandoned children: hundreds of abandoned children are in the hospitals]. Retrieved from http://www.vesti.ru/videos?vid=304002&cid=

42. *Rossiya*,(2010). *V 2009 godu Rossiyane otkazalis ot 8 tysyach priemnih detey* [In 2009 Russians abandoned 8 thousands adopted children]. Retrieved from http://www.vesti.ru/videos?vid=308345

43. *Rossiya*, (2012). *Noviy god v krugu semyi: schastlivaya istoriya usynovleniya* [New Year in the family: a happy story of adoption]. Retrieved from http://www.vesti.ru/videos?vid=475986

44. *Rossiya*, (2012). *Kuda uhodit detstvo: chto sluchaetsya s detmi v USA* [Where does the childhood go: what is happening with children in the USA]. Retrieved http://www.vesti.ru/doc.html?id=990898

45. *Rossiya*, (2012). *Rossiyane doljni sami usynovlyat sirot, schitaet president* [Russians should adopt orphans themselves, - the president stated]. Retrieved from http://www.vesti.ru/doc.html?id=988465&cid=999

46. *Rossiya*, (2008). *Vospitateli izbivali sirot shvabroy* [The caretakers were beating orphans with a mop]. Retrieved from http://www.vesti.ru/doc.html?id=169530

47. *Rossiya*, (2013). *Mat' Maksima Kuzmina prejdevremenno lishili roditelskih prav* [The mother of Maxim Kuz'min lost her parental rights in advance]. Retrieved from http://www.vesti.ru/doc.html?id=1067745&tid=102214

48. State Data Bank, (2009). *Podvodniye kamni semeynogo ustroystva* [The challenges of family placement]. Retrieved from http://www.usynovite.ru/massmedia/7bruO5P125.html

49. State Data Bank, (2011). *HIV-infitsirovannyh detey nachali usynovlyat na Srednem Urale* [Families in Sredniy Ural started to adopt HIV- infected children]. Retrieved from http://www.usynovite.ru/massmedia/ab2c75671d.html

50. State Data Bank, (2011). *Nina Ostanina: Priemnym semyam nujna finansovaya podderjka* [Nina Ostapina: Adoptive families need financial support]. Retrieved from http://www.usynovite.ru/massmedia/8f576dc9b1.html

51. State Data Bank, (2011). *Priemnih roditeley budut uchit'* [The adoptive families would be trained]. Retrieved from http://www.usynovite.ru/massmedia/6c6f87614b.html

52. State Data Bank, (2008). *Blagotvoritelnaya aktsiya v pomosh detyam-sitrotam prihodit na smenu vystavke "Sotsialniye proekty i programmy"* [The charity event to support orphans replaced the Social Projects and Programs exhibition]. Retrieved from http://www.usynovite.ru/massmedia/1b8p5rJZ90.html

53. State Data Bank, (2009). *Spetsialisty informatsionnogo tsentra prohodyat trening po profilaktike sotssirotsva* [The specialists from the informational center are being trained to prevent social orphanhood]. Retrieved from http://www.usynovite.ru/massmedia/677Aq68746.html

54. State Data Bank, (2007). *I hudojnik, i philosoph* [An artist and a philosopher]. Retrieved http://www.usynovite.ru/massmedia/0m837s2t04.html

55. State Data Bank, (2008). *V Abakane na segodnyashniy den' projivayut 858 detey-sirot ili ostavshihsya bez popecheniya roditeley* [There are 858 orphans and children left without parental support residing in Abakan]. Retrieved from http://www.usynovite.ru/massmedia/5692t929m7.html

56. Wikipedia. *Sirota* [Orphan]. Retrieved from

http://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%A1%D0%B8%D1%80%D0%BE%D1%82%D0%B0

57. YouTube. *Pust' govoryat. "Den' zashity byvshih detey"* [Let's talk. The protection

day of former children]. Retrieved from

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z_EwY652-ak

58. YouTube. *KTK: Detdomovets poselilsya pod mostom* [The orphan started to live

under the bridge]. Retrieved from http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k80eoW4k-

J0&playnext=1&list=PLYfKNHpYT0TVNC5nL4IoHwnhRSr7ie2_v&feature=re

sults_main

59. YouTube. *Kimovskiy detdomovets. 2 hodki v psihushku* [Kimovskiy orphan. 2 times

was placed in the mental hospital]. Retrieved from

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u9xqYtKr-Yg

60. YouTube. *V Uralske detdomovets na ploshadi ustraival akt samosojjeniya* [In Uralsk

an orphan was trying to commit an act of self-immolation]. Retrieved from

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f3V9QjtVYsY

61. YouTube. *Sirota- kazanskaya* [Orphan - Kazanskaya]. Retrieved from

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FAf3rp1i5UU

62. YouTube. *Sirota* [Orphan]. Retrieved from

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rPEHd_J57jM

Author Biography

Marina Kudasova was born in Turkmenistan, USSR and at the age of fourteen she moved with her family to Russia. In 2009 she graduated from Immanuel Kant's State University of Russia, department of foreign language and literature. Already during her undergraduate studies she got involved in social projects and volunteered to work with orphans in Russia, drug addicted children and youth in Poland, street children in India, and low-income school students in Cambodia. Marina's passion lays in the areas of research and work with marginalized children and youth. In 2011, Marina received a Fulbright Fellowship Award and continued her Master program in Comparative and International Education department at Lehigh University in the United States. Upon completion of the program, Marina is planning to continue her academic and professional career by pursuing a doctorate degree in the field of international education. She is interested in the ways education can help and foster marginalized children to succeed in their lives.