

# Introduction

This book is based on the ethnographic study of ‘social orphanhood’ (*sotsial’noe sirotstvo*) in post-Soviet Russia.<sup>1</sup> ‘Social orphans’ is an idiom describing children (individuals up to 18 years of age) who have at least one living parent, and often members of their extended family, but who were left without parental care. This term lacks a clear definition. Official discourse distinguishes between biological orphans and ‘children left without parental care’ (*deti, ostavshiesya bez popecheniya roditelei*). In public discourse the term ‘social orphans’ is often conflated with ‘children left without parental care’, but both are used to describe such categories of children as unsupervised family children (*beznadzorniye*), street children (*besprizorniye*), hidden orphans (*skrytye siroty*), vagrant children (*brodyazhki*), delinquent children and youths, abandoned children *and* children who grow up in residential care institutions. They are ‘social’ orphans because their living parents were thought to be unwilling or unable to look after them for ‘social’ reasons: their parental rights have been terminated, they were ‘asocial’, neglectful, alcoholics, incarcerated or absent. In my study I focused on ‘social’ orphans who grew up in residential care institutions, where they comprise 80–95 per cent of the institutional child population.<sup>2</sup>

## The Scope of the Problem

There is no single source for the official statistics regarding such children, but the numbers that appear in different sources are usually similar. In the 2000s the number of children without parental care stood at 776,000, with 250,000 in residential care (Trostanetskaya, cited in Lukashina 2003)<sup>3</sup> and the rest placed in adoptive families or family substitutes, such as *opeka* (guardianship), *patronat* and *priemnaya sem’ya* (types of foster care). Dronova (2007) cites 867,000 children without parental care.<sup>4</sup> Lakhova (2006) refers to 820,000, with 220,000 living in residential care institutions; other sources named 260,000 residential care children.<sup>5</sup> According to Kachurovskaya there are 735,000 children without parental care, with 190,000 children in residential care institutions.<sup>6</sup> Having done my own

calculations for one city, I realized that the actual number of social orphans is difficult to estimate because of the fluid boundaries between different statuses of children.

Throughout the 1990s the number of children without parental care had been growing (Table 0.1). If in 1998 approximately 1.8 per cent of all Russia's children were cared for outside their nuclear family,<sup>7</sup> in 2003 the number rose to 3 per cent.<sup>8</sup> The number of children's homes increased from 900 in 1991 to 2,100 in 2005 (Korsakova 2005). According to other sources, the number of children's homes is higher: 2203 children's homes and *internats*, with additional 1952 remedial children's homes but not including baby homes (Ministry of Education and Science 2005).

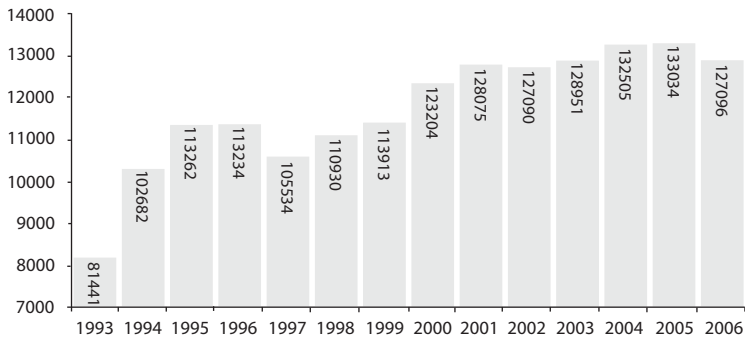
In the period between 1994 and 2006, over 100,000 new cases of 'children without parental care' were discovered annually (Figure 0.1).

Generally, over one-third of these children were placed in residential care institutions,<sup>9</sup> over a half were placed in family substitutes<sup>10</sup> and only about 6 per cent were returned to their birth families.<sup>11, 12</sup> The latter is of special interest to us, for along with fewer children having been returned to

Year	1965	1992	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	2003
New cases of children without parental care per year	60,000-70,000**	67,286	102,682	113,296	113,243	105,534	110,930	
Children without parental care			496,273	533,137	572,362	596,852	620,115	776,000*
Placed under guardianship			225,456	252,540	278,051	293,546	303,865	
Adopted			114,495	139,827	141,136	144,825	146,812	
Raised in institutions			112,600	140,800	153,200	158,500	169,400	250,000*
Number of institutions	1,761				1,119	1,252	1,279	
Parents deprived of parental rights		6,700*	16,997	19,846	24,359	27,640	31,790	

**Table 0.1.** Number of children without parental care and their distribution between guardianship, adoption and residential care institutions. Number of parents deprived of parental rights.

(Source: Karelova 2000, \*Trostanetskaya cited in Lukashina 2003, \*\*Rybinskiy 1990)



**Figure 0.1.** The number of new cases of ‘children without parental care’ registered annually in the Russian Federation. <http://www.usynovite.ru/statistics/2006/ammount>

their birth families, the number of parents whose parental rights have been terminated has jumped tenfold in the post-Soviet period, from 6,700 cases in 1992 (Table 0.1) to 70,000 in 2005 (Lakhova 2006). All these statistics indicate a trend: an increase in the numbers of children left without parental care, of children’s homes, and of parents deprived of parental rights (as compared to the post-War Soviet period).

Social orphanhood is not a new phenomenon; these children existed in Soviet times, but it was in the post-Soviet period that their numbers started to swell and solidified into a category, becoming an issue of heightened concern. From the mid 1980s a massive wave of publications described the poor state of childhood, in sharp contrast with the positive *image* of Soviet childhood more familiar to the majority of people during Soviet times, or at least as far as childhood representation in the media goes. The issue had moved into the public domain of open media discussions, research interests, conferences and social policy, attracting attention of educators, psychologists, practitioners working in residential care institutions, and the emerging field of social work.

My analysis of public discourse reveals three major problem areas, corresponding to the three stages in the family’s and children’s relationship to the state: I call these pre-institutional, institutional and post-institutional. Discussions related to the pre-institutional stage consider the problems of children in danger of institutionalization, viewed as a part of the larger pool of children in need (Rybinskiy 1997). The ever-increasing number and

visibility of children without parental care became a significant point of reference for illustrating the devastating effect that post-Soviet transformations exerted on the family. Along with deprived childhood, the family assumed a place in the spotlight, including a particular kind of family called *neblagopoluchnaya* (or 'problem' family),<sup>13</sup> another category that crossed over the threshold separating Soviet from post-Soviet society. The media is saturated with examples illustrating observations that 'problem' families raise 'problem' children, that children in these families have a deprived childhood, and that the increasing number of 'problem' families and their children suggests a process of individual psychological, social and demographic disintegration, that is, an illness in the whole society.<sup>14</sup> Research and scholarly discussion support many of these claims in a more nuanced way. They document the following issues: the family in crisis (Antonov et al. 1999, Podgornov 1996); family transformations that include the nuclearization of the family, increasing divorce rates, the increasing number of single parent families and the decreasing number of children, along with changing family roles (Gurko 1995); a changing value system that accompanies transition from ideological monism to ideological pluralism (Sillaste 1995); the considerable worsening of economic situations in families (Darmodekhin and Elizarov 1994, Osadchaya 1997); the disintegration of moral values; and the rise in alcoholism and drug use (Bezlepkina 1995). Gor'kovaya (1994) studied teenage delinquency and found that in 92 per cent of her cases, children's families had pronounced *neblagopoluchiye*, a concept we shall examine in detail later, while Romanova and Petrakova (1992) studied how children assimilate family alcoholic tradition. Many of these studies also point to a link between the availability of state support and family welfare, including issues of responsibility (Varga 1996, Darmodekhin and Elizarov 1994, Antonov et al. 1999, Sillaste 1995). Thus, the problem of children without parental care was seen as a consequence of the family crisis in general and of 'problem' families in particular. Economic devastation is considered as a contributing factor, but many refuse to accept it as a definitive one as, they argue, there were fewer orphans (680,000) after the Second World War (Kachurovskaya 2007) and many people raised orphans as their own children in conditions no less challenging than the current ones. In most cases the blame is securely attached to 'bad' mothers (Kobets 1995, Burenkova 1995) and so-called 'cuckoo mothers', another Soviet idiom that describes women who give birth to children and leave them for other people to raise.<sup>15</sup> Children of such mothers were seen as being better off elsewhere, including Russian

and foreign adoptive families and residential care institutions, of which post-Soviet Russia inherited a whole network.

In the discourse pertaining to the institutional stage, throughout the 1990s state residential childcare institutions were generally viewed as a good alternative to such families. But increasingly in the 2000s, media stories revealed the poor state of institutions and incidents of child abuse by the institutional staff, in hospitals where abandoned children often live for years,<sup>16</sup> and by some Russian<sup>17</sup> or foreign<sup>18</sup> adoptive parents. Although some were still advocating preservation and improvement of the institutional system (Ivanova and Barabanova 1999), the emphasis now shifted to citizens helping residential childcare institutions with material goods, and the government began to develop foster care programmes. Instead of the feeling of horror and disbelief that accompanied this avalanche of information, a less emotional and more pragmatic approach was adopted, leading to the creation of numerous websites, religious and non-governmental organizations and civil initiatives that aimed at assisting children in need, efforts to promote adoption and the creation of family-type residential care, among others.

Finally, the discourse on the post-institutional stage reflects an awareness that former residents leave institutions ill prepared to live in the wider society, becoming increasingly visible through their unemployment, homelessness and criminal involvement, and thus posing a threat to societal stability (Grigor'eva 1995a, Grigor'eva 1995b, Belikova 1991). This pointed to a need for programmes that would facilitate their social adaptation.

Many initiatives outlined above were aimed at improving institutions and creating more family *substitutes*. Yet the main player in this drama, the 'bad' birth mother, is taken for granted and is the subject of considerable prejudice. Although it is still unclear who this quintessential 'bad' mother is, outside of the oft-used cliché image of alcoholic, single, unemployed or young irresponsible women, many agreed that their children should not remain in such families. Indeed, as shown above, 94 per cent of the children taken from such mothers ended up either in a family substitute or in residential care. This distribution is an exclusive right and responsibility of the state (regulation). The wave of publications in the 1990s calling for awareness and recognition of the problem had passed, yet the problems outlined there remained. The number of social orphans is increasing but the reasons for that are still unclear, except for the general nods towards falling moral standards, families in crisis, 'problem' families, and occasionally economics and unemployment.

## What is this Study About?

Answering the question ‘Why there are so many children without parental care, and why their numbers are growing?’ entailed a study of social orphans not as an isolated phenomenon, but within the context of what led up to them becoming social orphans, analysing the circumstances surrounding the process of separation, its consequences for the parents and the child, and the actors involved in this process. The problem of social orphanhood is located in the nexus between the state, the family and the child seen from the vantage point of the child welfare system, where all three actors meet. I was interested in exploring a set of practices in the area of child welfare, as well as concepts, attitudes and values that guide them in their everyday occurrences. The study is also an attempt to understand these practices as being the result of a historical process that shaped the existing family policies and attitudes.

Signs of potential problems in children may signal an unfavourable family environment, raising a suspicion that the family in question may be *neblagopoluchnaya*, a suspicion that may quickly become a certainty. Parents will then be placed in the category of a *neblagopoluchnaya* and their children become ‘social orphans’. From that time on, public opinion operates with these categories without making extensive efforts to look beyond the labels; this is where a category makes individuals.

In professional and public discourse, the cliché reference to social orphans often does not indicate an agent, using the passive voice: children left without parental care, immediately leading to the question, ‘who left them without parental care?’ Most commonly, mothers are implied as being responsible for leaving their children. As I shall explain, the trope of a ‘bad mother’ in Soviet culture is one of the worst that can happen to a woman. I sought to examine who is conceptualized as a ‘bad mother’ and what constitutes her ‘badness’. Children who grow up in institutions are put into the fluid category of ‘social orphans’. I endeavoured to understand what it means to live as a social orphan. How and where are they brought up? Being removed from their birth families, what are family and home for them? What are their life paths after leaving children’s homes? What is the role of residential care institutions in society? As we shall see in Chapter 7, these children have an ambiguous status, being simultaneously viewed as marginalized and privileged. Therefore, this is a study of the social construction of ‘unfit’ parents, of ‘social orphans’, and of the relationship between these categories and the individuals comprising them, and the

state in a post-Soviet context. The aims of my study were (1) to examine the process of social *orphaning*<sup>19</sup> of children from an institutional, parental and child's perspective, and its conceptual foundation, and (2) to explore social *orphanhood* as a state of being.

Termination of parental rights is a blatant instrument that finalizes what had been seen as the process of breakdown in the family. Examining real or constructed breakdowns via welfare mechanisms is a way of understanding childhood, family, individuals and their relationships to the state. I believe that the crisis points of family breakdown, whether actual or as imagined by the state, form highly productive points for considering what it is that constitutes the good family, and the sharp changes in the relationship between family, parenting and state. Such a focus entails an examination of shifting ideas and practices of public/private, state and society, power and agency, and notions of what it is that makes a person. The rationale for examining this particular branch of the welfare system is that it acts as an index of the health of the whole society, for this is indeed how the issue of social orphans is perceived by various actors.

## **Time Line: Soviet and Post-Soviet**

The time line is an important factor in this study for two reasons. The first concerns the issues of change and continuity. Since the beginning of *perestroika* in 1985, post-Soviet Russian society continues to be in a permanent state of flux, with profound changes affecting social, economic and political spheres. It felt as if 1991, when the Soviet Union fell apart, constituted a temporal and spatial break separating the (old) Soviet from the (new) post-Soviet periods.<sup>20</sup> Specifically, in the 1990s, the overall feeling was that of overwhelming change. The perceived certainty and immutability of social order and most institutions were gone, leaving open a question of how to interpret new social reality and what to do next. As a popular saying went, 'one night we went to bed in one country and woke up in another'. Although political dramas unfolding on the TV screens attracted genuine interest and hopes for positive changes, the life of an ordinary citizen was more closely affected by changes in the domains of economic and social policies, with unemployment, unpaid wages and decreased benefits, the emergence of the private sector and ownership, and changing infrastructures becoming new realities. Through this material I wish to explore whether or not, due to the disruptions in multiple spheres during this 'transitional' time, there was indeed such a 'clean break' and if so, in which domains.

The second reason why the time frame is important is because, although my fieldwork was conducted in the post-Soviet period, the Soviet Union continued coming up in interviews with my informants, in child welfare practices or in the archaeology of some current common concepts. Most of my informants were socialized via Soviet institutions and, as we shall see, the current child welfare infrastructure turned out to be a modified Soviet model. Thus, it was necessary to consider the Soviet Union in depth, which explains the considerable emphasis that is placed on Soviet practices.

Yet the relationship between things Soviet and things post-Soviet is not the only one that seems illuminating. Throughout Soviet history and into post-Soviet times, Russia was seen as being different in kind from Western democracies. Likewise, Russia considered capitalist countries its ultimate 'other'. Differences were to be found everywhere, in the political structure, economics and social welfare, and in a formation of the subject. However, the interpretation of the Soviet subject as a product of power (the 'diffused' model; see below) revealed many similarities with ideological practices in contemporary Western democracies (Dobrenko 2007). I arrived at the same conclusion. My first hunch as to possible similarities in child welfare practices between such presumably radically different systems as in (post-) Soviet Russia, the UK and the USA was that much of my data corresponded to the interpretative framework of French social philosophers Foucault and Bourdieu, whose theoretical frameworks were developed for non-Soviet society. There were other telling instances, such as when scholars from the UK and the USA commented on my conference papers, 'We have plenty of this in my country'. Eventually I decided to place my material in a comparative framework, based on the literature of child welfare practices in Western Europe, the UK and the USA, and the results were no less illuminating than the Soviet/post-Soviet parallel.

## **Notes on Methodology**

### ***Entering the Bureaucratic Maze***

Originally I planned to conduct my study in two cities, Magadan and Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskiy (Figure 0.2), allowing me to make comparisons and see whether or not processes observed in one city were peculiar to a particular place or whether they were representative of the wider society.

I knew that in order to obtain permission to work in institutions I had to start from the 'top', and this is where a few informal contacts proved



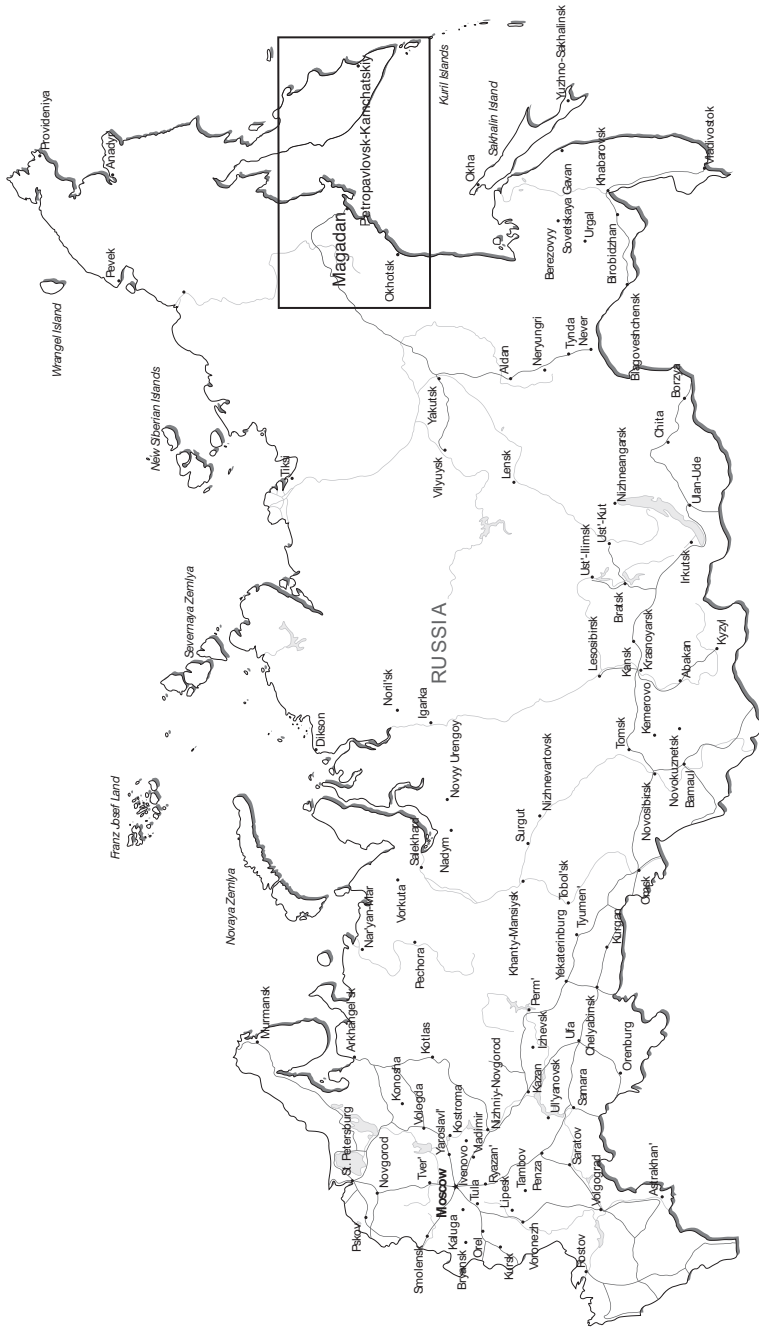


Figure 0.2. Fieldwork sites: Magadan and Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskiy, Russian Far East. © Map Resources.

themselves useful. To study social orphans is to deal with a sensitive issue, but the problem was perceived to be of such magnitude that researching the topic seemed like a good idea to some key personnel in the city administration. A few telephone calls by Nadezhda Papp, then Vice-Mayor for Social Issues, to the directors of the Baby Home, a school for low-income families, and the Guardianship Department, all in the jurisdiction of the various departments of the city administration, opened doors to these institutions. Later additions were the Committee for Juvenile Affairs (KPDN) and the Centre for Temporary Isolation of Juvenile Delinquents (TSVINP). I could make my observations at any time and for however long it took.

However, we made a strategic mistake. Among others, we called the director of the Children's Home, notifying her about my coming and asking her to assist me. Yet, the next day I was informed that before I could visit the Children's Home and the *internats* (residential homes/schools), I must secure permission from their immediate superiors, the regional Department of Education. Apparently, the director of the Children's Home informed them about my coming, and was not permitted to see me until I received clearance from Georgiy, the Head of the Department. From now on, the negotiation of my access to the institutions was more structured and formal; I had to make my way through the bureaucratic edifice in descending order. The atmosphere and requirements here were very different from that of the city administration. Georgiy interrogated me on my purposes and intentions, and required me to notify him as to the dates and duration of my studies in each institution so that he could issue an official *prikaz* (order) and make it public in the Department. He also insisted that I produce a report of my findings and deliver this report to the meeting of regional educational officials directly after my observation. No arguments to the effect that I first must analyse my data deterred him from this demand. Later I found out that I was not treated differently from other visitors to the Children's Home, as the Guardianship Department, although having the right to check on the city children residing in this regional Children's Home, had an experience similar to mine. The Department of Education seemed to justify the name 'gatekeeper' quite literally, as their controlling hand was firmly planted in the Children's Home's and the *internats'* affairs. I heard later that the Department keeps the directors of these institutions on a tight leash; indeed, within a year, three directors had been fired.

Georgiy sent me to discuss particulars of my study with his Vice-Head Maxim, to whom I had to explain my reasons for research again and who put forth another set of limitations on my work. He said: 'We shall not

permit you to work with the children, only to observe.' I was quietly wondering how in other cities volunteers were allowed to work with children, but during this meeting he was determined to show me who was in charge and these issues were non-negotiable. Later it emerged that he forbade the directors of the Children's Home and *internats* from showing me any documentation.

In both Magadan and Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskiy, the question of access to documents was an issue. A social scientist doing applied research was a novelty, and I think there was no regulation as to which documents they could allow me to see and which were a liability. They all solved this problem differently: I was able to convince Maxim to allow me to work with the children's files, but he forbade the institutional staff from showing me any other documents, such as journals of teacher's observations. The Guardianship Department did not make it a problem: after a short deliberation I was allowed to see all the documents and journals held on the shelves. The Baby Home also permitted me to see many documents, the children's files and journals of teachers' observations. Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskiy's Department of Health firmly prevented my access to any documents.

In Magadan's Department of Education I met with Arianna, who oversees the work of the Children's Home and *internats*. She also served as a member of the Psychological-Medical-Pedagogical Committee (PMPC) that evaluates children's mental development and is responsible for placements to remedial schools and classes. At first she took me for a government official from 'above' in Moscow who was making an unannounced inspection of the Department of Education's residential care facilities. Her face reflected a wave of extreme anxiety as they were not prepared for it. When I explained that I was there to do research, she was visibly relieved and from that moment, nuances in her behaviour changed, she became more self-assured and perhaps even boorish. She behaved more modestly around her superiors (Georgiy and Maxim), yet as soon as she was around people who were 'nobody' (in her own words), like myself and her subordinates, she came across as a person who enjoyed and used power, and was quick to point to where she was (higher) in relation to them. These others included government officials from other departments and institutions, including the Guardianship Department.

Fears and anxieties did not stop there. A concern for doing something wrong or saying something wrong, a sentiment that was perhaps inevitable in such a prescriptive environment as an institution, permeated the attitude of many institutional staff members during the initial moments of

encounters. This fear subsided once it became clear that I was not judging or pointing out faults. But anxieties were not unfounded, as ‘confidentiality’ turned out to be an interesting concept. During my observations in the Baby Home I guaranteed that my notes would be confidential, except to the person being observed. However, in a few days the Senior Upbringer, in the presence of another teacher, requested to see my notes from the previous day. I politely refused, to the displeasure of the Senior Upbringer and to the relief of the teacher present in the room. The next day, everyone knew about the incident.

After being cleared at official regional and city administration levels, I was sent to meet with the directors of the institutions, who then allowed me to start my work in children’s groups. I began my work at the chosen sites, but other organizations started to present themselves as playing an important role in the child welfare network. I had to obtain separate permissions to observe the work of the PMPC, the court and prisons, but my initial anchoring with the city and regional administrations helped. Eventually I decided to conduct the bulk of my work in Magadan. However, because the issue of confidentiality in a small city presented a particular problem, I still used data collected in Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskiy in that part where it reflected similar attitudes, concepts and practices. The names of all the individuals have been changed. Having listened to so many stories, observed various procedures and processes, there was a question of what should be included in the book. While emerging categories, concepts and themes started to form patterns, I looked for prevalence that constituted a mainstream tendency. These are the tendencies which determine the increasing number of social orphans. I chose to portray at length only those processes that I found to be most typical and reflective of a greater number of similar cases. At times I thought that if only the state agents gave a particular mother a chance, a helping hand, assistance crucial for that moment, so many lives, both the child’s and the parent’s, would not have been altered to such a significant degree, so many bonds would not have been broken to substitute a known evil for an unknown evil. However, this was beyond the capability and responsibility of the state agents I studied. I became aware of the responsibility I bear for a call to turn a humane face towards these mothers. After all, there *are* children abused, neglected, hungry and cold. However, I argue that the present pool of families whose children are in institutions is made up of *all* kinds of families, and if a network of family assistance was available, a substantial number of the children would return home or never be placed in a children’s home in the first place.

## Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

In studying the realms of the state, the family and the child, I used a number of concepts and ethnographic categories in the Soviet period, as well as their shifting meanings in the post-Soviet period. This was done in order to trace some causes of contemporary practices and their role in the formation of the actor's subjectivity. This helps to substantiate my point that many practices are based on values and norms shaped in Soviet times, and are carried across the threshold of a timeline that separates the old Soviet society from a new post-Soviet society, *despite* the shifting meanings and changing conditions.

One issue addressed in this book is the positionality of childhood and family within the society. I shall demonstrate that the state agents exercise a high degree of control over many 'failing' families and their children that come to their attention. Chapter 4 exemplifies the state agents' expectations of what a family should be and what kind of childcare and upbringing it should provide, outlining the norms and conditions under which the state allows the parents to care for their children. This raises questions of the autonomy of the family and childhood belonging. In Chapter 5 I argue that the family was constructed in Soviet times as a semi-autonomous unit, with childhood being positioned halfway between the family and the state, making children's welfare a concern for all people and leading to a lack of clarity in issues of authority, responsibility and accountability. This view of childhood obliges us to consider this positionality in the context of boundaries between the realms of public and private.

### *Public and Private*

In a socialist society, the boundaries between public and private were meant to change if, according to Marx, means of production were owned and controlled communally, and private property was not to exceed personal property for immediate use. These boundaries affected not only the economy but also the social world, embracing understanding of ownership, family and space (Humphrey 1998, Pine 1998). The typology of the state, political society, civil society and the private sphere of 'personal' life, which is useful to describe the institutional differentiation of Western modernity, is less applicable for Soviet-type society (Garcelon 1997). Rather, new specifically Soviet spheres were established where public and private mutually penetrated one another. I shall argue that family life was positioned in this hybrid sphere. Garcelon suggests a tripartite system of

'officialdom', 'social' and 'domestic' realms. In the social realm of work and officially recognized associations, both formal and informal networks operated. The domestic realm of family and friends (see also Nielsen 2003), based on intimacy and shared value commitments, although serving as a refuge from official authoritarianism, was in close proximity to and under the mutual surveillance of neighbours, lacked privacy and was based on the mutual dependency of family members and friends for comfort and aid. The official order marginalized the familial 'privatism' of the domestic realm, insofar as it neither respected individual rights nor limited the penetration of families and informal social circles by the state apparatus. By contrast, Western models recognize 'private' as personal and domestic, implying a certain degree of autonomy and privacy, giving rise to a distinctly non-Soviet language of 'intrusion' and 'intervention' into private autonomy by the collective authority.

Kharkhordin has analysed the genealogy of private life in Soviet Russia, showing that the Revolution swept away the distinction between public and private and replaced it with a division between the 'social', consisting of transparent 'public' and 'personal' lives, and an unseen, unrecognized private, not going beyond the most intimate. He maintains that Soviet society formed a 'social' sphere, a hybrid between public and private, where private had retreated into the intimate, but private life did not shrink to intimacy in the sense of a legitimate and protected sphere of privacy. Privacy was completely 'stamped out by the hybrid "social" for there was no recognised sphere left, which was not, in principle, a part of the social' (Kharkhordin 1997: 359). Kharkhordin distinguishes between *lichnaya zhizn'* (personal life) and *chastnaya zhizn'* (private life), which together constitute what is commonly referred to as 'private' life in everyday English usage, life involving family and friends, and more generally life outside the realm of public duties and public organizations. *Lichnaya zhizn'*, fostered by the regime, was the subject of the ever-present public gaze facilitating the fusion of private and public (private became public, or *lichnoe stalo gosudarstvennym*). *Chastnaya zhizn'*, a way of life connected with private property, was fading away because starting in the 1930s, treating life away from the work site as 'private life' was associated with corrupt moral behaviour. Kharkhordin identified dissimulation (*pritvorstvo*), translated both as hypocrisy and as closing oneself off, as a central practice that constituted the split between public and private (*obshchestvennoe* and *chastnoe*). Thus, the hybrid of 'social' was to allocate and regulate both the quasi-public (the world of work) and quasi-private (the world of personal life, of *lichnaya zhizn'*). *Chastnaya zhizn'* became invisible, hidden not only

from the leaders, but also from the pervasive surveillance of surrounding comrades.

Within this hybrid sphere, new terminology sprang up to delineate public/private boundaries. Gerasimova (2002) calls the use of public facilities and public goods for private needs 'private publicness'. Utekhin (2001) examines everyday life in a communal apartment, showing public and private merging into one another. The exposure of private matters to neighbours made the private semi-public. He demonstrates that the semi-publicness of private acts, i.e., intimate sexual relations, family conflicts, child punishment, childcare and hygiene, created a domain which he calls 'quasi-family'. In this domain, private matters became public, and public was expanded into private because conflicts in an apartment were often solved in a collective way by calling a meeting of the whole apartment. The close proximity of neighbours created a feeling of involvement in other people's business and made people feel connected to each other. Many years of such semi-public existence, Utekhin argues, formed an individual in such a way that he or she transferred these quasi-family relationships with semi-strangers (neighbours) onto complete strangers. Therefore, the close proximity of neighbours created both a feeling of connection to people and a desire to close oneself off from mutual surveillance, compelling people to develop a complex sense of navigating through nuances in regulating distance. This sort of relationship, whether with private individuals or the state, always has two sides: that of support but also, as a result of too close involvement, control.

The positioning of the family in this hybrid sphere had far-reaching consequences for the inter-penetration between the state and the family, resulting in (never fully completed) processes of familialization of the state and etatization of the family. Although the private sphere of the family served as a site of resistance to the state (Shlapentokh 1989, Yurchak 1997), it still constituted a medium through which the state's causes were perpetuated. Some scholars see the state as being 'privatized' (Creed 1998, Ledeneva 1998), while others see it as an extended family (Verdery 1996). Taking these concepts of the (Soviet) state further, I shall argue that this construction of socialist society as an extended family led to the development of a new type of kinship, 'social kinship through institutions and ideology'. This, together with the unresolved question of childhood belonging, still contributes today to the production of social orphans, for many people still act on the internalized image of a state that is there to help them. Important to this idea of social kinship within the Soviet 'social' hybrid is Michael Warner's concept of 'a public', seen as a 'space of discourse

organised by nothing other than discourse itself' (2002: 50). Warner's public is a complex metaphorical social space where strangers are united through the circulation of discourse, thus creating relationality and interactivity between them, and where 'strangerhood' and 'intimacy' are not mutually exclusive. Although Warner's public is a concept developed for the 'West', I could see that a single pan-Soviet discourse on equality, comradeship and country-as-family created Warner's 'social imaginary of publics', ensuring social belonging by placing strangers on a shared footing and offering its members direct and active membership through language, which was no less effective under a seemingly different political regime.

However, in Western societies the notion of 'private' is also problematized (Habermas 1989, Bhattacharjee 2006). As Peletz argues, in most societies the forces of market and state constrict and devalue private lives, and polity is posited on compliance that transcends feelings. Even when projects of modernity do not involve ethnic cleansing or racial purification, their achievements engender profound ambivalence since they presuppose appropriating certain sentiments and discourses of kinship, while simultaneously delegitimizing or deforming other modalities of relatedness in which people still feel morally or materially invested (2001: 432–34). Warner (2002) maintains that the private space is a myth, since private spaces are constituted and regulated by public spaces. Perhaps it is within this mythology of the private sphere in different political systems that we find parallels between the (post-) Soviet contradiction in family policy, where family is sacred but separation is the norm, and liberal democracies, where the family is both the site of intervention by the state and held up as inviolable (see Chapters 8 and 9).

### ***State and Society***

One permanent yet elusive actor in this book is 'the state'. My aim is to depict the state as it is culturally constituted. Ethnographically, in the Soviet context, the state assumed situational duality, for citizens had at their disposal two concepts of the state: 'the state is them' and 'the state is us'. On the one hand it came to be seen and experienced as a social fact, an imposing reified entity. The reified Soviet/Russian state is habitually invoked in the local state agents' conversations with residential care-leavers: 'the state has given you everything', 'the state takes care of you', and in the wider discourse, as in 'the state cheats us'<sup>21</sup> and 'it is the state's fault'.<sup>22</sup> 'The state is them' when one speaks about state bureaucracy and elite Party rulers, and this state was treated with caution and cynicism (see Yurchak



1997). Thus, numerous strategies counteracting state official policies have been employed including *samizdat*, informal economies, *blat*, underground movements, etc. Here the 'state' was a 'clearly bounded institution that is distinct from society', as many state-centred theories have described it (Sharma and Gupta 2006: 8).

But the reified state was not the only one of its faces, using Navaro-Yashin's (2002) vocabulary. Seen as 'the state is us', the state was indicative of a social body where the boundaries between 'state' and 'society' were blurred. This is a generative point upon which many questions regarding the working of state agencies in (post-) Soviet times are based. In the Soviet context, the state (*gosudarstvo*) should be understood as having a wider, more inclusive meaning than its English language equivalent, which is closer to the idea of government. It included virtually every aspect of what we might call 'society' (*obshchestvo*). In other words, there was no aspect of 'society' which was not controlled and pervaded by the state. The Soviet political system consisted of a state bureaucratic vertical edifice duplicated by the Party, governed by ideology and ruled by Party directives, permeating social, economic and cultural spheres (Pavlova 1993). However, mechanisms of power also rested with ordinary people through mutual surveillance, self-identification and self-indoctrination (Kharkhordin 1999), existing 'alongside the state machinery on a much more ordinary level, to sustain the state just as effectively as its primary institutions, including the police' (Kotkin 1995: 23). The power of the state was based on the characteristics and behaviour of people, and the period of Stalinism that lasted until the beginning of the 1950s 'was not just a political system, but a set of values, a social identity, a way of life' (*ibid.*: 23).

Indeed, the state was set up with two characteristics and ensuing functions in mind. In 1917, Lenin (1992) stated that in a capitalist society the state, an oppressive and overarching force, was used by the ruling classes to suppress and subjugate the ruled. After taking political power, he continued, the Bolsheviks would organize the new state into the proletariat state, that is, a dictatorship of the proletariat organized into a ruling class, which necessarily had to be oppressive since there was an expectation of the continuing class struggle with the former bourgeoisie exploiters. With time, this dictatorship would become the all-people's (*vsenarodnoe gosudarstvo*) or democratic state. Consequently, there would be no need for oppression, because people would get used to consciously following the rules of socialist communal living without the special apparatus of coercion. During the development of socialist society and the disappearance of the classes, the

state would become the representative of the whole society, and its oppressive function would 'wither away'. The second characteristic of the state was its welfare nature. The state proclaimed that it existed exclusively as a guarantor of social interests. Its first and foremost duty was the welfare of the population in all matters (Kotkin 1995). Therefore, while the oppressive state was supposed to wither away, a classless self-governing society would be based on total welfare, continuing to attend to people's needs. This meant that because social welfare was built into the structure of society, professional individualized family-oriented social services were less developed. What shall become clear is that in post-Soviet time it was the welfare that was 'withering away', while the development of newly emerging individualized family and child welfare social services, so necessary in the new socio-economic environment, is still in its infancy; this cripples the family and facilitates the increase in the number of social orphans.

Analytically, arguing against the assumption that 'the state' is *a priori* empirical object, Abrams proposed that the state is not 'a reality, which stands behind the mask of political practice. It is itself the mask which prevents our seeing political practice as it is' (1988: 58, see also Taussig 2002), concealing 'relations of unequal power between social individuals' (Navaro-Yashin 2002: 157). Abrams wrote that 'It starts its life as an implicit construct; it is then reified ... and acquires an overt symbolic identity progressively divorced from practice' (1988: 82). Taussig asserts that reification leads to fetishism (2002: 482), where 'the signifier depends upon yet erases its signification' (1992: 118). He argues that modern societies replaced the idea of God with the idea of the state and, as such, it is revered.<sup>23</sup> Abrams maintains that in a modern world, the idea of the state that 'excuses force and convinces the rest of us that the fate of the victims is just and necessary' is critical for connecting with the repressive instruments (Taussig 1992: 113). For the state to come into being, it must have a point of application. Indeed, it could be argued that the state is not an essential but a relational category; it resides in relations, in my case between the state agents and *neblagopoluchnaya* families. Looking at the effects of state-family encounter, I saw that the state is experienced not as a nonentity, ephemeral, symbolic, or an abstraction (as in Poulantzas 1980), but as perfectly existing and real. This is where for me the *idea* of the state meets with the tangible outcomes of its social life. The intermediary between the two is a multiplicity I refer to as 'the state' or, more narrowly, the state child welfare network – a combination of staff working in child welfare state institutions (i.e., the Guardianship Department, residential care institutions, the Committee for

Underage Children, schools and kindergartens), the institutions themselves, whose work is governed by laws and policies, and the content of regulations and guidelines that embody values, give meaning, outlines and structures to the state's observance of proper parenting. All this constitutes a network of human and non-human actors and shapes an order, that, as actor-network theory (ANT) would have it, 'is an effect generated by heterogeneous means' (Law 1992: 3, Latour 1999).

This material attempts to bridge the two mainstream models of Soviet state and society, the 'totalitarian' and the 'diffused', for it seems that there could not have been one without the other. The first model views fear, terror and forced ideological indoctrination as main integrative mechanisms in Soviet society. In the last decade, a 'diffused' model called 'new revisionism' was created by social historians such as Steven Kotkin, Igal Halfin, Oleg Kharkhordin, Sheila Fitzpatrick and Jochen Hellbeck. This model reconceptualized the Soviet subject, refuting the previous view on Soviet personhood that postulated that Soviet ideology was imposed on subjects from 'above'. In this change of paradigm, these authors proposed to see the Soviet subject not so much as an object of repression but as a product of power (Dobrenko 2007). This process comprised negotiations and compromises on multiple levels between the state and society, and their mutual adjustment to each other (Kotkin 1995, Volkov 1997). Part of this mutual adjustment in Soviet times was engaging with ideology, which set ways for developing parts of the contemporary multiplicity I call 'the state'.

We can further problematize distinctions between 'state' and 'society' if we look at the intersection of not only two visualizations of the state, oppressive vs. welfare, but Soviet and post-Soviet at the time of rupture. One of the aims of this book is to demonstrate that the field of child welfare in post-Soviet Magadan is a field of reproduction not only of the state, but of elements of the *Soviet* state. We see it in institutional, legal and conceptual frameworks, in everyday practices of the child welfare network, but also in the traces of statist thinking regarding the *neblagopoluchnaya* family in the attitudes of some citizens, non-governmental organizations and state agents themselves, doctors, residential care staff, judges and the Guardianship Department, culminating in court hearings for the termination of parental rights. I was struck by the sheer force of accusations concerning inadequacy of mothers whose fault, in my opinion, lay in not being able to provide for their children to the level stipulated by state policies. They were blamed for not having jobs, adequate accommodation, enough money, food and clothes for their children. However, these state

agents go to the same stores as the mothers do and see the (high) prices of food and clothes, they are aware of the high level of unemployment (particularly among women), they know of closures of state enterprises and the perils of working for private businesses that offer no social benefits to working mothers. Who are these state agents: women from the Guardianship Department and judges? Do they represent the state or society? They come armed with the weapons of the state but speak on behalf of respectable citizens. A psychologist might point to this as a case where respectable society is reassuring itself of its respectability by pointing at deviance; this suggests that the repression of those defined as deviants was internalized as moral and proper by actual individual people, and not only in the explicitly ideological and seemingly irrelevant Code of the Builders of Communism.

The state could be reproduced through various venues, such as practices, i.e., bureaucratic practices, its routine and repetitive procedures, and mundane activities such as daily routines of proceduralism, through which the state's primacy and superiority over other social institutions are reproduced, and social inequalities are maintained (Sharma and Gupta 2006: 13), through cynicism (Navaro-Yashin 2002: 4), acceptance and participation in rituals (Rappaport 2002) and belief (Žižek 2001). We can find many of these elements in the workings of the child welfare system, which was set in motion in Soviet times. But what is it that they reproduce? Written into these practices are certain *values*, both believed and performed, many of which are Soviet in character.

The diffused job of reproduction rested with many agents, an ANT network of human and non-human actors. Structurally, the Magadan child welfare system could be seen as an assemblage, or a whole whose properties emerge from interaction between its heterogeneous parts (DeLanda 2006: 5), and a fractal (Green 2005, Strathern 2005) of the differently scaled entity, the state. In the seemingly comprehensive 'whole', that is, the Magadan child welfare network, its 'parts' are only loosely coordinated. Moreover, this network consists of a series of gaps and islands, where the state's presence is intermittent with its absence. Thus, we see that once a family or a child comes to the attention of the authorities, there is a big chance that the child may end up in an institution. If a family and/or children stay invisible, their problems remain unattended, which may lead to cases of child neglect and abuse. As such, this fragmentation prevents us from seeing this system as a monolithic whole. Yet as an assemblage, it is still subject to the process of territorialization, which sets special

boundaries for the group, increases its homogeneity and the solidarity of its members, and stabilizes the identity of the assemblage through the process of habitual repetition (DeLanda 2006: 50),<sup>24</sup> where routinization is a crucial territorializing process in authority structures (ibid.: 74). One source of territorialization is the existence of conflict between different communities, which has the effect of exaggerating the distinction between ‘us’ and ‘them’, that is, it sharpens the boundaries between the insiders and outsiders (ibid.: 58). As we shall see, the linguistic component also plays an important role in assemblages as a territorializing force. The main effect of language at a personal level, argues DeLanda, is the shaping of beliefs, and shared stories and categories play the role of ‘rigidifying the identities of the conflicting parties, the narratives being part of a process of group boundary construction’ (ibid.: 59).

However, does this make my state agents robotic mouthpieces for the state? Not so, for these ‘statist’ values are a part of ‘the state’ as a multiplicity (Deleuze and Guattari 1987). Thus, family policy is embodying values and practices that are heterogeneous and multi-rooted. Some strands, reflective of their times and current thinking, were initiated in the early post-Revolutionary time and were abandoned (for example, the free sexuality of the 1920s). Others persisted, becoming absorbed into society and turning into cultural values (the mandatory entering of women into the workforce); thus, Alexandra Kollontai’s gender contract of a working mother laid the foundation not only for the Soviet state policies, but shaped the contemporary view on the role of motherhood in Russian society (Kozlova 2003). Some developments only appeared as radical change without radically affecting their substance. Indeed, it could be even argued that the continuities were strengthened *because* they changed their form, constituting modified practices, such as Kharkhordin’s pattern ‘reveal, admonish, excommunicate’ (see Chapter 8). Others reflect old cultural values becoming intertwined with new ones, such as (post-) Soviet family gender roles which, having stemmed from pre-revolutionary traditional Russian cultural elements (for example, the patriarchal gender role division in families) and Soviet political and social ideology (for example, the demolition of the old family and bringing up all children in state care), still bear traces of a patriarchal past. Still others were instituted only in the 1990s (for example, the recognition of the father’s role). All were developing in what Deleuze and Guattari (1987) called a ‘rhizomatic’ – and not only genealogical – way, forming an ideoscape (Appadurai 1996) of child welfare. This ideoscape now looks like a bounded object embodying the set of ideas (such as gender relations, the value and place of the child, attitudes towards abortion), practices

and philosophies. Some were dropped, others transformed, while still others continued almost unchanged. Their origins and initial rationale for existence may have been lost in the past, with ambiguous cause-and-effect relationships, but those that are left all weave together, culminating in a particular document/practice/value having a distinctly contemporary singular face. This relationship between multiplicity and singularity shall play an important role in our understanding of the encounter between the state agents and those on the receiving end. I shall come back to this point in the Conclusion.

The state as a multiplicity becomes a collective moral agent and a part of the culture: as such, traces of the statist thinking could be found in what appear as segments of society that have nothing to do with the government – think not only of the Baby Home administration that makes decisions regarding child placement, but also of staff, nurses, teachers and nannies, many of whom share prejudices against mothers whose children they have in their charge. That is why I do not tend to see the state agents as a simple ‘mouthpiece’ for the state, as many of the implicit understandings on which they build their view of and attitude towards their contextual ‘other’, the *neblagopoluchnaya* family, are characteristic not only of the state but also of the culture.

Given the body of scholarship on dissimulation, cynicism, resistance, resilience and opposition in the Soviet context, in the post-Soviet period, when officially enforced pressure to conform had been removed, it was fascinating to see that part of the official ideology being performed (externalized) in the country that no longer requires it, indicating that ideology had unnoticeably penetrated individual consciousness, resulting in its partial etatization. This could not have been done without an explicit idea that the Soviet cultural values were to be perpetuated through every member of society, permeating the social structure all the way to an individual’s consciousness. To achieve that, the concept of Soviet *vospitanie* (upbringing, moral development, forming one’s character) was further developed from its pre-revolutionary predecessor. This was the time when the organizational framework of the child welfare system had been set, furthering the partnership of the state and the family in child rearing.

### ***Upbringing and Education***

These two concepts are ubiquitous in Soviet and post-Soviet educational systems. Pedagogy is the science of bringing up children by giving them education (*obrazovanie*) and upbringing (*vospitanie*), that is, purposeful intellectual, cultural and moral development, the moulding of their personality,

character and worldview in accordance with particular values. Along with teachers, a *vospitateľ* (an upbringer) is an important figure in residential care, for they are responsible for the comprehensive development of a child. The content and methods of education and upbringing in Soviet times were developed by the state at ministry level and supported by research, employed by all educational establishments, and disseminated and enforced by the respective bureaucracies. Although the importance of combined public and family upbringing has been recognized in Russian pedagogy since at least the mid nineteenth century, at that time the relative weight was initially put on the family, and only then on public upbringing (Egorov 2000: 149). In Soviet times the opposite was true: public (*obshchestvennoye*) upbringing was considered to be superior to family upbringing because it was more scientifically developed, conscious, purposeful and planned (Kulikova 1999). The highest compliment to a teacher is that he or she is not only an educator but also a pedagogue.

The main message of this *vospitanie* was the absolute primacy of public interests over private, and collective over individual (Kharkhordin 1999), and the main goal was to raise a person in whom 'the norms of Communist morals turned into personal beliefs, and formed the basis of everyday behaviour. Society and individual life were considered to be not two, extraneous to each other, but an inseparable one' (*Bol'shaya Sovetskaya Entsiklopedia* 1970). Thus, the formation of an individual was envisioned to become completely identified with, and inseparable from, societal goals, with the state existing not only outside but also inside of each individual.

My data highlights the power of *vospitanie* (upbringing) in inculcating these values. Teachers and upbringers trained in teachers' institutes were the mediums of transmission of state-approved knowledge to students, their pedagogic authority underpinning what Bourdieu has called 'symbolic violence', the imposition of systems of symbolism and meaning (i.e., culture) upon groups or classes in such a way that they are felt to be legitimate. Their pedagogic work facilitated a process of inculcation, producing what Bourdieu called a habitus, or 'systems of durable, transposable dispositions,<sup>25</sup> structured functions predisposed to function as structuring structures' (Bourdieu 1977: 72), through which people perceive and understand the social world, and which individuals acquire through experience and explicit socialization in early life (Ritzer 2000). According to Bourdieu, habitus is irreversible and cumulative. Bourdieu has been criticized for his determinism in seeing a person as a cultural and historical construction, leaving little to chance or autonomous agency (Jones 1996, McNay 2002), although in his later works he allowed for agency to emerge from the

margins of discourse and from the disjunction between habitus and fields (Bourdieu 1990). In post-Soviet society, with its massive and ongoing transformations, the problem is the opposite of that postulated by the critics of Bourdieu: it is not where human agency arises from if an individual's practices are determined by habitus, but why the alternative thoughts and possibilities are not acted upon when this possibility exists. We shall see the effects of the fact that most state agents working in the system of child welfare today were brought up in Soviet times. Moreover, many of them are teachers themselves. It is significant that in the chain of state residential care institutions that typically include baby homes, children's homes and *internats*, the latter two belong to the Ministry of Education<sup>26</sup>.

### ***A Soviet View of the Person***

In the course of this book we shall encounter two themes permeating local practices and discourses: that of the biological and the social, which played out on three different levels, and that of the individual, kinship and the state vs. family. Analytically I distinguish between two models of kinship, blood ties and social ties, with the third model, which I call 'social kinship through institutions and ideology', being a variation of the social model. I examine the interplay between these models and circumstances under which each is deployed. The social model, which serves as a basis for removing/retaining children from so-called *neblagopoluchnaya* families, is rooted in Marxist ideology, which 'takes great pride in seeing man as the sum total of his social relations, rather than as constrained by some essence ascribed to him by this or that social ideology' (Gellner 1988: 37), emphasising the potential for human nature to change and become perfected. Early works were quite radical, such as Trotsky's *Literature and Revolution*, where he insisted that the future Soviet man will not just be the new *social*, but also a higher social *biologic* type, quite literally, a superman. To achieve this, he would make himself undergo radical transformation, learning to regulate his own physiological processes, such as digestion, blood circulation and reproduction, making them subject to collective experiments and becoming in his own hands an object of artificial selection and psychophysical training. He would subordinate his biology to the control of reason and will: 'The human race will not cease to crawl on all fours before God, kings and capital, in order later to submit humbly before the dark laws of heredity and a blind sexual selection!' (1980: 255).

Indeed, the person was viewed as a 'meeting place in which biological and sociological factors work out their relationships' (Madison 1968: 26).



Madison maintains that both desirable and undesirable behaviour were seen as socially determined, so that breaking the old order would eliminate the basis of undesirable behaviour. However, by the 1930s, when the 'Soviet way' had failed to curtail such behaviours, it became necessary to hold individuals rather than the system responsible. The person was now viewed not as a passive object of the influences of his surroundings, but as an active participant in creating the conditions of life, a conscious individual, disciplined, in control of and responsible for his behaviour. Soviet psychology held that man was not dominated by instincts, or the unconscious, but rather by reason. The unconscious was not denied, but was assigned a subordinate position in the explanation of human behaviour. His changing himself and his environment was a conscious and rational process, hence the reliance of society (or a group within a society) on his being conscientious (*soznatel'nost'*). If a person is seen as in need of change, a person or a group of people who are responsible for influencing him/her should appeal to his/her rationality, not probing into 'deeper' causes, i.e., into the emotional quality of interpersonal relationships (Madison 1968). This stress on *soznatel'nost'* still plays an important role in the state agents' expectations of correct behaviour on the part of parents in post-Soviet times. We shall see how the major technique for changing personality is still considered to be rational, persuading and sharpening awareness.

Vygotsky's influential developmental theory maintains that a child has a *potential* for development, and this potential depends not upon what a child brings into the world, but what society makes of him. The mental abilities of a child, wrote Vygotsky (see Sutton 1980), are developing during the child's purposeful interaction with adults, especially *obuchenie*, a concept involving an active double process of teaching by an adult and learning by the child. Of the three factors determining mental development (heredity, environment and social interaction), the latter is potentially able to override the influence of the first two, thus permitting the malleability and potentiality of human mental development. From the late 1950s, the psychology of education and the psychology of upbringing had been synthesized, and the teacher became a major influence on a child, because the leading activity of educators and parents was to maximize the child's development (*ibid.*).

Therefore, in education the view of person and of the child are heavily weighted towards environmental character, serving as a foundation for the important concepts of the 'best interests of the child' and 'conditions' which govern the practice of child welfare agencies even today, in which a constant, purposeful interaction with 'good' adults is seen as essential for realizing a child's

potential for habit formation and development of moral characteristics. This consideration serves as a powerful incentive for retaining a child in residential care and the termination of parental rights. Few voices openly and effectively question the validity of these practices and concepts in their everyday application.

The interplay between the biological and social is a Soviet form of a widespread dichotomy between nature and nurture in the development of an individual; however, it also holds, if we elevate the unit of analysis, for models of kinship where the state is inherent. In post-Soviet times, we find a split between the legislative and decision-making level dominated by environmental determinism, while the collective consciousness is deeply imbued with the superiority of blood kinship and biological immutability; 'real' kinship resides in the biological family. The socialist state, although partially succeeding in restructuring the family and developing infrastructures designed to put into action the proposed 'kinship through institutions and ideology', still could not find itself without its partner, the family.

### ***Power, Agency and Structure***

I went to my first fieldwork open-minded, letting my ethnographic data guide the choice for the theoretical framework. While in the field I observed a conspicuous combative relationship between the state and the family in relation to children; the lack of (or ineffective) resistance on the part of the family; the discrepancy between new social and economic realities of post-Soviet society and seemingly old values applied by many state agents while evaluating and judging the family; the ease with which children were moved between institutions as the state agents saw fit; and the attitude on the part of state agents towards what is categorized as an 'unfit' family – as if it was of no consequence. The emerging issues therefore seemed to me to be those of power (struggle), agency and structure; of social change and cultural continuity; and of a genealogy of state-family relationships in the Soviet and post-Soviet periods. In interpreting my findings I adopted Bourdieu's approach where social theorists are 'resources to be used as, and if appropriate', because 'each thinker offers the means to transcend the limitations of the others' (Jenkins 1992: 19). Although being aware of warnings against treating the Foucauldian paradigm as a universal order (Ssorin-Chaikov 2003), it seemed appropriate to borrow from Foucault's analysis of the modern state, with its *raison d'état* political rationality of modern forms of power (biopower and biopolitics), or Weber's bureaucratic rationality without subscribing to the respective theories in their entirety. Bakhtin illustrates how power is asserted through language. Bourdieu's concept of habitus provides an

explanation for the observed social reproduction. Giddens's theory of structuration is useful in examining the concept of agency.

Situating the main actors within the larger context of society governed by Foucault's 'modern power', one cannot fail to see its three distinctive characteristics in the area of child welfare: categorization, compartmentalization, and normalizing judgement. The child welfare network is comprised of institutions and agencies belonging to and governed by different ministries and departments: children are sorted and placed correctly according to age, health, family circumstances, educational level, physical and intellectual abilities, etc. Within an institution they are distributed between groups/classes according to age and/or gender. Their placement, care and movement between institutions are done for their 'best interests'. The state pays close attention to the maintenance of the health and wellbeing of the child by the family, with particular requirements for the parents' home environment, their moral values and lifestyle. The state agents and other citizens have at their disposal a particular ordering and a number of categories with which they operate, i.e., classifying parents into 'fit' and 'unfit' families, children into parents' children, 'social orphans' or state children, the specific requirements for family 'home conditions', and 'adequacy of parenting', each having a scale ranging from 'good' to 'bad' and all serving as a basis for a future decision regarding inclusion or exclusion. The labelling of a parent as 'unfit' helps to put him/her into an appropriate 'compartment' and treat him/her accordingly. The meaning and significance of these categories have been devised, regulated and controlled by the state, and the state agents are necessarily involved in using and acting on these categories for the good of the children from these families.

But as I shall demonstrate, although the Soviet state envisioned itself as a welfare state concerned primarily with the wellbeing of the population, family and childhood will be shown to serve the needs of the state, specifically in raising a particular kind of loyal individual and a worker, rather than being an end in themselves.<sup>27</sup> This type of modern power Foucault called self-governing productive biopower, which emerged together with the 'reason of the state'<sup>28</sup> with man being the true object of the state's power. Biopower is characterized by the increased ordering and organization of the population for the sake of increased force and productivity, but under the guise of improving the welfare of the individual and the population (Foucault 1976, 1994). According to Foucault, biopower centres around two poles: the body as an object to 'disciplinary techniques' to increase its usefulness and docility, and the fecundity, hygiene and moral

health of national populations (Minson 1986). The supervision of the latter was effected through entire series of interventions and regulatory controls: Foucault's biopolitics of population, a technique of power utilized by the state institutions:

The management of this population required a health policy capable of diminishing infant mortality, preventing epidemics, of intervening in living conditions in order to alter them and impose standards on them (whether this involved nutrition, housing, or urban planning), and of ensuring adequate medical facilities and services (Foucault 1994: 71).

Since the population was nothing more than for which the state cared for its own sake, the state was entitled to relocate the population, or even slaughter them if it served the state's interests to do so (Foucault 1982: 138). The authorities treating children and parents as objects of policy, without regard to their individual wishes, problems, and reasons, particularly moving children between numerous institutions for their 'best interests' without taking into account what they themselves may think about their best interests, is indeed conducting biopolitics, 'guaranteeing relations of domination and effects of hegemony' (Foucault 1976: 141). In this way I see them as possessing governmentality, or the way in which the behaviour of a set of individuals became involved in the exercise of sovereign power. Subscribing to the use of these categories will be shown to be widespread among state agents and citizens (i.e., neighbours) and form part of my view of a cultural disposition. It is also through this discourse that the notion of the inadequate maternal person is produced.

To address the inadequacy in parenting, the state agents operate on a repertoire of options given to them by the state: they have to measure, evaluate and hierarchize the observed social aspects of parenting against the norms developed and re-enforced through the state medical, educational and child welfare institutions. Normalizing judgement was omnipresent in Soviet society. I shall demonstrate what constitutes these norms and how this technology of normalization acts in two key areas: the relationship between the state and the 'unfit' parent (Chapters 3, 4 and 5) and in residential care (Chapters 6 and 7). The spatial and temporal management of children's bodies is described in Chapter 6.

Parents who fail to correspond to the norm are disciplined. Foucault maintains that disciplinary technology imposed its own standard of normalization as the only acceptable one. An essential component of

technologies of normalization is that they are themselves an integral part of the systematic creation, classification and control of anomalies in the social body. By identifying the anomalies scientifically, the technologies of biopower are in a perfect position to supervise and administer them (Foucault 1977). As a normalizing power it succeeds even when it is only partially successful: children leave institutions in need of further 'reformation', and in a very Foucauldian sense, this order reveals itself to be a strategy, with no one directing it and everyone increasingly enmeshed in it, the only end being the increase of power and order itself (ibid.).

### ***Power Struggle and Agency***

In the area of child welfare, state agents working in predominantly governmental structures interact with the families of children who are viewed to be at risk and deprived. The point of all action on the part of both parties is to achieve a particular objective with a clear and tangible outcome: the ability for themselves to retain and bring up children. This is the baseline against which we shall measure the effects of action and its properties, power and domination, as well as resistance and agency. In this book I demonstrate first the power balance between the state and the family, which presupposes the ability to act and social action of both parties, and then the gradual tipping of the balance until the family becomes completely overwhelmed by the state, powerless and having little agency.

According to Foucault, power relations are rooted in the social nexus and are not reconstituted 'above' society as a supplementary structure. Power is a 'way of acting upon an acting subject by virtue of their acting or being capable of action' (Foucault 1982: 220); therefore, power exists only when it is put into action and is exercised over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free. This view of power does not negate the agency of a subject. In a struggle between the state agents and parents, my data shows a severe imbalance of power. Although Foucault allows for this imbalance, stating that power is immanent to state institutions, the mechanisms, conditions and circumstances under which the domination takes place are less developed in his work.

This is where I find it helpful to employ Giddens's theory of structuration, where he explicitly ties power to agency. The work of government officials in the state infrastructure is guided by various policies, formal and informal rules, constituting *structure* in Giddens's meaning. This social structure facilitates action by virtue of what it makes available and constrains action by virtue of what it lacks. Action involves the

application of means to achieve outcomes; power represents the capacity of the agent to mobilize resources that constitute those means (Ritzer and Smart 2001). 'Power' refers to the transforming capacity of human action, in that action depends on the capability of the individuals to 'make a difference', that is, to exercise power. This, as we shall see, is a view of agency and power that describes the outcome of action for the state agents, but is not applicable to all parents. Archer argues that Giddens writes as if action is always creative and transformative (Craib 1992). This is clearly not the case with many families, which despite their efforts to follow or subvert the state's action often lose their battle over a child. If power is a transformative capability and agency is an ability to make a difference, then many mothers do not have either, while the state has both. Yet I shall demonstrate that parents do have some power and that they do *act*, sometimes by collaborating, withdrawing or resisting. However, for them, their action is often ineffective and therefore not transformative. For Foucault, power is a modification of action by the action of essentially free actors; he maintains that 'where there is power, there is resistance' (1976). For Weber, power is the 'probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance' (1968: 53), while for Giddens it is a transformative capability. Foucault's concept of power accurately describes the initial relationship after the state/family encounter as depicted in Chapters 2–4, where for a parent there are still possibilities to retain their child. As the book progresses, I follow the development of a power imbalance where it acquires Weberian and Giddens's character, but describe the position of one actor, state agents and those few families that are capable of meeting the state requirements and retain their child. The rest, however, start to lose out very quickly. Here two factors are important: access to resources and effectiveness of action.

To achieve their objective, parents' responses to the demands of the state range from compliance (indeed, often they start with compliance) to rebellion (as a resistance reactive to power), and often neither reaction brings them closer to their goal. The state insists on criteria which the parents cannot easily meet: to overcome obstacles and difficulties, to turn their life around and comply with the view of the state on how parenthood is supposed to be. Therefore, unless the parents' actions will make a difference in the direction outlined by the state or unless a parent would break all these stipulations (i.e., steal a child and change the place of residence to become invisible), they are in danger of losing their child. In the case of state/family interaction regarding children perceived as at risk,

some strategies conceptualized elsewhere as agency, such as expressing people's positions and influencing one's environment in an act of silence and non-participation (Wilson 2002), would be futile. Withholding the mother's voice and participation as a way of non-engagement with the state will only prove that she is a bad mother, making deprivation of parental rights even easier. Neither the everyday resistance by foot-dragging, desertion or false compliance (Scott 1985), nor cynicism and pretence (Yurchak 1997), nor dissimulation (Kharkhordin 1999) characteristic of the Soviet response to state dominance are effective in the power battle between the post-Soviet state and the family, because parents fail to achieve their objective and bring the desirable result: keeping the child. The 'weapons of the weak' described by Scott are usually portrayed as a positive tactic. Here an expression of agency is a negative tactic often aimed at self-destruction; the resources and motivation to conduct other acts are miniscule at best. Ahearn (2001) proposes a broad definition of agency as the socioculturally mediated capacity to act. In the *Chambers Dictionary*, ability is defined as 'the power, skill or knowledge to do something', while capacity is defined as 'the ability or power to achieve something'. The difference here is in being able to achieve, rather than just to act. Many mothers are capable of acting as regards the mental and physical ability to act, but there are constraints that seriously limit this capacity (i.e., lack of resources); therefore, they may be capable of acting but unable to do so, or their action may be ineffective. Some of them act and achieve their goal, but a great many act and cannot achieve it. Therefore, I shall adopt a fairly narrow working definition of agency as the capacity to achieve an objective. This definition distinguishes between actor and agent and shows that for these families, resistance in whatever forms it comes, from an open rebellion to withdrawal, may not amount to agency. The preconditions for achieving the goal are that there must be access to resources and the family must have its own legal authority. This is exactly what I shall demonstrate they lack as a result of ideological and historical developments in the relationship between the state and the family, and the concentration of power with the state institutions.

Giddens stipulates one condition for effectiveness of action and a necessary prerequisite for the exercise of power, the access to 'resources', a concept which is relatively underdeveloped by Giddens (Craib 1992). Bourdieu provides us with a concept of a 'field' that views power in its relationship to capital, or any resource effective in a given social arena, enabling one to appropriate the specific profits arising out of participation

in it (Wacquant 1992). He classifies resources into economic (material and financial assets), cultural (knowledge, intellectual skills, i.e., education), social (social network, group belonging), and symbolic (prestige and honour) capitals. Bourdieu's field is a social arena of struggle over specific resources. It is a structured system of social positions, occupied either by individuals or institutions, and the nature of these positions defines the situation for their occupants. Positions stand in relationships of domination, subordination and equivalence by virtue of this access to capital, and agents in dominant positions strive for the preservation and improvement of their positions with respect to the defining capital of the field. Thus, specifically through the concepts of cultural capital, dominance – a special form of power according to Weber – is seen as directly connected with the unequal distribution of, and access to, resources. This proves to be a crucial variable in the power relationship between the two actors, the state and the family, serving to illustrate the mechanism of turning the initial open power balance into one of state domination. The state agents' and the institutions' legal and moral authority, high social position, their education and access to information, access to other state institutions authorized to use force legitimately, i.e., police and courts, the concentration of financial resources in these sites all constitute resources for the state. The limitations in what state agents can do come from the absence of other kinds of structure, particularly infrastructure and resources for assisting the family and former residents, lack of information and indeed peoples' own habitus, which partly facilitates the self-perpetuation of the system. As far as the family is concerned, there are considerable limitations placed on access to power for those families who fail to have access to adequate resources. Those parents who find themselves in difficult situations, but have access to other resources, are able to retain their children. This is not true for those who are caught in the cycle of poverty, lack of education and of material assets, whose access to capital is severely impeded by their current position, which many of them are unable to change; they (slowly) lose their children to the state. Perhaps by taking these children away and placing them into institutions, the state agents try to 'write in' these children into the state structure that provides them with material support and education, something that their parents lack. However, without being 'written in' to a family structure, these children remain at a disadvantage.

The power relations then often become that of state domination in the Weberian and Foucauldian sense of 'the possibility of imposing one's own



will upon the behaviour of other persons' (Weber 1968: 942). This is all the more surprising when one considers that the post-Soviet state is anything but monolithic: 'the fluid and fragmented character of state forms is a classic theme in Russian/Soviet historiography, the theme of the weak state, which seems paradoxically in contrast to the endurance of statehood as a culture and an identity' (Ssorin-Chaikov 2003: 5). Yet this weak state articulates itself most forcefully through its state agents. If the reader can feel how monolithic the state can seem to be, this is because I show it as an impenetrable wall, as seen through the eyes of those whom it dominates.

### ***Language as Social Action***

One of the tools available to the state is the authoritative use of language. In considering power asymmetry, I find Bakhtin's theory of language in its relationship to culture useful, particularly his concept of dialogue, to demonstrate power dynamics in language use, i.e., how language is used to exclude. In analysing court hearings, I drew on Bakhtin's idea of the dialogic nature of truth that assumes possession of voice by both parties, the state agents and the parents. I treat voice as the metaphor for having one's opinions and reasons heard and acknowledged. Deprivation of voice is the exercise of power that renders the possibility of agency ineffective and, by depriving mothers of voice, the state agents deprive them of agency.

Bakhtin viewed the cultural world and language as consisting of 'official' (or monoglossic) and 'unofficial' (or heteroglossic) forces. Heteroglossia, or 'differentiated speech', describes the variety of different languages which occur in everyday life, such as register (discourse belonging to the lawyer, the doctor, the politician) and sociolect (discourse determined by different social groups according to age, gender, economic position, kinship) (Vice 1997). A monoglossic 'unitary language' refers to forces of regulation, an official normative discourse that he called 'official monologism' (Morson and Emerson 1990). The idea of a dogmatic 'official monologism' with its 'ready-made' truth is the opposite of the open-ended, creative and dialogic nature of truth that could emerge only through language as a 'co-construction of meaning'. In the court hearing described in Chapter 4, we shall observe exactly Bakhtin's point, how 'official discourse in its most radical form resists communication: everyone is compelled to speak the same language ... Extreme versions of official discourse are totalitarian precisely to the degree that they assume no other selves beyond the one they posit as normative' (Holquist 1990: 52). The imposition of an official language precludes dialogue, because in 'dialogism, life is expression.

Expression means to make meaning, and meaning comes about only through the medium of signs. This is true at all levels of existence: something *exists* only if it *means*' (ibid.: 49). In the court hearings that took place between the state agents and the mother was an exchange of utterances, but not a dialogue in the Bakhtinian sense. For Bakhtin, official discourse privileges oneness, while in a dialogue there is no one meaning being striven for. The refusal or inability of the state agents to see and accept other meanings precludes *communication* between the sides, leading to and resulting from a dogma, 'a sealed-off and impermeable monoglossia'. Dogma is a result of a sociolect constructing its own social reality, beyond which the person imaginatively cannot go. Only polyglossia, a contestation of languages that acquire equal rights, and heteroglossia allow such transformation of language, and consequently a set of meanings and understandings into a working hypothesis for comprehending and expressing reality (Bakhtin 1981). However, this is not what happens when normative language takes over, as in the court hearing. Through subversion, silencing and selective listening, the exchange of meaning was turned into the imposition of the official language, with the heteroglossic meanings coming from the mother being effectively lost. It is as if her reasons, now meaningless, ceased to exist. This constitutes a finalization of all attempts at relation of mutuality, open-endedness, constructive creation of truth and, most importantly, potentiality: part of any idea, or any person, is its potentialities, and precisely this potential is of the utmost importance for life itself (Morson and Emerson 1990).

### ***The State and an 'Unfit' Family***

At a first glance, the *neblagopoluchnaya* family, as indeed social orphans themselves, could be considered marginal groups, because in post-Soviet society they are often defined by a lack of work and income, poor household and clothing, or unkempt appearance, yet the use of this concept is problematic in the (post-) Soviet context.

In Western social science, marginality is seen through such categories as class, poverty or race. Morris defines 'underclass' as 'a group, which is excluded, or has withdrawn, from mainstream society in terms of both style of life and the dominant system of morality', viewed as 'dangerous classes' and a threat to societal values (Morris, L 1994: 4). Morris demonstrated that in the British social welfare state, the distinction has constantly been made between worthy and unworthy poor. As a counterpart to 'underclass', a notion of social citizenship was proposed that would guarantee social inclusion for

all, yet this notion did not eliminate marginalized and excluded groups, but rather created a culture of dependency. The bases for social stratification, the existence of lower classes and their exclusion are often rooted in inequalities related to a social class system, race, gender and poverty. Valentine defines poverty as a relative deprivation, showing it as inequality in material wealth. Although American ideological values assign great importance to equality, the poor are nonetheless disadvantaged in a number of other areas agreed to be of value, including education, occupation and political power (Valentine 1968). Howe (1998) maintains that if the poor in the USA have been seen as constituting a delinquent subculture separate and distinct from the rest of the population, in the UK in recent years the poor were treated as part of mainstream society, but viewed as suffering from inadequate socialization experience, leaving them ill-equipped to succeed.

In academic discourse, poverty had been linked to 'culture'. Oscar Lewis (1976) developed the concept of 'culture of poverty' among poor Mexican families, with the main features of this 'culture' being personal and family disorganization, resignation and fatalism, the use of violence and alcoholism. In the UK, Willis demonstrated the acquisition among young, non-academic, disaffected males of working-class identity and the 'continuous regeneration of working class cultural forms', which have 'an important function in the overall reproduction of social totality and especially in relation to reproducing the social conditions for a certain kind of production' (1977: 2–3, see also Evans 2007). Carol Stack (1974) in her study of urban black families in the USA found that they developed a highly adaptive structural system of co-residence and a kinship-based exchange network. This network comprises a resilient response to the social and economic conditions of poverty, the inexorable unemployment of black males and females, and the access to scarce economic resources of a mother and her children as recipients of state benefits. Strong loyalty to kin precluded upward mobility.

But notions of the culture of poverty have been contested. Valentine (1971) found that cultural values of the poor may be much the same as middle-class values, merely being modified in practice because of situational stresses. Howe (1998) considered that the theories of the cultural explanations of poverty and disadvantage are mostly social science elaborations of middle-class descriptions of poor, and called for connecting the supposed cultural characteristics of the poor to wider economic and political processes. Echoing his approach, Perlman reveals the 'myth of marginality' with regards to the residents of Brazilian *favelas*, showing that contrary to popular belief:

They are not marginal but inexorably integrated into society ... They are not separate from being on the margins of the system, but are tightly bound to it in a severely asymmetrical form. They contribute their hard work, their high hopes, and their loyalties, but do not benefit from the goods and services of the system. They are not economically or politically marginal, but are exploited, manipulated and repressed; they are not socially or culturally marginal, but stigmatized and excluded from a closed class system (1976: 195).

Revisiting *favelas* 30 years later, she found much the same or even worse, because over these years, the myth of marginality transformed into reality of marginality (Perlman 2005).

However, these models have a limited application with regards to the *neblagopoluchnaya* family. This concept was developed within a particular socio-economic environment where 'marginality' was not a part of the Soviet discourse to the degree it became common in post-Soviet society, as a result of economic stratification and post-Soviet moral degradation (Pilkington 1996). Marginality was not normally rooted in unemployment, class distinctions and culture, poverty or race, for in the Soviet discourse there was no unemployment and poverty that was peculiar to a particular type of a social group,<sup>29</sup> as indeed there were no essentialized distinctions between classes, and no recognized ruling or dominant class<sup>30</sup> that would create a lower class. In addition, there was no territorial segregation, as a *neblagopoluchnaya* family could be found anywhere in the city, even in more prestigious centrally located buildings; such special segregation is peculiar to post-Soviet towns. The *neblagopoluchnaya* family is not a group of people: they do not act as one and individuals resist being categorized as such; it is a diffused and virtual category.

It is important to stress that Soviet society was a stratified society with inequalities, constraints and possibilities for different groups. There was a hierarchy of privileges tied to the access to scarce goods through formal and informal networks, and these privileges (or, importantly, an absence thereof) were often reproduced, 'inherited' by children, contributing to the inequality between children from different strata. However, a number of mediating institutions, such as education or the military, provided a ladder for social mobility, allowing a move from being dispossessed to being more privileged. There was, however, also a downward mobility. Representatives of different classes were neither necessarily locked into their cultures, as in Willis's study, nor into racial and economic disadvantage, as in Stack's

population of black urban Americans, let alone developing a resilient response to the socio-economic conditions of poverty and unemployment. It was thought that decisions and possibilities of moving upward depended on an individual, rather than on their economic status, class or other conditions. With free education, guaranteed income and mandatory employment (unemployment for more than six months was a criminal offence), in less prosperous families their inability to provide a more comfortable life for themselves was therefore attributed not to any structural feature of the system but to a personal failure, a deviancy.

Western social science has developed a conceptual apparatus that makes it possible to see marginality through the lenses of subcultures, poverty, unemployment, race and class. This includes systematic knowledge about who makes up groups and categories of people affected by unemployment and poverty, and their social and psychological consequences. Although in post-Soviet Russia we deal with rapid economic and social stratification, unemployment and poverty, the dearth of reflexive analysis of this kind makes these groups look indistinguishable from mainstream society, the effects of the translocation of the concept developed for one system, into another with starkly different socio-economic realities. Precisely for this reason, individuals comprising these groups are viewed as deviant: their marginality is seen as rooted not in poverty or unemployment but in their moral deviancy, and therefore their individual inadequacy is a continuation of the (Soviet) trend to treat social problems as individual pathology. If in Soviet times deviance referred to the departure from mostly moral norms, in post-Soviet times it is increasingly acquiring socio-economic characteristics, yet often without leaving morality aside, thus conflating materiality and morality. So, we see the emerging cycles of poverty and decreased opportunities. There are already 'dynasties' of former residents whose children reside in institutions.

When unemployment and poverty entered post-Soviet discourse, there was an emergence of a subtle, still without a vocabulary (i.e., deserving and undeserving poor), understanding of different kinds of poor – those who are good people and those who are morally flawed with regard to mothers whose children reside in institutions<sup>31</sup> – this being a transformation of the previously existing understanding of the *neblagopoluchnaya* family as a temporary effect of circumstances and as a way of life (such as *bomzhi*<sup>32</sup> (tramps) and 'asocial, immoral alcoholics'). But while some people do not know how to be poor, others do not know how to treat them and what to make of them. Often evaluating a family that does not have the right 'conditions' for bringing up

a child, the state agents have no choice but to treat it as a *neblagopoluchnaya*, attributing their failures to personal inadequacies. In post-Soviet times the proportion of those who the state views as unable to properly care for their children only increases, leading to an increase in the number of termination of parental rights. These families are excluded ('excommunicated') from the moral parental community and their children are placed in institutions. They are excluded but hardly known, for the *neblagopoluchnaya* family as (now) a marginalized group constitutes a double unknown: as a *family* and as a *marginalized* family. This exclusion, however, is not a purely (post-) Soviet phenomenon and serves a number of functions described within the framework of witchcraft accusations (Douglas 1999, Macfarlane 1970, La Fontaine 1998). As I shall argue, witchcraft-type accusations are a process of scapegoating that provide a mechanism of social exclusion to help maintain the boundaries between 'normal' and 'deviant'.

### ***Quite Weberian Bureaucracy***

In Magadan, child welfare is a state prerogative and a part of the state bureaucratic system. This means that at the time of my study, there were no private, non-governmental or religious organizations that had a legal right to provide care for social orphans. Most of the state agents worked for the state organizations established in Soviet times, governed and controlled by the state's federal laws and regulations, disseminated through respective bureaucracies from a ministry to a local community administration down to a particular institution. During my observations in the Guardianship Department I saw how carefully the staff studied these documents, implementing what was relevant to their work into their practice. I observed how readily staff members reached for the official explanations of what to consider adequate or inadequate care, and to what extent their requirement for this care in practice corresponded to what was required by the state policies. These laws and regulations are therefore not a formality, but this does not mean that the state agents do not violate laws when they see fit. If found, violations or problems were highlighted in official reports; perpetrators were issued reprimands or punished in other ways – a scenario to be avoided.

The post-Soviet bureaucratic system corresponds to many of Weber's key characteristics of a rational bureaucracy of the modern state: (1) it consists of a continuous organization of official functions bound by rules; (2) each office has a specified sphere of competence with a set of obligations to perform various functions, the authority to carry out these functions, and the means of compulsion required to do the job; (3) the offices are organized

into a hierarchical system; (4) administrative acts, decisions and rules are formulated and recorded in writing (Ritzer 2000). In bureaucratic administration, one finds the concentration of resources, power and administrative secrecy (Weber 1968). For a (post-) Soviet official, office-holding is a 'vocation': he or she was appointed by a superior authority, may hold this position for many years, received a fixed salary and a pension, and enjoyed a social esteem as compared with the governed (ibid.: 958–63).

But of course, the Soviet and post-Soviet bureaucracies were not 'ideal types'. The staff of the Guardianship Department did not acquire specialized training prior to taking up the job; rather, they were trained on the job. Weber's depiction of the 'iron cage' of bureaucracy, where formal rationality is associated with a certain lack of individual freedom, holds only partially true. Although bureaucracy enveloped all aspects of life in a totalitarian society (Arendt 1973), far from being impartial and committed to the rule of law, it was characterized by a certain arbitrariness, a monopoly on assessing administrative performance and the possibility to enforce and pursue aims of their own, rather than trying to implement targets determined by social expectations and social demands (Hirszowicz, cited in Smith 1988: 106). The bureaucratic system of today is not transparent and does not answer to anyone but higher authorities, using regulations and laws received from them. Higher authorities often appoint a governmental official from the circle of people they know.

It was also characterized, as it is today, by entrepreneurial initiative, informal relationships, pragmatism and instrumentalism (Smith 1988). Ledeneva shows how the bureaucratic system was personalized through *blat*, 'an exchange of "favours of access" under conditions of shortages and a state system of privileges' (1998: 37). She maintains that besides formal laws there were ministerial or government orders for internal use that did not have the status of a formal law. *Blat* allowed manipulations with law that would turn the bureaucratic indifference towards those who did not belong, to the possibility of being treated 'humanely', ensuring a positive decision for those involved in a *blat* relationship. Yurchak (2002) describes a hybrid model of the state in post-socialist Russia, distinguishing within it officialized-public and personalized-public spheres. He maintains that some state officials have a hybrid identity, whereby they could act in an officialized public sphere as state guardians, while at the same time, having a unique access to state power, information and protection, they could act in a personalized public sphere for their own personal gain. They follow in earnest those state laws that they see as meaningful, while the types of laws

that they perceive as meaningless and counterproductive they treat as a formality and follow them only in the officialized public sphere.

Therefore, in the Soviet and post-Soviet context, formal rationality of a bureaucracy governed by rules was and still is overrun by personal considerations, contacts and informal rules, often in favour of those who constitute a resource for the members of bureaucracy, or at times applied merely arbitrarily. This means that, depending on the circumstances, members of the bureaucracy can use laws creatively, having a choice of adhering strictly to or finding ways of getting around the rules. On a few occasions I observed how the government officials could manipulate some regulations, interpreting them to suit their goals. For example, one clause in the Federal Register of Children without Parental Care requires the listing of all relatives of age and the reasons why they cannot look after a child (most often poverty, alcoholism and mental illness are indicated). It is recommended that family placement is preferred, or at least relatives should be consulted if a child was freed for adoption. Yet in the case of Anna, a 20-year-old single mother with limited financial and material means, we see how the Guardianship Department consistently gave preference to the future adoptive parents, a well-to-do couple who wanted to adopt Anna's youngest sister residing in the Children's Home. Anna's continuous attempts to secure custody of her sister failed and her wishes and opinions were ignored. Yet a Guardianship Department staff member admitted that 'according to law, we have to ask the opinion of any siblings of legal age'. Even if there was no material gain, personal satisfaction was quite evident, stemming from the feeling of doing what she felt was right for the child, and perhaps from the feeling of being in control. Her choice was most revealing of her understanding of the 'best interest of the child' and the attitude towards Anna as a representative of the 'underclass'. Likewise, within residential care institutions, there are possibilities and incentives to bend rules,<sup>33</sup> but impoverished mothers, who are useless as far as constituting a resource, often encounter most forcefully an indifferent side of the bureaucratic system.

Thus, there is a combination of constraints put forth by legal obligations, requirements and laws that guide the work of government officials and personal creativity in interpreting and manipulating governmental policies. However, in accordance with Weber's model, in a well-developed bureaucratic system, the rules of the institution have taken on a life of their own. The stamp of Foucauldian rationality of government was visible not only in the work of the state government officials but also, and very



strongly, in the work of residential care institutions for small children, where the rationalization of the life of children, with the imposition of adult time concept, discipline and regimental requirements, was over-emphasized at the expense of motherly care.

In Chapter 1 I shall describe the archaeology of family policy. Chapter 2 describes the child welfare network, the role and functions of residential care institutions and two case studies reflecting the state-family relationship of cooperation and benevolence. Chapter 3 gives examples of arising tension between the state and the family, and outlines the concepts of 'inadequate fulfilment of parental duties' and 'working with the family'. Chapter 4 exemplifies at length the state agents' expectations of what a family should be, and what kind of childcare and upbringing it should provide, outlining the norms and conditions under which the state allows the parents to care for their children. In Chapter 5 I propose a concept of 'social kinship through institutions and ideology', which enables the practice of cutting off of birth families and the use of institutions as an extended arm of the state. Chapter 6 describes institutional settings, while Chapter 7 is based on interviews with former residential care inmates regarding their experiences in these settings. Chapter 8 returns to the themes of continuity amidst rampant change, and Chapter 9 argues that despite apparent differences in political, social and economic structures of (post-) Soviet Russia and countries with liberal democracies, there are pronounced similarities in child welfare practices.

## Notes

1. The study included the three-month feasibility study (April–June 2000), followed by the main study (July 2000–January 2001) and two follow-up studies (June–August 2002 and August–October 2008).
2. This number migrates from one published piece to another, but I was unable to find a reference to an official source. I suspect that this is a 'folk' number or the way to say that the majority of children in residential care institutions are children from what is known as 'problem' families.
3. According to the Ministry of Education (Lukashina 2003), <http://www.gazeta.ru/2003/01/21/minobrazovan.shtml>.
4. According to the Main Control Administration attached to the President of the Russian Federation, <http://www.comstol.ru/Ob/83.html>.
5. [http://www.childrens.fatal.ru/res/detdom\\_stat.htm](http://www.childrens.fatal.ru/res/detdom_stat.htm).
6. According to the Russian Statistic Bureau, <http://demoscope.ru/weekly/2007/0305/gazeta027.php>.

7. As compared to 0.5 per cent of children looked after by local authorities in the UK in 2000 (National Statistics, Department of Health, <http://www.doh.gov.uk/public/sb0024.htm>) and 0.8 per cent of children in foster care in the USA (*America's Children* 2002, US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration of Children and Families, <http://www.childstats.gov/americaschildren>).
8. Calculated from numbers given in <http://www.comstol.ru/Ob/83.html>.
9. 38.57 per cent in 2004, 37.8 per cent in 2005 and 34.5 per cent in 2006.
10. 52.79 per cent in 2004, 53.41 per cent in 2005 and 55.52 per cent in 2006.
11. 5.85 per cent in 2004, 6.01 per cent in 2005 and 6.63 per cent in 2006.
12. I calculated these percentages from data published on the official site of the Ministry of Education and Science of the RF, <http://www.usynovite.ru/statistics/2006/ammount>.
13. In Russian language there is no equivalent to the English term 'unfit' parent. It is assumed that if parental rights are terminated, the parent is *neblagopoluchniy* and 'unfit'.
14. A Google search on *neblagopoluchnaya* family produced nearly 79,000 articles. See, for example, [http://topmedicina.ru/news/detail/?item\\_id=454](http://topmedicina.ru/news/detail/?item_id=454), <http://www.academy.edu.by/sites/logoped/family.htm>, [http://revolution.allbest.ru/pedagogics/00009359\\_0.html](http://revolution.allbest.ru/pedagogics/00009359_0.html).
15. Analogous to the behaviour of the cuckoo bird, which lays her egg in nests of other birds to hatch.
16. See <http://palm.newsru.com/russia/16mar2007/children.html>, [http://www.ombudsman.gov.ru/dad\\_2008/dad09/dad888/05.doc](http://www.ombudsman.gov.ru/dad_2008/dad09/dad888/05.doc), [http://www.gazeta.ru/news/lastnews/2007/02/02/n\\_1031173.shtml](http://www.gazeta.ru/news/lastnews/2007/02/02/n_1031173.shtml), [http://www.ug.ru/ug/?action=topic&toid=10472&i\\_id=121](http://www.ug.ru/ug/?action=topic&toid=10472&i_id=121).
17. <http://www.newsru.com/russia/23apr2009/obvinili.html>.
18. [http://www.newsru.com/crime/04may2005/deti\\_5.html](http://www.newsru.com/crime/04may2005/deti_5.html).
19. Thanks to Hilary Pilkington for suggesting this term.
20. Being the second such disruption in twentieth century Russia after the 1917 Revolution that separated (old) Imperial Russia from (new) socialist Russia.
21. <http://radiomv.ru/news/?mode=view&id=1365>.
22. <http://radiomv.ru/news/?mode=view&id=1365>.
23. The strong connection between the idea of the state and God has a long history in Russian state-craft. Etymologically, *gosudarstvo* (state) shares the same root with *gosudar'* (sovereign), the modified derivative of *Gospod'* (God) (Fasmer 1996).
24. DeLanda points out that for Hume, habit is a more powerful force sustaining the association of ideas than a conscious reflection, and personal identity is stable only to the extent that habitual or routine associations are constantly maintained (2006: 50–51).
25. Bourdieu calls dispositions a past which survives in the present and tends to perpetuate itself in the future (Bourdieu 1977).

26. Baby homes belong to the Ministry of Health and Social Development (the Ministry of Health in Soviet times).
27. Soviet and post-Soviet society, juxtaposing itself to the 'individualistic' West, drew on the historical continuity and cultural value of such organization of society where the common, collective good and interests preceded those of an individual, with the calls in Soviet times to identify oneself with the collective/country/state. Therefore, what was good for the state was supposed to be good for the population. A concern for the Soviet Union, and now Russia, to be economically and militarily strong for the benefit of society blatantly tied together the strength of the state and the welfare of the population.
28. Understood as the art of governing the state according to rational principles, which are intrinsic to it (Foucault 1991).
29. This does not mean that individuals were not affected by poverty and some were more vulnerable than others.
30. The new class was the party and administrative bureaucracy (Smith 1988), but even they could not pass their position on to their children. Many of them came from working and peasant families. In ideological terms, working class was indeed the dominant class.
31. Indeed, children in Soviet institutions were coming from families of single mothers and families with three and more children (less well-off but 'moral' families), children whose relatives had 'respectable' reasons for temporary placements (illness, long business trips, etc.) and children from families that violated socialist rules (criminals, alcoholics, religious families), corrupting the moral and physical upbringing of a child. Most often mothers from the latter group were deprived of parental rights.
32. An abbreviation for 'without a particular place of residence'.
33. I have been told that before the 1990s, when Russia allowed only ill and handicapped children to be adopted abroad, doctors diagnosed children with (mental) illnesses to make such adoptions possible. Although all adoptions are free, foreign couples are expected to help an institution from which they adopt a child, and thus boilers, space heaters, toys and computers found their way into children's homes.

