

## Commentary on Russian Child Adoption Incidents: Implications for Global Policy and Practice

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### Abstract

Scandals have plagued the Russia-USA intercountry adoption relationship, with critical junctures being the Masha Allen case, which was explored by the U.S. Congress in 2006, and more recent and heavily followed case of Artyom Saveliev. In this second case, the child was returned to Moscow, Russia, unaccompanied, with nothing more than a note of explanation of adoption dissolution from his adoptive mother in Tennessee. This paper discusses these cases and other incidents or violence against adoptees with recommendations for strengthening social work practice at the adoption agency and policy level. Home studies, pre-placement training, post-placement home visits and assessments, and Russia's ratification of the Hague Convention are discussed as social work practice areas for improvement. Discourse includes diplomatic relations, popular press or media reports of the incidents in Russia, and an impending bilateral agreement, which is in process of finalization.

**Keywords:** intercountry adoption, reform, pre-placement training, home study

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### Introduction

On April 8, 2010 Artyom "Justin" Saveliev's adoptive mother put him alone on a plane from Washington, D.C. to Moscow. Artyom, a 7-year old Russian adoptee, had nothing more than a backpack to meet a waiting taxi driver at the Russian airport. Instructions to the driver were to take the child to adoption authorities with a note:

*"This child is mentally unstable. He is violent and has severe psychopathic issues/behaviors. I was lied to and misled by Russian orphanage workers and director regarding his mental stability and other issues...After giving my best to this child, I am sorry to say that for the safety of my family, friends, and myself, I no longer wish to parent this child...I am returning him to your guardianship and would like the adoption disannulled"* (Good Morning America, April 12, 2010).

In what has become an international incident, the press has reported alarming details of the case.

According to reports, Artyom's single mother, Torry Hansen, wrote the above note approximately six months after she adopted him from Russia to be part of the Hansen family in Tennessee. Because the family lived in a relatively secluded area, little is known about them. Further confidentiality makes it difficult to ascertain the exact facts of the case. Apparently, another child lived in the home, named Logan, who has been reported as Hansen's nephew (Good Morning America, April 12, 2010). A statement by the mother's attorney indicates that she will not comment unless charged with an offense (Burke, 2010). A national news outlet reported no evidence that Artyom or Logan had enrolled in local schools or home schooling (Good Morning America, April 12, 2010). Reports also indicated that recent physical child abuse cast more suspicion upon Hansen's fitness to parent her adopted son (Good Morning America, April 12, 2010). As a result, local authorities have considered pressing charges of educational neglect, endangering the welfare of a child, and child abuse. (Good Morning America, April 12, 2010). To date however, local authorities have not pressed any charges, but the investigation remains ongoing and ultimately it appears that this case will not result in legal proceedings nor findings of child abuse and neglect on the part of Tennessee authorities (Fayetteville District Attorney's Office, personal communication, July 13, 2010).

Russian officials performed medical and psychological assessments of Artyom that rejected Hansen's assertion of Artyom's mental instability (Good Morning America, April 12, 2010). U.S. Embassy consular officials in Russia attempted to meet the child to observe and verify his condition, but Russian officials blocked this early effort as questions about citizenship and rights arose (Cave & Clifford, 2010). These points of contention caused early diplomatic problems and received considerable press, but Artyom has dual citizenship based on his first seven years in Russia and subsequent adoption in the United States (Savodnik, 2010).

Outrage continued to rise from press reports about Artyom's mother, including a story about Hansen making inquiry to adopt a second child from the region during the same general time of this child abandonment case (Banfield & Netters, 2010a). Apparently she was in the midst of a home study update at the time of this incident. This added further depth of concern to the story which, by the time this information became public in media reports, was receiving considerable attention in the mass media in the United States and Russia.

Russian President Medvedev publicly called the abandonment a "monstrous act" (CNN, 2010). Members of the Russian Parliament made a motion to suspend adoptions to the United States (Associated Press, 2010a). In both nations, the public cried out for criminal prosecution; however, the technical facts of the case indicate jurisdictional problems. Unfortunately, Artyom's situation was not an isolated incident of intercountry adoption gone wrong between the United States and Russia. Several incidents have had outcomes that were more tragic, stirring controversy and contributing to a decline in adoptions from Russia.

### Russia-USA Adoptions: A Declining Practice in the Face of Controversy

The United States of America and Russian media have widely reported several heartbreaking incidents in the past years, incidents that have likely contributed to the declining number of U.S.-Russia adoptions. A mix of public opinion and regulatory response—or perhaps lack thereof—to these kinds of incidents may continue to limit the number of adoptions in coming years. Five incidents exemplify the delicate context surrounding U.S.-Russia adoptions.

In one incident, the U.S. parents were not prepared to deal with—or even aware of—the developmental disabilities their son, a Russian adoptee, would present. When

Chip and Julie Harshaw adopted their son from Russia to Virginia Beach, Virginia, because they used promised a healthy child with “a good prognosis for normal development” (Belluck, 2010).

Once at home in Virginia, they struggled to raise their son. The Harshaw’s eventually institutionalized their son after not being able to care for him at home. Their son has been diagnosed with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, neuropsychiatric problems, and brain damage. Now, the Harshaw’s are suing the adoption agency that delivered their son. Stories like these make U.S. parents wary of adopting from Russia.

Another case in Virginia has made Russians uneasy about sending orphans to U.S. homes. In 2008, a toddler died of heat exposure when his father left him in a car at the height of summer temperatures in Virginia. Prosecutors originally charged the father with manslaughter, but he was ultimately not sentenced for criminal wrongdoing in 2009 (Weingarten, 2009). The lack of criminal accountability was controversial in Russia where the press covered the case, questioning if criminal justice would be served in the United States (Osadchuk, 2008).

Even assuming that the above incident resulted from an innocent mistake, other cases indicate that Russian adoptees die at the hands of abusive parents in the United States. Inevitably, the Russian media latches onto these stories and circulates them widely in Russia (Bovt, 2008). In a third very unfortunate case (that coincided in timing with Artyom’s incident), a seven-year old Russian boy died allegedly as a result of child abuse and neglect by his parents. His parents now face prosecution for homicide, for which the death penalty is a possibility in Pennsylvania (Brenckle, 2010).

That case has received considerable attention in Russia and the United States, including discourse about the potential for capital punishment (Associated Press, 2010b). This case is not the only abuse death. Understandably, these horrific cases diminish support in Russia for placing orphans in U.S. homes.

Even when U.S. parents do apparently nothing wrong, the Russian media pays attention when tragedy falls on Russian adoptees in the United States, as a fourth incident demonstrates. Recently, an eight year-old Russian adoptee was senselessly murdered. His parents had taken him on a bike ride in a park in Louisiana, where a deranged 16-year old stabbed him to death. A judge has since ruled that the teen can be tried as an adult for first-degree murder (Martinez, 2010). While this case brought negative attention at a particularly sensitive time, Russian press reports that this murder will not stall the new adoption treaty (Odynova, 2010). Nonetheless, this case indicates that intercountry adoption is a hot-button issue in the Russian media.

In one of the most publicized intercountry adoption failures, the world learned about the heartbreaking sex abuse case involving Masha Allen. During 2006 Congressional testimony, Allen revealed her horrific treatment at the hands of her “adopted” father Matthew Mancuso, who was called a “pedophile” in this testimony (Committee on Energy and Commerce, 2006, p. 1).

Congressional testimony revealed that adoption services failed to protect her from Mancuso. The home study investigator failed to interview Mancuso’s adult stepdaughter, who likely would have reported her own sexual abuse—if the home study investigator had contacted her (Committee on Energy and Commerce, 2006, p. 5).

According to testimony, Masha—the little girl that Mancuso abused in internet pornography—did not even have her own bedroom (Committee on Energy and Commerce, 2006, p.10). A solid home study investigation or effective follow-up visit would have caught this immediately. Tragically, the adoption agency that made the actual placement never informed the local organization responsible for the follow-up visits about the placement (Committee on Energy and Commerce, 2006, p.26). As a result, no one made a follow-up home visit. The out-of-state placement agency—an agency not licensed to make post-placement assessments in the state where Allen lived—only checked in on the child with a follow-up by telephone (Committee on Energy and Commerce, 2006, p. 39).

The malpractices in this case were obvious—incomplete home study investigation and no real post-adoption placement visit or assessment. Perhaps Allen summed up the poor practices best when she asked, during testimony, “why didn’t anyone come to check on me?” (Committee on Energy and Commerce, 2006, p. 2). Some of the same failures in these five incidents may have led to the events leading up to Artyom’s shocking story.

## Brief Analysis of Artyom’s Case

Insufficient home study assessment and insufficient post-placement services likely contributed to Artyom’s plight. The Russian-accredited agency that placed Artyom in the United States was in good standing. However, because this Washington state-based agency was not licensed in Tennessee, it used a local provider to carry out the home study process and post-placement activities. These types of practices also happened in Allen’s case. Sub-contracting or partnering for the adoption home study and post-placement assessments is a very common practice across the United States.

If in fact Artyom and Logan were not enrolled in school, this indicates a serious problem with the quality or depth of the home study investigation and follow-up/post-placement assessment. This critical information oversight will undoubtedly be a prominent concern addressed by the Russian government for future adoptions.

Currently, the U.S. government has not set national or federal standards for home studies or post-placement assessments in the United States requiring school enrollment evidence or other family functioning indicators (Crea, 2009; Rotabi, 2010c). Instead, three sets of laws and procedures dictate home study standards—those in the state of family residence, those set forth by U.S. immigration, and those set by Russian authorities. These three entities have three different criteria that come together into one study.

At first glance, this regulatory crosshatch may seem like a three-way net, ensuring heightened standards under three different sets of rules. Realistically however, home study practice in the United States allows for broad subjectivity, even despite opportunities for improvements with standardized assessments (Crea, 2009). Other countries have instituted standards and developed regulatory oversight of home studies. For example, the United Kingdom—in response to problems in the nation during the late 1990s—does not allow private and for-pay social workers to produce home study reports, thereby insuring integrity of the documentation (Selinske, Naughton, Flanagan, Fry, & Pickles, 2001). This is counter to intercountry adoption practices in the United States, a system fueled by payments for all services, including payments for home studies. This fosters an assessment-for-pay dynamic, which ultimately can undermine home study integrity. While no evidence has come forth surrounding the home studies that happened when Hansen adopted Artyom, such practices should receive greater scrutiny.

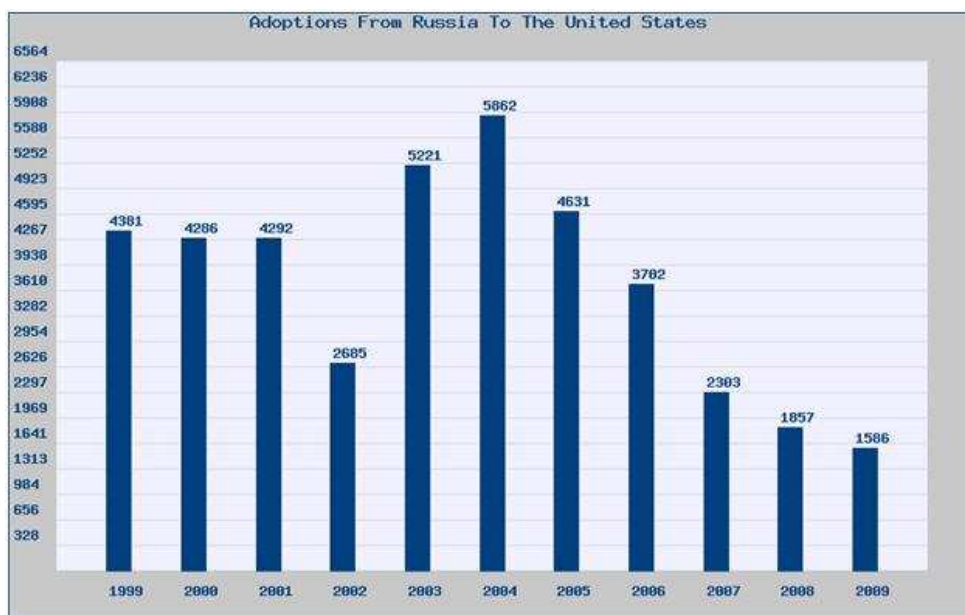
Likewise, pre-adoptive services enjoy little uniformity in the United States. Pre-adoptive placement training, such as “institutionalized children” education, is essential for anyone adopting an older child from the kinds of conditions that Artyom experienced before his adoption. It should be noted that older children adopted from orphanage settings are considered “special needs” (Carstens & Juliá, 1995; Ruggiero & Johnson, 2009) and families should be prepared for such. This should include a reality-check challenging fantasized notions about adoptions. This “check” should include assessment that individuals and couples truly understand the implications of such special needs/child behaviors on their family system and their own personal capacity their to parent (Johnson, Edwards & Puwak, 2003).

However, it is unclear as to the exact kind of pre-adoption preparation services that Hansen received or if she received any training on particular conditions typical of children originating from Russian institutions (e.g., Attention Deficit Disorder, Radical Attachment Disorder, and Fetal Alcohol Syndrome) (Bowring, 1999; Schmidt, 2009).

The fragmented U.S. home study standards contribute to the unanswered questions surrounding what specifically went wrong in the Hansen incident. One can only imagine the quality and content of training that Hansen received from her placement agency; that agency made a public statement that such service is provided for all of their families without identifying educational objectives or other evidence-based indicators of training quality (World Association for Children and Parents, 2010). Without national uniform standards in the United States for pre-placement intercountry adoption training in general, or for Russian adoptions specifically, it is impossible to verify the quality of training or educational outcomes related to parent knowledge, behaviors, and skills (Rotabi, 2010a). Thus, insufficient pre-placement training combined with subcontracted home studies potentially contributed to Artyom’s situation.

Ultimately, Artyom’s case and other incidents of neglect-related death, physical child abuse deaths, and sexual abuse of Russian-adoptees have strained the Russia-USA intercountry adoption relationship (Good Morning America, April 12, 2010; Rotabi, 2010b). Not coincidentally, the number of Russian adoptions has declined significantly, but a complete shutdown—as rumored in the days after Artyom’s arrival in Russia—has not occurred. Instead of shutting down U.S.-Russia adoptions, the United States and Russia have negotiated a new bilateral agreement that has been submitted to authorities for approval. With at least 3,000 pending U.S.-Russia intercountry adoptions affected by this change (Joint Council on International Children’s Services, 2010), the future has become uncertain about these cases. Many questions can be asked of this particular case, mainly about intercountry adoption child placement protocols and practices in adoptions coming out of Russia (Rotabi, 2010a, 2010b, 2010c).

Russia has been a top-sending nation of children to the United States with just under 20,000 intercountry adoptions since 2004. With over 600,000 orphans, lack of parental care has posed “[t]he most pressing and disturbing problem of Russian children” for decades (Bowring, 1999 p. 130). Moreover, Russia institutionalizes most of its orphans, leaving children with little hope of growing up in a residential environment (Schmidt, 2009). Despite the desperate need for good homes for these children, the number of adoptions from Russia has declined significantly in recent years.



Source: <http://adoption.state.gov/country/russia.html#statistics>

Controversy in Russia about intercountry adoptions has been blamed for decline in part due to child deaths. In the best interests of children, fundamentally, and diplomatic relations, as a secondary consideration, these incidents point to the need for changes in regulations surrounding the U.S.-Russia child adoption system.

### Practice Recommendations: Three Critical Points for Practice and a Pointed Comment on Policy

Future adoption practice between the United States and Russia should address at least four critical areas—points that the new bilateral agreement will likely include. The United States and Russia must examine the practices behind subcontracting home visits, pre-placement training, and post-placement activities and assessments. In addition, Russia should ratify the Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption.

As in Masha Allen's case, Artyom's adoption agency was located in a state other than the state where adoption placement occurred. The practice of sub-contracting pre-placement and follow-up assessments likely led to a lack of attention to adoption readiness and post-placement adjustment. Ineffective practices in this area may be putting children such as Artyom at risk for adoption disruption and dissolution (Barth & Berry, 1988; Palacios, Sánchez-Sandoval & León, 2006). Child welfare experts must now examine whether this sub-contracting practice should continue, considering the inevitable problems with multiple links in the assessment and placement process, including accountability issues such as supervision.

In turn, regulators must also consider home study issues (Ruggiero & Johnson, 2009). The first question about home study quality is whether the home study investigator meets practice standards for assessment and child placement determination. Unfortunately, as previously explored, without national standards for home studies—using placement decisions based on evidence—the answer is unacceptable at worst and elusive at best. A standardized approach to home studies is essential for practice improvement. One potential model is the Structured Analysis Family Evaluation (SAFE) (Crea, 2009). Whether SAFE or another model, it is important to develop new standards and administrative policy and direct service practices to improve home study reliability and validity in this era of reform (Rotabi, 2010c).

Regulators must also examine pre-placement training requirements for parents (Ruggiero & Johnson, 2009). There are no guarantees of quality of pre-placement adoptive parent training in the United States. In the case of Russia, training has been essentially unregulated. Strengthening training and setting requirements for content (i.e. institutionalized children behaviors and parenting an institutionalized child) will be critical to develop a system that guarantees quality of educational objectives and outcomes (Rotabi, 2010a).

Russia has responded to the ICA problems by steadily requesting more post-placement visits, an area in which important practice improvements can be made (Ruggiero & Johnson, 2009). When Russia went through a slowdown shortly after Masha Allen's Congressional child abuse testimony, this slowdown was due to the Russian government review of U.S.-agency post-placement assessment and reporting compliance (Embassy of the United States, 2010). At this point, Russia has arguably the highest standards of any frequent child-sending nation when it comes to post-placement visits. Russia currently requires four post-placement visits, starting at the six-month mark. Russia also has a system for U.S.-agency accreditation (U.S. Department of State, 2010). Agencies that have not complied with post-placement protocol (i.e. not sending reports forth to the Russian government) have lost accreditation. Despite these efforts, improved post-placement activities would have likely helped Artyom and Torry Hansen in the months leading up to his flight back to Russia. A much earlier post-placement visit probably would have supported this family more effectively. For example, a stronger or more effective post-placement relationship with the assessment social worker may have resulted in a referral to nearby Vanderbilt University where specialized clinical services for intercountry adoption are available. While it is not certain, it appears that such a referral was not made and this was a lost opportunity. Inevitably, the new bilateral agreement will require early post-placement visits at least and possibly better planning requirements for clinical services in the wake of Artyom's adoption dissolution.

Finally and pointedly from a policy perspective, Russia should ratify the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption. Russia signed the Convention in 2000 (Hague Conference on Private International Law, 2010). However, the Convention's protections do not bind Russia, because Russia has not actually ratified the agreement. This international agreement, committed to by over 80 nations, guides intercountry adoption practices to promote the best interests of the child (Hague Conference on Private International Law, n.d.; Rotabi, 2008). If implemented in the nation, Russia can join this global standard to govern adoption practices between Convention nations.

The Convention sets forth standardized requirements for adoption service providers in both nations—including some oversight for the pre-placement practices such psycho-social information (i.e. institutionalized child indicators) made available to prospective adoptive families, from Russian professionals (i.e. Pediatricians and Social Workers), about adoption readiness of the children under consideration. And while not perfect and often insufficient enforcement mechanisms, these Hague standards are an important step forward in improving intercountry adoption outcomes. However, the new bilateral agreement may pick and choose Hague standards (i.e. Hague accredited agencies in the United States), which could lessen the incentives for Russia to actually ratify the Convention. It should be noted that it has been speculated that Russia will not actually ratify the Convention, as a diplomatic leverage point between the United States and Russia. This prediction has been made by people familiar with Russia-U.S. adoptions and it is seen as a way for Russia to keep an upper hand diplomatically without true international accountability on their side. If this is true, this is unfortunate because the Hague Convention holds promise promoting best practices and ultimately the best interests of the child.

### A New Bilateral Agreement

At the time of this writing, the bilateral agreement had not yet formally been released to the public; however, by the summer of 2010, Russian news reports offer signals about the substance of the new U.S.-Russia bilateral adoption agreement. The *St. Petersburg Times* reports that the agreement "is ready to be forwarded to authorities after negotiators reached a speedy deal under which Washington accepted most demands put forth by Moscow" (Peach, 2010).

Under this agreement, Russian adoptions will apparently continue, but adoption agencies and adopting parents will face new requirements when adopting children from Russia. First, the agreement will only allow Hague-accredited U.S. adoption agencies to facilitate Russian adoptions. This likely means that any agency providing adoption services for a Russian adoptee will need to comply with Hague accreditation standards (Rotabi, 2008), even though Russia has not ratified the Hague Convention (Hague Conference on Private International Law, Status Table 2010).

Second, parents will have additional responsibilities before and after adopting. Artyom's case particularly suggests shortcomings in pre-adoption services. In the future,

parents will need special training before adopting, as per the new treaty.

Despite the relatively stringent Russian post-adoption placement requirements, the Commissioner for Children's Rights under the President of Russia, Pavel Astakhov—a prominent official, TV star, and "super lawyer" (Savodnik, 2010)—still has lamented that after U.S. families adopt, Russian officials "have no control over the adoptive family" (Berseneva, 2010). In response, the new agreement will likely require parents to report on their adoptees' health and living conditions and allow additional social worker visits in the earliest phases of post-adoption transition and family-child adjustment.

Apparently, this treaty will apply retroactively, which will likely require some parents who have already adopted to meet these post-adoption requirements when authorities ratify the agreement. Russian officials reportedly expect ratification of the bilateral agreement by the end of 2010 or early 2011. Its impact on the actual practice of intercountry adoption, improving requirements for home studies and pre-placement training as well as post-placement adjustment assessment remains to be seen at these early stages of change in Russia-U.S. adoptions.

## Extending Observations about Russia to Global Intercountry Adoption Reform

The future changes in U.S.-Russia adoptions point to adjustments that the United States can take domestically that will improve adoption practices en masse. With a significant decline in intercountry adoptions since 2004 (Selman, 2009), especially a decline in availability of desirable infants and toddlers with the closure of nations like Guatemala for Hague reform (Rotabi & Bunkers, 2008), the sending stream of children will inevitably shift to older and waiting children. These children will be more likely to have institutionalization experiences and related problems. That is, more children like Artyom Saveliev will be adopted internationally. As a result, strengthening of child assessments, home studies, and other supporting information in the pre-placement assessment and education phase is essential to identify appropriate children effectively and match based on family readiness for special needs children.

Strengthening such studies to standardized assessments, such as those found in the SAFE home study instrumentation (Crea, 2009) is essential. Also, strengthening pre-adoption training will be important for all nations with tailored information about the typical conditions and issues of children from China, and Ethiopia. Such training should be recognized as meeting standards of quality through a rating system that informs consumers (prospective families and their social workers/adoption agencies) that the material meets basic requirements, content integrates state of the art knowledge and best practices, and is actually based on evidence of adult learning. Ideally, this is a process which would have peer review and would be managed in an unbiased manner by the U.S. Department of State under its Hague Convention function as the USA Central Authority (Rotabi, 2008). Unfortunately, right now that is not an area of regulatory control as per Hague Convention implementation standards and this is a missed opportunity for improving practices in this critical area.

Also, post-placement processes have been largely superficial, but special needs children and their families often need intensive case management, especially when there is an indication of adoption disruption or early stages of dissolution. As such, post-placement standards of care must be strengthened. Thoughtful planning on a case-by-case basis must include on-going assessment and hands-on counseling. These services should integrate referral to other providers, without relying solely on referrals to other entities as the approach to service management. These critical services are an area which is beginning to receive greater attention and it was the focal point of an October, 2010 report entitled *Keeping the Promise: The Critical-Need for Post-Adoption Services to Enable Children and Families to Succeed* (Smith, 2010). This report draws conclusions which include strengthening of policies, government funding of such services, and greater research in this area of child welfare. There is no doubt that service improvements in this area are much needed and ultimately there is very little research in international adoption disruption (Palacios, et. al, 2006). Defining the issues with empirical evidence will greater inform family support strategies for preventive care.

Finally, and to be clear, adoption service providers should not only serve families directly but also with accountability. The adoption community should abandon the limited case management approach, especially post-adoption. And, if an adoption agency cannot truly provide basic case management for disruptions and dissolutions, then they should not do the work of intercountry adoption. After all, competence, service, integrity, and supervision make up critically important elements of ethical social work practice (National Association of Social Workers, 1999). This last element, strong and structured supervision with accountability holds promise and it should be absolutely required for all activities and especially subcontracted services.

## Conclusion

At this time in social work, the most controversial subject in public discourse related to policy and human service practice is intercountry adoption. The subject of poor social work practice and even adoption fraud has received considerable discourse by social work practitioners and scholars since at least the Vietnam Babylift (Bergquist, 2009), through the Romanian era (Johnson, Edwards, & Puwak, 2003), and then onward to more current events including the very recent 2010 earthquake in Haiti and attempts to abduct children for adoption (Rotabi & Bergquist, 2010) and reform efforts in general related to international issues and policy shifts (i.e. see [listed chronologically] Joe, 1978; Ryan, 1983; Ngabonziza, 1991; Carstens & Juliá, 1995; Greenfield, 1995; Triseliotis, 2000; Gresham, Nackerud & Risler, 2004; Hollingsworth, 2003; Bailey, 2006; Hollingsworth, 2008; Rotabi, 2008; Rotabi & Bunkers, 2008; Bergquist, 2009; Bunkers, Groza & Lauer, 2009; Roby & Ife, 2009).

In this era of reform and ethical concerns about intercountry adoption practices, some social workers have called to abolish the practice due to inherent problems (i.e. Dickens, 2009) while others pragmatically (Masson, 2001; Rotabi & Gibbons, 2009) offer recommendations to strengthen practice standards (i.e. Bailey, 2006; Triseliotis, 2000;). Ultimately, ICA as a social work activity must be treated as an ethical practice area with the highest of standards, considering the global implications and the best interests of the child. This latter conception has inherent disagreement, depending on the lens or perspective (Rotabi & Bergquist, 2010), and Artyom's case brings to bear issues of institutionalized children who may or may not transition well as the placement family makes adjustments or fails to adapt.

Artyom's case is an example of the intersections between two nations, citizenship, and human rights of some of the most vulnerable people in the world— institutionalized children. As such, the discipline of social work must look inward with hard questions about the current nature and state of quality related to home studies, pre-placement training, and post-placement assessments. Artyom's case is one that indicates evidence of poor practice in some areas (Rotabi, 2010b), for which the authors have provided speculation and assessment to the best of their ability for this commentary. The authors have been limited given Artyom's, and his adoptive mother's, right to confidentiality, especially related to home study documentation and other critical information like pre-placement readiness with appropriate training. However, the authors offer this commentary not to limit criticism to this specific case but to begin critical discourse in the profession, ultimately encouraging enhanced standards and practice at the adoption agency and policy practice levels.

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