

## **Children and Youth at Risk in Times of Transition**

# **Studies in the History of Education and Culture**



Edited by

Meike Sophia Baader, Elke Kleinau, and Karin Priem

## **Volume 3**

# Children and Youth at Risk in Times of Transition

---

International and Interdisciplinary Perspectives

Edited by  
Baard Herman Borge, Elke Kleinau  
and Ingvill Constanze Ødegaard

**DE GRUYTER**  
OLDENBOURG

The editors would like to thank UiT - The Arctic University of Norway and the University of South-Eastern Norway (USN) for financial support for Open Access.

ISBN 978-3-11-100963-6

e-ISBN (PDF) 978-3-11-101064-9

e-ISBN (EPUB) 978-3-11-101211-7

ISSN 2748-9531

DOI <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111010649>



This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License. For details go to <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>. Creative Commons license terms for re-use do not apply to any content (such as graphs, figures, photos, excerpts, etc.) not original to the Open Access publication and further permission may be required from the rights holder. The obligation to research and clear permission lies solely with the party re-using the material.

**Library of Congress Control Number: 2023944102**

**Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek**

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available on the internet at <http://dnb.dnb.de>.

© 2024 with the authors, editing © 2024 Baard Herman Borge, Elke Kleinau and Ingvill Constanze Ødegaard, published by Walter de Gruyter GmbH, Berlin/Boston. This book is published with open access at [www.degruyter.com](http://www.degruyter.com).

Cover image: Imgorthand / iStock / Getty Images Plus  
Printing and binding: CPI books GmbH, Leck

[www.degruyter.com](http://www.degruyter.com)

# Table of Contents

Baard Herman Borge, Elke Kleinau and Ingvill Constanze Ødegaard

**Introduction — 1**

## Part I: **Researching Vulnerabilities and Implementing Children's Rights**

Julie Ane Ødegaard Borge and Ingvill Constanze Ødegaard

**Children's Rights in Times of Transition — 9**

Ingvill Constanze Ødegaard and Elke Kleinau

**Reflections on Methodological Approaches and Challenges in Researching Children Born of War — 25**

## Part II: **Children & Youth in World War II and its Aftermath**

Wiebke Hiemesch

**Witnessing Children's Lives under National Socialism: Oral Testimonies and Children's Drawings from Ghettos and Concentration Camps — 67**

Kristina Schierbaum and Anja Schierbaum

**Reflecting on Janusz Korczak: On his Care for Jewish Orphans in the Warsaw Ghetto — 91**

Jakub Gałęziowski

**Researching Global Phenomena in Local Circumstances: Polish Children Born of War in the Context of CBOW Research — 115**

Anne Klein

**Surviving the Holocaust: Children of Jewish Deportees in Post-war France (1940–1980) — 139**

Baard Herman Borge and Lars-Erik Vaale

**“An echo of our parents”: Norway's Legal Reckoning with Underage NS Collaborators — 163**

### Part III: **Critical Reflections on the German Discourse on 'Children of the Occupation'**

Elke Kleinau

**Black German 'Occupation Children' in the Focus of Anthropological Research: Continuities and Discontinuities — 183**

Rafaela Schmid

**Problematised 'Fatherlessness': On the (Re)Production of a 'Victim Narrative' in 'Occupation Children' Research — 209**

### Part IV: **Learning from the Past: Dealing with Present Day Challenges**

Martina Koegeler-Abdi

**Liminal Children, Liminal Rights? Media Representations of Scandinavian Children Born of War after World War II and after the Fall of the Islamic State — 233**

Lina Stotz

**The Evolution of Child Soldiers from 'Villains to Victims' in Law and Policy and its Significance for Children Born of War — 265**

Sascha Hein, Isabell Schuster, Julie Larran, Barış Altındağ, Maria Schriefer and Shanti D'Sa

**School Transition Expectations of Newcomer Pupils in Germany: A Pilot Evaluation of a Summer Programme — 295**

**Contributors — 315**

Baard Herman Borge, Elke Kleinau and Ingvill Constanze Ødegaard

## Introduction

This anthology is a result of several cooperations and exchanges between the editors over the past few decades. Coming from different countries and disciplines, we have engaged in several joint conferences, workshops, and publications in the field of children and children's rights across disciplines and research methodologies. Not all of us have the topic of children and youth as our primary research field. However, working on research topics that are highly connected to the societal position of children, both nationally and internationally, across time and space, we have found a mutual interest in getting a deeper understanding of how childhood shapes adult life, and also why so many groups of children – still today – face significant challenges in having their rights implemented and executed.

In times of transition, children and youth seem to be particularly vulnerable, where transition needs to be understood in a broader sense: it can both be transition at the individual level, addressing internal transition such as from childhood to puberty, or externally imposed transitions, such as parents' divorce or mobility. However, transitions may also take place at the collective internal level, where transitions within school systems or from school to working life influence individual trajectories. At the collective level, it is external events, though, that seem to pose severe challenges to children and youth; wars and conflicts, humanitarian crises, slavery, trafficking, illegal adoptions, child labour – only to mention a few of the devastating violations to which children are still subject more than 30 years after *the UN Convention on the rights of the child* was ratified. Most of these events put children and youth in a process of transition over which they themselves have no control and which they, often due to their being under-age, are not even in the position to act upon, but which still strongly impacts their human rights and well-being.

The chapters included in this edited volume were selected following an open call for papers at the end of 2021. Papers were welcomed that addressed risks that affect children and youth especially in times of transition such as in war and post-war societies, for example, children born of war, refugee children, child soldiers, war children, trafficked children, and enslaved children. The call targeted scholars from the humanities, law and social sciences, and studies could be based on historical, quantitative and/or qualitative analyses. In the call we also specified the wish that authors address how clear responses and responsibilities may reduce the vulnerability of the group analysed, and papers that could present positive cases that may serve to illustrate best practices were particularly welcome.

Following several review processes, including double-blind peer-review, 12 papers were selected for final publication, ranging from discussions on methodology to examples of best practices. The case studies range from before World War II up to the contemporary repatriation of children of European foreign fighters and include a great variety of methodological approaches and data sources. As recently formulated in the context of sexualised violence against children and adolescents, perspectives on childhood have always been “characterised by ambiguities, differences and contradictions. This is particularly evident in the context of the granting of children’s rights and child protection. On the one hand, children are ascribed subject rights and their autonomy emphasised, on the other hand, they are necessarily limited by a protective function from outside.”<sup>1</sup> In order to reinforce this idea of protection, most of the authors in this anthology work with an extended concept of childhood that includes people up to the age of 18.

Although addressing different groups of children, times, wars and conflicts, all cases clearly show how in many cases children’s rights have been directly and indirectly violated by various parties. It also shows that in many cases children have even been the targets of the crimes, and only a few contributions have been able to point to positive examples which could illustrate best practices.

The book is structured in four main parts. Part I: **Researching Vulnerabilities and Implementing Children’ Rights** includes two papers with a general focus on various aspects of children’s rights and doing research on children and youth. *Julie Ane Ødegaard Borge and Ingvill Constanze Ødegaard* discuss “Children’s Rights in Times of Transition”, looking at various developments in children’s rights and discussing the challenges of implementing those rights and having the voices of children and youth heard at the political level. This is followed by a contribution by *Ingvill Constanze Ødegaard and Elke Kleinau*. Based on their extensive experience, the authors in their contribution, “Reflections on Methodological Approaches and Challenges in Researching Children Born of War”, discuss some of the challenges to researching vulnerable populations such as the children born of war. They suggest that following the steps of the research (data) cycle may be useful in seeking to obtain transparent and reusable high-quality data, documentation and results. The authors showcase this idea via critical reflecting upon some of their own research in relation to the steps of the research data cycle.

---

<sup>1</sup> Friedrike Thole and Edith Glaser, “Missbrauch und Missachtung von Kinderrechten. Abwehr- und Diskriminierungsstrategien in Lehrer:innenverbänden,” in *Teilhabe und Ausschluss von Kindern in der Gesellschaft. Perspektiven der Kindheitsforschung, Grundschulpädagogik und Lehrer:innenbildung*, ed. Isabelle Naumann and Julian Storck-Odabasi (Weinheim/Basel: Beltz Juventa 2022), 97.



Not surprisingly, many case studies analyse children before, after, and during World War II and these have thus been clustered in part II: **Children & Youth in World War II and its Aftermath**. *Wiebke Hiemesch* describes the dangers children faced in concentration camps and ghettos and their experiences of the inhumane conditions from the perspective of a history of children's everyday lives in her chapter "Witnessing Children's Lives under National Socialism: Oral Testimonies and Children's Drawings from Ghettos and Concentration Camps." By applying a multi-methodological approach, including children's drawings, she describes their lives and analyses their agency despite the extreme conditions they experienced in the camps. The next contribution by *Kristina Schierbaum and Anja Schierbaum* also analyses children's experiences in extreme conditions during World War II. In "Reflecting on Janusz Korczak: On his Care for Jewish Orphans in the Warsaw Ghetto" Schierbaum and Schierbaum describe how Korczak, as leader of the orphanage for Jewish children in Warsaw, tried to maintain an everyday life for the children during the Ghetto's existence and also accompanied them to their death in the Treblinka extermination camp.

Children Born of War (CBOW) are discussed in various contexts in this anthology. General methodological challenges are addressed in the contribution by *Ødegaard and Kleinau*. In the chapter "Researching Global Phenomena in Local Circumstances: Polish Children Born of War in the Context of CBOW Research", *Jakub Gałęziowski* presents the specific case of children born of war in Poland and the difficulties he encountered in researching CBOW in his doctoral studies. He analyses the particular situation of Poland during and after the Second World War and how he sought access via very different and heterogeneous sources. The growth of CBOW in Poland was fundamentally different from the Western and Northern European CBOW previously covered by research, which may require an adaptation of the definition and categories of CBOW currently used.

The final two chapters address juridical issues of two different groups of children affected by World War II. The contribution of *Anne Klein*, "Surviving the Holocaust: Children of Jewish Deportees in Post-war France (1940–1980)", addresses Jewish children and youth who survived the deportations from France and as adults engaged themselves in the cause of retroactive justice, also challenging the hegemonic French narrative of the Resistance by focusing on the collaboration of the Vichy regime. The juridical treatment of Norwegian youth who joined the National Socialist youth organisation as minors is analysed by *Baard Herman Borge and Lars-Erik Vaale* in the chapter "An echo of our parents': Norway's Legal Reckoning with Underage NS Collaborators". Based on various sources, they show how young NS members were unfairly treated by the Norwegian police and courts even by pre-war legal standards.

The chapters of Elke Kleinau and Rafaela Schmid also address children in post World War II contexts, namely the children fathered by members of the so-called allied forces in Germany after 1945. In recent years, research on this group of children has expanded significantly, in particular in the German speaking research community. In part III: **Critical Reflections on the German Discourse on ‘Children of the Occupation’** Kleinau and Schmid address specific areas of this research field. *Elke Kleinau* analyses in her contribution on “Black German ‘Occupation Children’ in the Focus of Anthropological Research: Continuities and Discontinuities”, how the special situation of children born to local German mothers and Black American allied soldiers in post-war Germany were seen and treated within the context of debates about ‘race’. In her contribution “Problematised ‘Fatherlessness’: On the (Re)Production of a ‘Victim Narrative’ in ‘Occupation Children’ Research”, *Rafaela Schmid* then critically discusses the present academic mainstream narrative that posits a causality between fatherlessness and victimisation.

Part IV: **Learning from the Past: Dealing with Present Day Challenges** finally deals with more recent events. In her contribution “Liminal Children, Liminal Rights? Media Representations of Scandinavian Children Born of War after World War II and after the Fall of the Islamic State”, *Martina Koegeler-Abdi* analyses how children fathered by members of the German forces and local mothers in Denmark and Norway during World War II were featured in the media and compares this to the representation of the children of European foreign fighters in the media today. Also *Lina Stotz* compares two different groups of children in her chapter, “The Evolution of Child Soldiers from ‘Villains to Victims’ in Law and Policy and its Significance for Children Born of War”. She analyses how the public view on child soldiers has changed over recent decades from their being framed as perpetrators to their being understood as children whose basic rights have been severely violated. Furthermore, she discusses to what extent such a political and legal recognition of child soldiers may be possible in future, given that this is a particularly vulnerable group of children whose basic rights are often violated in war and post-war situations. In the last chapter, “School Transition Expectations of Newcomer Pupils in Germany: A Pilot Evaluation of a Summer Programme”, *Sascha Hein, Isabell Schuster, Julie Larran, Barış Altındağ, Maria Schriefer, and Shanti D’Sa* analyse the impact of a specific programme implemented to help refugee children better cope with the transition from primary to secondary school in the German school system today. The analysis shows that while the statistically measurable significance is limited, such programmes may be of value to the children.

In summary, as diverse as the contributions in this book are, they point to situations in which the rights of children and youth are not just at risk but ignored and even violated. Although many of the chapters also show how children them-

selves have found ways to cope with their destinies and have shown a remarkable level of resilience and empowerment, it is difficult to disregard the fact that many of these groups of children and youth have landed in their vulnerable situations only because of the behavior of those adults whose primary obligation it is to protect exactly those rights.

The collaboration that this volume represents between authors of different disciplines with different theoretical and methodological approaches has been both an enrichment and a challenge for us. We would like to thank all our authors for responding to our insistent questions and for taking a critical look at them. Furthermore, we owe a great debt of gratitude to our peer reviewers. Last but not least, we would like to thank Dania van Olfen for her active and competent support in research and the formal standardisation of the manuscripts.

## Reference

- Thole, Friedrike, and Edith Glaser. "Missbrauch und Missachtung von Kinderrechten. Abwehr und Diskriminierungsstrategien in Lehrer:innenverbänden," in *Teilhabe und Ausschluss von Kindern in der Gesellschaft. Perspektiven der Kindheitsforschung, Grundschulpädagogik und Lehrer:innenbildung*, edited by Isabelle Naumann and Julian Storck-Odabasi, 95–107. Weinheim/Basel: Beltz Juventa 2022.



---

Part I: **Researching Vulnerabilities and  
Implementing Children's Rights**



# Julie Ane Ødegaard Borge and Ingvill Constanze Ødegaard

## Children's Rights in Times of Transition

Children are not the people of tomorrow, but are people of today.

They have a right to be taken seriously, and to be treated with tenderness and respect.<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times” is the opening line from the novel *A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens.<sup>2</sup> Although the story takes place before and during the French Revolution hundreds of years ago, the phrase captures the dual nature of change that transitions have been in the past and will continue be in the future. Times of transition are complex for society at large, bringing both opportunities and difficulties at the same time and in intertwining ways. For children and young people, this transition may be even more challenging, as they inhabit a transitional stage themselves in going through the various developmental phases of biological, cognitive, and emotional growth, processes which often also overlap. Simultaneously, they are part of a larger societal ecosystem, which constructs and conveys the expectations that confront them. Culture is often considered as “the glue which holds the society together”, and values play a vital role in this glue.<sup>3</sup> Typically, in times of societal transitions, it is this glue that is challenged – either due to externally imposed pressures or to internally evolving opposition and mobilisation. This is nothing new, and history is full of examples of both.

With regards to value patterns, the American political scientist Ronald Inglehart argued in his famous book *The Silent Revolution* from the 1970s that the younger generation, having come of age within stable, peaceful, and prosperous political times, experienced a change in value patterns from materialist to post-materialist values. This in turn impacted the party systems in democratic countries.<sup>4</sup> During the 20th and 21st centuries we have also seen an evolution of particular

---

1 Jan Korczak, cited by Martin Woodhead, “Foreword,” in *A Handbook of Children and Young People's Participation. Perspectives from theory and practice*, ed. Barry Percy-Smith and Nigel Thomas (London/New York: Routledge, 2010), xix.

2 Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities* (s.l.: Global Media Publishing Ltd., 2007).

3 Elgin F. Hunt and David C. Colander, introduction to *Social Sciences. An introduction to the Study of Society* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 73.

4 See Ronald Inglehart, *The Silent Revolution: Changing Values and Political Styles among Western Publics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977).

rights related to racial discrimination (1969), discrimination against women (1979), the status of indigenous people (2007) and people with disabilities (2008).<sup>5</sup>

Also, children's rights have been enshrined in the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UNCRC) since 1989.<sup>6</sup> However, since the ratifications of these rights, the limitations in enforcing them both at national and international levels have been many.<sup>7</sup> These rights are even more vulnerable in times of transition, which can be demonstrated by many cases just in the past decade: the destabilisation of the middle east following the Arab spring with its millions of refugees, among them many children and unaccompanied minors fleeing to Europe and other countries, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on children and the impact of climate crisis on children's human rights in the present and the future. Children all over the world experience constant situations of transition, some of them life-threatening, whereas others offer opportunities for positive change.

In this chapter we will reflect on and discuss some developments, challenges, and opportunities related to the notion of childhood and children's rights. As it is often in times of transitions that established patterns are challenged, we ask: "How can times of transition be seen as providing both opportunities and challenges for children and the upholding of their human rights?"

In the following section we will look at some of the discussions regarding the concepts of children and childhood and their relation to human rights in the context of the UNCRC and the state as an actor.

## Children, childhood, and human rights

Childhood is a social construction that varies over time and space.<sup>8</sup> According to the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UNCRC) Article 1, a child refers to "every human being below the age of eighteen years unless

---

5 See "What are the Treaty Bodies," United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, accessed June 22, 2023, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/treaty-bodies>.

6 See "Convention on the Rights of the Child," The United Nations Human Rights (UNCRC, 1989), accessed June 28, 2023, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child>.

7 See Bob Clifford, "Introduction: Fighting for New Rights," in *The International Struggle for New Human Rights*, ed. Bob Clifford (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 2.

8 See Karen Malone and Catherine Harting, "Challenges of Participatory Practice with Children," in *A Handbook of Children and Young People's Participation: Perspectives from Theory and Practice*, ed. Barry Percy-Smith and Nigel Thomas (London/New York: Routledge), 26.



under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier”.<sup>9</sup> With the UNCRC children have been defined as a group with special needs and rights that require particular protection by the respective nation states. Taking this perspective on childhood shows how the concept of childhood in itself is in transition.

Childhood as an idea has changed over time, from considering children as ‘small adults’ expected to adopt adult-like responsibilities, behaviours, and clothing<sup>10</sup> to a new view on children starting in the 18<sup>th</sup> century with the work of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. He argued that childhood was of independent value and engaged in the question of how children could be educated to be “good” people in “bad” societies.<sup>11</sup> In his philosophy of education, he argued that if boys were allowed to develop naturally, free from the constraints and corruptions of society, they would grow up with their innate goodness. Although some of these ideas about childhood in the past have been disregarded, such as his views on the upbringing of girls, the question of what it means to regard children’s needs as different from those of adults, and what the practical implications of this may be, are still current and disputed issues.

When it comes to human rights, Ann Quennerstedt found in her meta-analysis a recent increase in published articles that have widened and deepened our knowledge of what rights for children are about, fueled by the adoption of the UNCRC.<sup>12</sup> This research field, she argues, promotes children as “people in their own right” instead of children as appendices of their families, or only as future citizens. Still, she concludes that research on children’s rights is very limited, both in volume and scope and when it comes to influence and reception by relevant researchers. In her article *Children, but not really humans?* she pinpoints that it is unclear why different sets of words are so often used to describe, analyse, and discuss human rights for children (provision, protection, participation) than the words used to describe human rights for adults (civil, political and social rights). Instead, she argues that constructing what children’s rights are about from a gen-

---

9 UNCRC, 2. In this chapter we will apply the definition by the UNCRC, referring to children as persons under the age of 18.

10 See Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life* (New York: Random House, 1962).

11 See Thomas Aastrup Rømer, “Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Imellom kosmos og polis,” in *Danningens filosofihistorie* [Philosophy of Education], ed. Ingerid S. Straume (Oslo: Gyldendal, 2012), 137.

12 See Ann Quennerstedt, “Children’s Rights Research Moving into the Future – Challenges on the Way Forward,” *The International Journal of Children’s Rights* 21 (2013): 233, accessed May 10, 2023, doi:10.1163/15718182021002006.

eral human rights language of civil, political, and social rights will form a better basis for research.<sup>13</sup>

One case that in particular brought attention to childhood as a concept in the human rights movement was the case of Argentina during military the dictatorship of the 1970s.<sup>14</sup> Children were targeted by the state for abduction, torture and violence. When *Amnesty International* wrote reports about the human rights situation in the country, they gave the children a voice as direct victims of repression aimed at their parents. The reports in 1978 and 1979 focused on the children's accounts of what happened. Cosse argues,<sup>15</sup> children gained visibility and became subjects – in and of themselves – of human rights demands, which would become a major element in the subsequent stages of the recognition of the rights of children in the UNCRC in 1989.

## The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

The UNCRC is in many ways to be considered a success story as the most widely ratified human rights treaty. Yet, it is still far from being realised.<sup>16</sup> Often when violations or challenges to children's rights are addressed, examples are taken from areas with extreme poverty, humanitarian catastrophes, wars and conflicts, and this anthology addresses many groups of children exposed to risks in times of transition, in particular before, during and after World War II.

In recent times, however, until the Russian war on Ukraine starting in 2022 this took place in the global south. The migration movement to Europe in 2015 following the destabilisation of the Middle east and war in Syria has seen various groups of children at risk crossing European borders.<sup>17</sup> This has included numerous unaccompanied minors, many of them being unaccounted for.<sup>18</sup> In Norway alone, since 2015, 432 children have disappeared from asylum reception centres and care centres after coming to the country. Among these, some are as young

---

13 See Ann Quennerstedt, "Children, But Not Really Humans? Critical Reflections on the Hampering Effect of the '3 p's'," *The International Journal of Children's Rights* 18, no. 4 (2010): 625, accessed May 10, 2023, doi:10.1163/157181810X490384.

14 Isabella Cosse, "Human Rights and the Status of Children as Victims in the Late Cold War," *Cold War History* (2023): accessed April 25, 2023, doi:10.1080/14682745.2023.2167980.

15 See Cosse, "Human Rights and the Status of Children as Victims in the Late Cold War;"

16 "Humanitarian Action for Children 2023," *Unicef*, accessed June 27, 2023, <https://www.unicef.org/reports/humanitarian-action-children-2023-overview>.

17 "Missing Migrants Project," *International Organization for Migration*, accessed June 27, 2023, [https://missingmigrants.iom.int/region/mediterranean?migrant\\_route%5B%5D=1376](https://missingmigrants.iom.int/region/mediterranean?migrant_route%5B%5D=1376).

18 "Missing Migrants Project," *International Organization for Migration*.

as five years old, and the police hardly search for the missing children, in spite of a resolution by the Norwegian Parliament in 2015 which obliged the police to do so.<sup>19</sup> Norway was the first country in the world to establish an Ombudsman for Children, a national independent supervisory body with a statutory mandate to monitor and promote children's rights in Norway.<sup>20</sup> Even so, children in vulnerable situations face high risks of having their rights violated or disregarded.<sup>21</sup> As children all over the world are subject to human rights violations on several different dimensions, we in this chapter decided to address a diversity of examples. This breadth is also to emphasise that children's rights are not only at stake in authoritarian regimes, but also in countries located at the top of international democracy and welfare indexes.

Daly, Stern and Leviner explain how the UNCRC in article two, the principle of non-discrimination, has not resulted in consideration of discrimination against children because of their childhood in the same way as has happened for other groups, like women and ethnic minorities.<sup>22</sup> They argue that children are more likely to suffer from poverty and violence than adults, and under-18s are largely excluded from national legislation. Attention has been given to discrimination against children on the basis that they belong to particular minority groups, such as racial or ethnic minorities, those with disabilities, or those of a particular gender or legal status.

However, there is still limited recognition at national and international levels that children face discrimination because they are children, "on the basis of childhood".<sup>23</sup> Daly et al argue that this leads to discriminating practices that are criticised but seldom *labelled* discrimination by law. In fact, children face unfair treatment or exclusion because of the low status accorded to childhood compared to adulthood in most societies. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, children's rights to mental health and freedom of assembly were affected disproportionately compared to other groups,

---

19 See "Over 400 mindreårige asylsøkere har forsvunnet i Norge," *Dagsavisen*, accessed December 6, 2022, <https://www.dagsavisen.no/nyheter/innenriks/2022/12/06/over-400-mindrearige-asylsokere-har-forsvunnet-i-norge/>.

20 See Barneombudet, Status for barns rettigheter, The State of Children's Rights (2012), accessed June 22, 2023, <https://issuu.com/barneombudet/docs/status-for-barns-rettigheter-barneombudet-2012>.

21 See Julie Ane Ødegaard Borge, "Agency and Rights in Youth (Norway)," *Bloomsbury Education and Childhood Studies*, ed. Karin Hognestad and Kate Tilleczek (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), accessed June 5, 2023, doi:10.5040/9781350996281.0025.

22 See Aoife Daly, Rebecca Thorburn Stern and Pernilla Leviner, "UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 2 and Discrimination on the Basis of Childhood: The CRC Paradox?" *Nordic Journal of International Law* 91, no.3 (2022): 419, accessed May 10, 2023, doi:10.1163/15718107-91030007.

23 Daly, Stern and Leviner, "UN Convention on the Rights of the Child," 419.

and *The European Network of Ombudspersons for Children* reported five areas of concern: 1) Emergency measures had significantly diminished opportunities to identify children at risk of violence or abuse, or for children to access help and protection. 2) Children as a population and specific groups of children – in particular children with additional learning needs, disabled children, children with a mental illness, children with mild to moderate mental health problems, children in care, asylum seeking children or child refugees, children of divorced or separated parents, and children in the child justice system – were more likely to be adversely affected by emergency measures in response to COVID-19. 3) The introduction of emergency measures in response to COVID-19 (in particular the closure of schools and other education institutions) led to fewer opportunities for children to exercise their rights, in particular their rights to education, freedom of association and assembly, and to engage in play and leisure activities. 4) The research expressed serious concerns about the general consultation with children about emergency measures in response to COVID-19, and the absence of participation by children as emergency measures were being developed. Finally, the report shows that 5) accountability mechanisms are often inadequate to enable children (or those who represent them) to effectively challenge the introduction of emergency measures, and that monitoring of children’s rights violations is (in general) often inadequate, i.e. there is a lack of data on violence against children.<sup>24</sup>

Daly et al. argue that there are many situations in which children are subject to direct as well as indirect discrimination.<sup>25</sup> Many policies affect children both directly and indirectly. Anonymous sperm and egg donation is a typical area where the interests of adults disregard a child’s right to know about its biological parents.<sup>26</sup> Without the right to vote, it may be difficult to render such policies. What the voting age at different levels and in various countries should and could be is an ongoing debate.<sup>27</sup> Guro Ødegård gives a thorough description of arguments and counter-arguments in an analysis of official documents from several European countries where arguments pro and con lowering the voting age to 16

---

<sup>24</sup> See European Network of Ombudspersons for Children, Position Statement on “COVID-19: learning for the future” Adopted by the ENOC25th General Assembly 29 September 2021, accessed June 27, 2023, <https://rm.coe.int/enoc-position-statement-on-covid19-learning-for-the-future/1680a4f44b>.

<sup>25</sup> Daly, Stern and Leviner, “UN Convention on the Rights of the Child,” 424.

<sup>26</sup> See Sarah Zhang, “The Children of Sperm Donors Want to Change the Rules of Conception,” *The Atlantic*, October 15, 2021, accessed June 28, 2023, <https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2021/10/do-we-have-right-know-our-biological-parents/620405/>.

<sup>27</sup> See Jan Eichhorn and Johannes Bergh, *Lowering the Voting Age to 16: Learning from Real Experiences Worldwide* (s.l.: Palgrave Macmillan Cham, 2020).

have clustered into four themes: democratisation (pro), political maturity (con), consistency in age limits and constitutional practice (con).<sup>28</sup> Reducing the voting age, she argues, will in the short term have a minor impact on both turnout and the results. Regardless, when children's rights are in competition with other interests, they tend to lose out when their needs and rights are contrary to those of adults.

The literature points to some reasons for why it is so difficult to realise the UNCRC. The first difficulty involves 1) translating universal abstract human rights for everyone across different societies and cultures, and the second 2) putting into practice values that have been embraced. In the following we will first look at the contextual argument. Childhood is constructed in different societies at different times. Where children live in contexts where they are more likely to be considered "passive citizens"<sup>29</sup> who need to be instilled with the correct political and social behaviours, this is called political socialization, and the idea defined much research in the 1950s and 1960s. At a macro level, this process is mainly conserved with the objective of enabling system persistence.<sup>30</sup> In a study about the enforcement of children's rights in Italy and Spain, Grau-Grau et al. argue that this understanding of the 'child' as *becoming* rather than *being* has led to the development of a particular set of policies and laws towards children, which are embedded in family policies, and which in turn contribute to shaping the social contexts in which children grow up.<sup>31</sup> They argue that we instead must problematise the mainstreaming of children's rights and focus on particular contexts to unmask the facilitating and challenging factors regarding the consecution of children's rights in specific contexts. Bronfenbrenner's *Ecological Systems Theory* uses a multi-layer approach that is often used to explain how the child develops within the surrounding environment, from the immediate settings of family and school to broad cultural values, laws, and customs.<sup>32</sup> He divides the child's environment into five different systems: the microsystem (immediate environment, such as parents, sib-

---

28 See Guro Ødegård, "Finnes en ideell stemmerettsalder?," *Tidsskrift for ungdomsforskning* 11, no. 1 (2011): 3.

29 Audrey Osler and Agnes Kato, "Power, Politics and Children's Citizenship: The Silencing of Civil Society," *The International Journal of Children's Rights* 30, no. 2 (2022): 440, accessed May 5, 2023, doi:10.1163/15718182-300200007.

30 See David Easton, *A Systems Analysis of Political Life* (New York: Wiley, 1965); Herbert Hyman, *Political Socialization* (New York: Free Press, 1959).

31 See Marc Grau-Grau, Matteo Tracchi, Daria Panebianco and Aida Kisiunaite, "Embodying Children's Rights in Italy and Spain: Unmasking Some Elements of the Cultural Politics of Childhood," *Children and Society* 36, no. 4 (2022): 644, accessed May 26, 2023, doi:10.1111/chso.12523.

32 See Urie Bronfenbrenner, "Developmental research, public policy, and the ecology of childhood," *Child development* 45 no. 1 (1974): 1–5.

lings, teachers, and school peers), the mesosystem (for example interactions between the child's parents and teachers), the exosystem (child is not directly involved, but the system affects them. Examples: neighbourhood, parents' workplaces, parents' friends, and the mass media), the macrosystem (influence of socioeconomic status, wealth, poverty, and ethnicity), and the chronosystem (environmental changes that occur over the lifetime such as historical events, but also, for example, divorce of parents). The framework has been used to explore and understand different groups of children's environments such as immigrant children, children born of war, and child soldiers. The theory has been criticized for being too deterministic, as children who have had negative experiences in the various contexts may still see positive developments.<sup>33</sup> Bronfenbrenner himself redefined and renamed his theory as the Bioecological model in the 1990s, focusing more on developmental processes individuals experience over time rather than on environmental influences.<sup>34</sup>

The next section will look more closely at the state's role in putting children's human rights into practice.

## State responsibility: the state as an actor

Even though there are norms in place and bodies appointed for the protection and promotion of children's rights, there is still a need to ensure that the system works in practice and that children's rights are effectively implemented.<sup>35</sup> These include, for example, rights such as: the right to be heard, article 12, Freedom of expression, article 13, Freedom of thought and religion, 14, Freedom of assembly, 15 and Access to information, 16. It is important to take into consideration that, as mentioned above, in some political systems no citizens have these rights. However, young children remain especially marginalised in theoretical and empirical analyses of citizenship and political rights overall, with a few exceptions.<sup>36</sup> In an analysis of child-

---

33 See "Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory," Olivia Guy Evans, accessed June 28, 2023, <https://www.simplypsychology.org/bronfenbrenner.html>.

34 See Urie Bronfenbrenner and Stephen J. Ceci, "Nature-nurture reconceptualised: A bio-ecological model," *Psychological Review* 10, no. 4 (1994): 568–586.

35 See Grau-Grau, Tracchi, Panebianco and Kisiunaite, "Embodying children's rights in Italy and Spain," 644.

36 See Simone Abendschön, "Children's Political Learning in Primary School: Evidence from Germany," *Education* 45, no. 4 (2017): 450, accessed May 22, 2023, doi:10.1080/03004279.2015.1115115; Anna Emilia Berti, "Third graders' understanding of core political concepts before and after teaching," *Genetic, Social, and General Psychology Monographs* 127, no. 4 (2001): 346.

ren's rights in Japan, Audrey Osler and Agnes Kato examine why children remain excluded from the *demos* and conclude that the Japanese government has prioritised "public order" at school and in society over pupils' "political rights".<sup>37</sup> They argue that if children have both the right to participation and the right to democracy, then we must turn to the state to understand why this right is not adequately guaranteed. Democracy is exercised by the *demos*, but it is the state that determines who is included in the *demos*. However, the UNCRRC also secures the rights of all children regardless of citizenship status (e.g migrants). Osler and Kato focus on the situation of children who, despite holding formal citizenship status, are denied the right to have rights. They argue that the state is afraid of children's democratic participation, associating it with the political left, student protest and past challenges to authority.<sup>38</sup> When those in power do not like what the children, either as a group or individually, have to say, it becomes even more complicated to influence policy-making. Previous studies have argued that the children who are heard are those who "fit the system" and are invited to participate by the authorities.<sup>39</sup> But as Gerison Landsdown says: "We have evidence as to the capacities and desires of children to be more involved".<sup>40</sup> Children are protesting all over the world,<sup>41</sup> confronting adult authority – both in what they say and in how they say it. An interesting case in this regard is a current protest taking place in Norway in which Norway's Supreme Court has ruled that the authorities' decision to licence new wind farms was invalid because the construction violated the Saami's protected cultural rights.<sup>42</sup> Yet it is the *Friends of the Earth's* youth organisation *Nature*

---

37 Osler and Kato, "Power, Politics and Children's Citizenship: The Silencing of Civil Society," 440.

38 See Osler and Kato, "Power, Politics and Children's Citizenship: The Silencing of Civil Society," 440.

39 See Guro Ødegård, *Motløs ungdom? Nytt engasjement i et gammelt demokrati* [Dejected Youth? New Political Engagement in an Old Democracy] (Akademisk Publisering: Oslo, 2010).

40 Gerison Landsdown, "The Realizations of Children's Participation Rights," in *A Handbook of Children and Young People's Participation*, 11.

41 See Julie Ane Ødegaard Borge and Ingvill Constanze Mochmann, "A Voice, but not a Vote: A Youth Generation at Risk?," *Children and Society* 33 (2019): 286, accessed February 15, 2023, doi:10.1111/chso.12332.

42 Licences for wind power development on Fosen ruled invalid as the construction violates Sami reindeer herders' right to enjoy their own culture (domstol.no). In Norway in 2010 the Water Resources and Energy Directorate issued licences for wind farms to *Fosen Vind DA* within Fosen district, an area in which reindeer husbandry is practised. The herders from Sør Fosen *stjete* and Nord-Fosen *siida* claimed that the construction interfered with their right to enjoy their own culture, but the wind turbines were regardless built and used after the *Ministry of Petroleum and Energy* in 2013 made some minor adjustments to the permits. These were built at the *Roan* Wind farm in 2019, Norway's biggest at the time, and *Storheia* wind farm in 2020 with its 80 turbines, which holds the record in 2023. The case was brought before the courts, which ended up in the grand



*and Youth* [Natur og ungdom] that is demanding that the state take action against the states' violation of human rights, in this case the human rights for indigenous people.<sup>43</sup>

Martin Woodhead argues that it is time to move beyond UNCRC article 12 – “States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child”<sup>44</sup> – and involve children more in decision-making. In Marc Grau-Grau et al.'s study, one of the informants from Spain said that: “politics prioritises groups that vote; children do not vote”.<sup>45</sup> This emphasises the idea that elected officials should reflect the demographic composition of the population they represent and should be responsive to the interests and concerns of their constituents.<sup>46</sup> Even though all 196 states, except the United States of America (USA), have ratified the UNCRC,<sup>47</sup> and the Convention is mandatory for the State, it is the State that must ensure that others comply with it. And this is where the challenge lies.

## Children as a vulnerable group

As previous argued, children's rights are particularly difficult to uphold without being able to hold governments fully accountable. Also, children are a particularly vulnerable group because they are dependent on parents and other adults as care-takers.<sup>48</sup> Thus, Grau-Grau et al. argue, getting people to understand that children's rights are meaningful and relevant is not just about abstract concepts. “Families

---

chamber of Norwegian Supreme Court with eleven judges. This court is restricted to cases of utmost importance. The main issue in the Supreme Court was whether the development violates the reindeer herders' rights under Article 27 *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (ICCPR). The provision sets out that “persons belonging to an ethnic, religious or linguistic minority shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture”.

<sup>43</sup> See “What are the Treaty Bodies.”

<sup>44</sup> Woodhead, “Foreword,” in *A Handbook of Children and Young Peoples's Participation*, xix.

<sup>45</sup> Grau-Grau, Tracchi, Panebianco and Kisiunaite, “Embodying children's rights in Italy and Spain,” 654.

<sup>46</sup> For more information see for example Daniel Stockemer and Aksel Sundström, “Age Inequalities in Political Representation: A Review Article,” *Government and Opposition* (2023): 1–18, accessed June 25, 2023, doi:10.1017/gov.2023.11.

<sup>47</sup> See “Child maltreatment,” *World Health Organization*, accessed September 19, 2022, <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/child-maltreatment>.

<sup>48</sup> See Gunnar Ekeløve-Slydal, *Menneskerettigheter, en innføring* [Human Rights: An Introduction] (Oslo: Humanist forlag, 2014).



think that when they close the door, the legal system cannot enter, and this is not true".<sup>49</sup> However, for a legal system to follow up on children's rights and wellbeing also in the microsystem, to use the theoretical system of Bronfenbrenner, enough priority has to be provided in terms of funding, manpower, etc. in all areas affecting children such as kindergarten, schools, youth welfare offices. Only then can children's wellbeing can be properly followed up also in the intimate family surroundings, even in welfare states. Enough examples exist where children have been exposed to severe abuse and maltreatment by caretakers, in some cases even leading to death. Often, indications of vulnerability have been known by stakeholders, but lack of capacity has prevented official bodies from following up.<sup>50</sup> Also, a challenge that is unique to childhood is that children grow up, and once they do, they cannot represent the children's perspectives anymore.<sup>51</sup> Still, we do see examples of specific groups of former children who do this also as adults. An example is the members of the group of the so-called children born of war (CBOW). These children are usually conceived by a local mother and father from a military, para-military or rebel (enemy) group in conflict and post-conflict times. Often exposed to severe stigmatisation and discrimination in childhood, many of them have maintained self-identification as CBOWs their entire lives, and also as adults some of them combat discrimination against CBOW born in present day conflicts.<sup>52</sup> Another challenge is that for children to contribute their views, they need access to appropriate information and to safe spaces where they can develop and articulate their views.<sup>53</sup> In particular, because of adult resistance, the political arena is not considered a space where children should be present.<sup>54</sup> It might not be a safe space either. Also, they themselves may want to distinguish their channels of political participation from adult participation.<sup>55</sup>

---

49 Grau-Grau, Tracchi, Panebianco and Kisiunaite, "Embodying children's rights in Italy and Spain," 654.

50 See "Das verhungerte Kind: Der Fall Jessica und die Folgen," *NDR*, accessed June 21, 2023, <https://www.ndr.de/geschichte/chronologie/Das-verhungerte-Kind-Der-Fall-Jessica-und-die-Folgen,falljessica102.html>.

51 See Landsdown, "The realisations of children's participation rights," 12.

52 See Ingwill Constanze Mochmann, "Children Born of War – A Decade of International and Interdisciplinary Research," *Historical Social Research* 42, no. 1 (2017): 320, accessed June 25, 2023, doi:10.12759/hsr.42.2017.1.320–346.

53 See Landsdown, "The realisations of children's participation rights," 12.

54 See Malone and Harting, "Challenges of Participatory Practice with Children," 26.

55 See Hava Gordon and Jessica Taft, "Rethinking Youth Political Socialization: Teenage Activists Talk Back," *Youth & Society* 43, no. 4 (2011): 1499, accessed June 24, 2023, doi:10.1177/0044118X10386087.

On this note, it is quite interesting that several states proposed a draft resolution on *Birth Registration and the Right of everyone to recognition everywhere as a person before the law*.<sup>56</sup> The draft resolution underlines the States' obligation, among other things, to register children at birth, without discrimination of any kind, reminding that recognition before the law is closely linked to the realisation of other human rights. Referring to numbers provided by UNICEF, the report expresses concern that 166 million children under the age of five worldwide have never been registered, and about 70 million of the registered children under five have no birth certificate.<sup>57</sup> These children are thus highly vulnerable and may be more easily exposed to illegal adoption, slavery, child labour, sexual- and gender-based violence etc.<sup>58</sup> These rights are already enshrined in the UNCRC in Articles 7 and 8, and that many countries are not able to guarantee children even this human right thirty-four years after the implementation of the UNCRC clearly emphasises the lack of priority of securing children's rights in many countries.

How the interests of states interfere with the rights of children is clearly visible in the dispute that has been going on for years, since the defeat of the Islamic State (ISIS) and involves the question of how to deal with children of European foreign fighters. Still today, after seven years, hundreds of children of European citizens who left their home countries to join ISIS are left in refugee camps such as Al-Hol in North East Syria.<sup>59</sup> Many European states, including the Scandinavian ones, have been very hesitant to take back the mothers and children. Some countries have even retrospectively withdrawn the citizenship of parents who joined ISIS on the grounds of their participation in a terrorist organisation. This has left many children who per birth have the right to Norwegian, Swedish, Danish, German, French, British etc. citizenship stateless in refugee camps on foreign soil. In this way, children's rights are subordinated to the state's argument that it is a security threat to take back the radicalised mothers and the children who, by proxy, also appear as 'radicalised'.<sup>60</sup> Another argument is that children need to prove that they have the right to obtain a country's citizenship, which is impossible

---

56 United Nations, Human Rights Council, "Birth registration and the right of everyone to recognition everywhere as a person before the law." 2023, 52 session, A/HRC/52/L.23, accessed March 27, 2023, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4007852>.

57 United Nations, Human Rights Council, "Birth registration and the right of everyone to recognition everywhere as a person before the law." 2023, 52 session, A/HRC/52/L.23.

58 United Nations, Human Rights Council, "Birth registration and the right of everyone to recognition everywhere as a person before the law." 2023, 52 session, A/HRC/52/L.23.

59 See "When am I Going to Start to Live? The urgent need to repatriate foreign children trapped in Al Hol and Roj Camps," accessed June 28, 2023, <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/document/when-am-i-going-start-live-urgent-need-repatriate-foreign-children-trapped-al-hol-and-roj/>.

60 See the contributions of Martina Koegler-Abdi and Lina Stotz in this anthology.

for these children to do.<sup>61</sup> The need for a UN resolution addressing the need and importance of birth registration and the right of everyone to be recognised everywhere as a person before the law presented at the *Human Rights Council* is thus obviously strongly needed, even in what may be considered well-established democracies.

## Conclusion and outlook

Times of transition are processes in which societies develop and evolve. In this chapter, we have shared some reflections about opportunities and challenges for children in upholding in their human rights during times of political, social, or economic change. Though there are possibilities for positive change, such as in the example of the resolution addressing the need for and importance of birth registration, where obviously this human right is considered to be at stake in present times of transition, we have showed many examples that underline how children in vulnerable situations face high risks in upholding their rights. As societies come and go, it is crucial to ensure that human rights for children is a main priority. We have argued that one of the reasons for this is that the state is responsible for implementing human rights for its citizens. An important question in this regard is what consequences and remedies pertain to human rights violations made by the state. If remedied, the state must still also take measures to ensure that similar violations do not occur again. As the *Norwegian National Institution for Human Rights* argue, “What this entails concretely depends on the facts and circumstances of a given case, and governments will have considerable leeway or a “margin of appreciation” to resolve this within their own national legal systems”.<sup>62</sup> Thus, the question of who is to be held accountable if laws are not enforced remains unsolved. Especially for children, who do not have the same access as adults to impact the political systems of which they are a part. However, that does not mean that it is impossible to influence politics or to have access to power. Children are a heterogenous group, though there are some

---

<sup>61</sup> See Saeed Bagheri and Alison Bisset, “International Legal Issues Arising from Repatriation of the Children of Islamic State,” in *Journal of Conflict and Security Law* 27, no. 3 (2022): 363–385, accessed June 27, 2023, doi:10.1093/jcsl/krac013. Several organisations have strongly engaged in getting their citizens, and in particular the children of European foreign fighters back to their home countries, amongst them the Danish organisation *Repatriate the Children*. See “About Repatriate The Children,” accessed June 27, 2023, <https://repatriatethechildren.dk/english/about/>.

<sup>62</sup> “About the Wind Farms on Fosen and the Supreme Court Judgment,” *Norwegian National Institution for Human Rights (NIM)*, accessed June 25, 2023, <https://www.nhri.no/en/2023/about-the-wind-farms-on-fosen-and-the-supreme-court-judgment/>.

common characteristics that fit the age group. Children do not have to be given a voice to have a voice, though structural factors influence the possibilities. In recent decades interdisciplinary child research has emerged in which children are considered active agents in constructing their childhood and active participants in childhood research.<sup>63</sup> More research will give insight into how children's rights have been and may be upheld, in particular in times of transition.

## References

- Abendschön, Simone. "Children's Political Learning in Primary School: Evidence from Germany." *Education* 45, no. 4 (2017): 450–461. Accessed May 22, 2023. doi:10.1080/03004279.2015.1115115.
- Ariès, Philippe. *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*. New York: Random House USA Inc., 1962.
- Bagheri, Saeed, and Alison Bisset. "International Legal Issues Arising from Repatriation of the Children of Islamic State." *Journal of Conflict and Security Law* 27, no. 3 (2022): 363–385. Accessed June 27, 2023. doi:10.1093/jcsl/krac013.
- Barneombudet. Status for barns rettigheter 2012 [The State of Children's Rights]. Accessed June 22, 2023. <https://issuu.com/barneombudet/docs/status-for-barns-rettigheter-barneombudet-2012>.
- Berti, Anna Emilia. "Third graders' understanding of core political concepts before and after teaching." *Genetic, Social, and General Psychology Monographs* 127, no. 4 (2001): 346–377.
- Borge, Julie Ane Ødegaard, and Ingvill Constanze Mochmann. "A Voice, but not a Vote: A Youth Generation at Risk?" *Children and Society* 33 (2019): 286–299. Accessed February 15, 2023. doi:10.1111/chso.12332.
- Borge, Julie Ane Ødegaard. "Agency and Rights in Youth (Norway)." *Bloomsbury Education and Childhood Studies*, edited by Karin Hognestad and Kate Tilleczek. London: Bloomsbury, 2019. Accessed June 5, 2023. doi:10.5040/9781350996281.0025.
- Bronfenbrenner, Urie. "Developmental research, public policy, and the ecology of childhood." *Child Development* 45, no. 1 (1974): 1–5.
- Bronfenbrenner, Urie and Stephen J. Ceci. "Nature-nurture reconceptualized: A bio-ecological model." *Psychological Review* 101, no. 4 (1994): 568–586.
- Clifford, Bob. "Chapter 1. Introduction to Fighting for New Rights." In *The International Struggle for New Human Rights*, edited by Clifford Bob, 1–13. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009.
- Cosse, Isabella. "Human Rights and the Status of Children as Victims in the Late Cold War." *Cold War History* (2023). Accessed April 25, 2023. doi:10.1080/14682745.2023.2167980.
- Dagsavisen. "Over 400 mindreårige asylsøkere har forsvunnet i Norge." Accessed December 6, 2022. <https://www.dagsavisen.no/nyheter/innenriks/2022/12/06/over-400-mindrearige-asylsokere-har-forsvunnet-i-norge/>.
- Daly, Aoife, Rebecca Thorburn Stern, and Pernilla Leviner. "UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 2 and Discrimination on the Basis of Childhood: The CRC Paradox?" *Nordic Journal*

---

<sup>63</sup> Barry Percy-Smith and Nigel Thomas, introduction to *A Handbook of Children and Young People's Participation*, 1.

- of *International Law* 91, no. 3 (2022): 419–452. Accessed May 10, 2023. doi:10.1163/15718107-91030007.
- Dickens, Charles. *A Tale of Two Cities*. S.I.: Global Media Publishing Ltd., 2007.
- Easton, David. *A Systems Analysis of Political Life*. New York: Wiley, 1965.
- Eichhorn, Jan, and Johannes Bergh. *Lowering the Voting Age to 16: Learning from Real Experiences Worldwide*. S.I.: Palgrave Macmillan Cham, 2020.
- Ekeløve-Slydal, Gunnar, ed. *Menneskerettigheter, en innføring*. [Human Rights: An Introduction]. Oslo: Humanist forlag, 2014.
- European Network of Ombudspersons for Children. “COVID-19: learning for the future.” Accessed June 27, 2023. <https://rm.coe.int/enoc-position-statement-on-covid19-learning-for-the-future/1680a4f44b>.
- Evans, Olivia Guy. “Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory.” *Simply Psychology*. Accessed June 28, 2023. <https://www.simplypsychology.org/bronfenbrenner.html>.
- Gordon, Hava, and Jessica Taft. “Rethinking Youth Political Socialization: Teenage Activists Talk Back.” *Youth & Society* 43, no. 4 (2011): 1499–1527. Accessed June 24, 2023. doi:10.1177/0044118X10386087.
- Grau-Grau, Marc, Matteo Tracchi, Daria Panebianco, and Aida Kisiunaite. “Embodying Children’s Rights in Italy and Spain: Unmasking Some Elements of the Cultural Politics of Childhood.” *Children and Society* 36, no. 4 (2022): 644–660. Accessed May 26, 2023. doi:10.1111/chso.12523.
- Hunt, Elgin F., and David C. Colander. Introduction to *Social Sciences. An introduction to the Study of Society*. New York: Routledge, 2017.
- Hyman, Herbert. *Political Socialization*. New York: Free Press, 1959.
- Inglehart, Ronald. *The Silent Revolution: Changing Values and Political Styles among Western Publics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977.
- Landsdown, Gerison. “The Realizations of Children’s Participation Rights.” In *A Handbook of Children and Young People’s Participation: Perspectives from Theory and Practice*, edited by Barry Percy-Smith and Nigel Thomas, 11–23. London/New York: Routledge, 2010.
- Malone, Karen, and Catherine Harting. “Challenges of Participatory Practice with Children.” In *A Handbook of Children and Young People’s Participation: Perspectives from Theory and Practice*, edited by Barry Percy-Smith and Nigel Thomas, 24–38. London/New York: Routledge, 2010.
- International Organization for Migration (IOM). “Mediterranean | Missing Migrants Project.” Accessed June 27, 2023. <https://missingmigrants.iom.int/region/mediterranean>.
- Mochmann, Ingvill Constanze. “Children Born of War – A Decade of International and Interdisciplinary Research.” *Historical Social Research* 42, no. 1 (2017): 320–346. Accessed June 25, 2023. doi:10.12759/hsr.42.2017.1.320–346.
- NDR. “Das verhungerte Kind: Der Fall Jessica und die Folgen.” NDR. Accessed June 21, 2023. <https://www.ndr.de/geschichte/chronologie/Das-verhungerte-Kind-Der-Fall-Jessica-und-die-Folgen,falljesica102.html>.
- Norwegian National Institution for Human Rights. “About the Wind Farms on Fosen and the Supreme Court Judgment.” Accessed June 25, 2023. <https://www.nhri.no>.
- Osler, Audrey, and Agnes Kato. “Power, Politics and Children’s Citizenship: The Silencing of Civil Society.” *The International Journal of Children’s Rights* 30, no. 2 (2022): 440–472. Accessed May 5, 2023. doi:10.1163/15718182-300200007.
- Percy-Smith, Barry, and Nigel Thomas. Introduction to *A Handbook of Children and Young People’s Participation: Perspectives from Theory and Practice*, ed. Barry Percy-Smith and Nigel Thomas, 1–8. London/New York: Routledge, 2010.

- Quennerstedt, Ann. "Children, But Not Really Humans? Critical Reflections on the Hampering Effect of the '3 p's'." *The International Journal of Children's Rights* 18, no. 4 (2010): 619–635. Accessed May 10, 2023. doi:10.1163/157181810X490384.
- Quennerstedt, Ann. "Children's Rights Research Moving into the Future – Challenges on the Way Forward." *The International Journal of Children's Rights* 21 (2013): 233–247. Accessed May 10, 2023. doi:10.1163/15718182021002006.
- Repatriate the Children. "About Repatriate the Children." Accessed June 27, 2023. <https://repatriatethechildren.dk/english/about/>.
- Rømer, Thomas Aastrup. "Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Imellom kosmos og polis." In *Danningens filosofihistorie* [Philosophy of Education], edited by Ingerid S. Straume, 136–142. Gyldendal: Oslo, 2012.
- Save the Children. "When am I Going to Start to Live? The Urgent Need to Repatriate Foreign Children Trapped in Al Hol and Roj Camps." Accessed June 28, 2023. <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/document/when-am-i-going-start-live-urgent-need-rep>.
- Stockemer, Daniel, and Aksel Sundström. "Age Inequalities in Political Representation: A Review Article." *Government and Opposition* (2023): 1–18. Accessed June 25, 2023.
- The United Nations Human Rights (UNCRC). "Convention on the Rights of the Child." Accessed June 28, 2023. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child>.
- Unicef. "Humanitarian Action for Children 2023." Accessed June 27, 2023. <https://www.unicef.org/reports/humanitarian-action-children-2023-overview>.
- United Nations, Human Rights Council. "Birth registration and the right of everyone to recognition everywhere as a person before the law." 2023, 52 session, A/HRC/52/L.23. Accessed March 27, 2023. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4007852>.
- Woodhead, Martin. Foreword to *A Handbook of Children and Young People's Participation: Perspectives from Theory and Practice*, edited by Barry Percy-Smith and Nigel Thomas, xix. London/New York: Routledge, 2010.
- World Health Organization. "Child maltreatment." Accessed September 19, 2022. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/child-maltreatment>.
- Zhang, Sarah. "The Children of Sperm Donors Want to Change the Rules of Conception." *The Atlantic*, October 15, 2021. Accessed June 28, 2023. <https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2021/10/do-we-have-right-know-our-biological-parents/620405/>.
- Ødegård, Guro. *Motløs ungdom? Nytt engasjement i et gammelt demokrati* [Dejected Youth? New Political Engagement in an Old Democracy]. Akademisk Publiserings: Oslo, 2010.
- Ødegård, Guro. "Finnes en ideell stemmerettsalder?" *Tidsskrift for ungdomsforskning* 11, no. 1 (2011): 3–31.

Ingvill Constanze Ødegaard and Elke Kleinau

# Reflections on Methodological Approaches and Challenges in Researching Children Born of War

## Introduction

‘Children Born of War’ (CBOW) are children who have been fathered by members of occupational or peacekeeping forces and local women.<sup>1</sup> Although it may be assumed that such children are born in every war and conflict that has taken place throughout the history of mankind, very little research on this topic existed for a very long time.<sup>2</sup>

The field of research on Children Born of War has developed considerably in recent decades and has become a topic that has gained attention and visibility in peace and conflict studies, interdisciplinary gender studies and a wide range of disciplines from the history, social and educational sciences to medicine.

As CBOW are part of a hidden population in conflict and post-conflict settings, conducting research is often characterised by multiple methodological and ethical challenges. Depending on the respective theoretical and methodological approach, there may be considerable variance in analysis, data collection and evaluation

---

**Note:** All publications between 2001–2022 were published under Ingvill Constanze Mochmann, since 2023 under Ingvill Constanze Ødegaard.

1 Kai Grieg, *The War Children of the World. War and Children Identity Project* (Bergen: Report, 2001); Charli R. Carpenter, *Protecting Children Born of Sexual Violence and Exploitation in Conflict Zones: Existing Practice and Knowledge Gaps. Findings from Consultations with Humanitarian Practitioners* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005) and Charli R. Carpenter, *Born of War: Protecting Children of Sexual Violence Survivors* (Bloomfield: Kumarian Press, 2007); Ingvill C. Mochmann, “Consolidating the Evidence Base of Children Born of War,” *Zentralarchiv für Empirische Sozialforschung* (2006), 198–199; and Ingvill C. Mochmann, “Children Born of War,” in *OBETS – Revista de Ciencias Sociales* 2 (2008).

2 See Ingvill C. Mochmann, Sabine Lee and Barbara Stelzl-Marx, “The Children of the Occupations Born During the Second World War and Beyond – An Overview,” *Historical Social Research* 34, no. 3 (2009); Sabine Lee, *Children Born of War in the Twentieth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017).

methods, including the linking of different data sources, archiving and data sharing procedures, as well as the ethical requirements.<sup>3</sup>

Based on the different expertise of the two authors, the aim of the chapter is to present different methodological approaches to the research, which allow us to discuss advantages and disadvantages of the respective methods and to make recommendations for good research practices vis-à-vis CBOW based on case studies from historical, quantitative and qualitative research.

Although disciplines have different methodological approaches to CBOW, many steps related to research design, data collection, analysis and re-use are similar. Thus, in this chapter the analysis will be structured along the research lifecycle, more specifically the research data cycle.

## The research lifecycle of Children Born of War

As pointed out in the introduction, CBOW have probably been born in every war and conflict that has taken place throughout the history of mankind. Yet, only a little research on this topic has existed for a long time, and although the evidence base is steadily increasing, due among other things to an increasing awareness of the topic also at the policy level, from the methodological perspective this research field comprises several challenges.<sup>4</sup> Due to the complexity of the topic, theories and explanations from other research fields are being used to analyse historical, social, psychological, medical, juridical etc. aspects of this particular group. Within the respective fields, theories, hypotheses, assumptions, sampling procedures, data collection, analysis etc. is based on the respective methodological requirements of the disciplines. This is per se neither a problem nor a limitation to the usefulness of the findings. However, it requires appropriate research data management, to both evaluate the validity and reliability of the respective sources used, the limitations of the respective findings, and transparency with respect to the re-use of data. The aim of this chapter is to show how the research data cycle may be used to address systematically many of the challenges at an early point in the research process, thereby contributing to good scientific practice. Our focus is on research on vulnerable populations, in particular the case of Children Born of War, as this is an area of the two authors' expertise.

---

<sup>3</sup> See Ingvill C. Mochmann, "Children Born of War – A Decade of International and Interdisciplinary Research," *Historical Social Research* 42, no. 1 (2017) and Ingvill C. Mochmann, *Children Born of War (CBOW): Genese und Konsolidierung des Forschungsfeldes*, unpublished Habilitation Thesis, 2019.

<sup>4</sup> See Mochmann, "Children Born of War" and Mochmann, *Children Born of War (CBOW)*.



As there is not *one* research data lifecycle model, we have for the purpose of discussion in this chapter chosen to apply the Research Data Lifecycle provided by the *LMA Research Data Management Working Group* of Harvard University, which is illustrated in the graphic below.



**Fig. 1:** Research Data Lifecycle by LMA Research Data Management Working Group, Harvard University, 2023 (source licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License).

This model seems particularly appropriate for the aim of this chapter, as it specifically “refers to the process of conducting research, from the initial planning, funding, and designing of a project to publishing and disseminating the conclusions or scholarship. Although the research process varies across disciplines and research domains, it often includes validating a model or hypothesis by using information and data. This site refers to data in the broadest sense of the word, including experimental, observational, acquired, and simulated data, as well as any relevant information, artifacts, and original sources. The research lifecycle also includes

publishing the data, code, and workflows to facilitate the reproducibility of the published results.”<sup>5</sup>

In the following the various steps of the *Research Data Lifecycle by LMA Research Data Management Working Group* (2023) will be presented briefly.<sup>6</sup>

1. **Plan & Design:** The first step addresses the Research Data Management Lifecycle, including issues such as: what does your research project look like from start to (anticipated) finish? How will data be handled during the project, and after the project is completed? According to the proposed framework, thinking about this at the start of a project saves time, money and energy, and many funding agencies require data management plans. It addresses issues such as data policies and compliance, file naming conventions, assignment of roles and responsibilities for oversight of data management and sharing.
2. **Collect & Create:** This step includes the organisation and documentations of all relevant material. It is advisable to keep the documentation necessary to understand the content and context of the data. Also implementing a version control helps keep track of files, including text documents and analysis code. Plan for reproducibility before starting a research project by creating a plan and setting up the research space.
3. **Analyse & Collaborate:** Consider the software you use for analysis, and whether those applications automatically generate information about your data files and process steps. Describe your data as you capture it, organise your files, and make smart choices about where you store your data.
4. **Evaluate & Archive:** This step addresses questions related to where the datasets will be stored, how secure it is and how it will be accessed.
5. **Share & Disseminate:** Here the questions to be answered are what sharing policies need to be considered and which repository is best for the data.
6. **Access & reuse:** Ensuring the broad utility of your research data efforts for other researchers.

Within the process of the research cycle, the so-called FAIR principles (Findability, Accessibility, Interoperability, and Reuse) provide the basic guidelines for scientific data management.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, the CARE principles (Collective Benefit, Au-

---

<sup>5</sup> *Harvard University, Research Data Lifecycle by LMA Research Data Management Working Group* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 2023).

<sup>6</sup> For the complete explanation of each step please see “Harvard Biomedical Data Management,” accessed June 19, 2023, <https://datamanagement.hms.harvard.edu/>.

<sup>7</sup> See Mark D. Wilkinson et al., “The FAIR Guiding Principles for scientific data management and stewardship,” *Scientific Data* 3, no. 160018 (2016), accessed June 13, 2023. doi:10.1038/sdata.2016.18.

thority to Control, Responsibility, and Ethics) complement the FAIR principles. Although originally developed to protect Indigenous rights and data while at the same time opening their data for re-use, many of the aspects addressed in the CARE principles are also highly relevant to research on CBOW and vulnerable populations in general.<sup>8</sup>

So far, research on CBOW is very much in the hands of individual researchers and research teams from specific disciplines. Working cross-disciplinarily and cross-nationally is often a challenge, as different countries and different disciplines have unequal standards, traditions and cultural norms with respect to many of the steps of the research data cycle briefly described above. Furthermore, research on CBOW often applies a large variety of different data sources which adds to the specific challenges of data collection. Research thus often combines a variety of different sources, from administrative data to personal documents, photos and media reports. All these different sources not only have specific requirements with regards to analysis and interpretation, but also with regards to sensitivity, ownership, and documentation of metadata.

In the following, we will present experiences from our own research projects or research on CBOW in general related to the various steps of the research cycle. The steps are not always mutually exclusive. Thus, some may occur at several of the steps described.

## Plan & Design

CBOW belong to a so-called ‘hidden population’ within society, making it very difficult to gain access to them.<sup>9</sup> There are several reasons why CBOW belong to a ‘hidden population’: Often mothers want to conceal the biological origin of a child in order to avoid discrimination and stigmatisation: that of the child, but also their own.<sup>10</sup> Related to this, many children from past wars and conflicts know or knew nothing about their actual biological backgrounds for a long time. But even those who know about it often do not want to disclose it for various reasons, some of which overlap with those of the mothers, for example, fear of exclusion and stigmatisation.

---

<sup>8</sup> Stephanie Russo Carroll et al., *The CARE Principles for Indigenous Data Governance*, accessed June 13, 2023, doi:10.5334/dsj-2020-043.

<sup>9</sup> See Mochmann, “Children Born of War – A Decade of International and Interdisciplinary Research.”

<sup>10</sup> See Ingvill C. Mochmann, “Besatzungskinder, tyskerbarn, Amerasians: Krigsbarn i historisk og internasjonal kontekst,” *Internasjonal Politikk* 72, no. 4 (2014): 545.

Much of what is known about the lives of the children therefore comes from media reports, autobiographies, testimonies, personal files in archives, etc. Due to the increasing research interest in CBOW in the past few decades, the evidence base is steadily growing. In particular, the children of German soldiers and French, Dutch, Norwegian or Danish women born during the occupation 1940–45<sup>11</sup> and children fathered by occupation soldiers in post-war Germany and Austria have been subject to research projects<sup>12</sup> and are by now relatively well documented on the basis of qualitative and quantitative interviews, register data and evaluations of historical documents. To our knowledge, however, only one study thus far using the collected data and material has been made available for secondary analysis by the research teams. That study was part of a survey conducted in Norway, Germany and later expanded to Austria and Bosnia. Only the Norwegian file, however, is stored in an official capacity at a repository. This does not necessarily mean it is also findable and accessible according to FAIR principles, though, as the only requirement by the Norwegian ethical committee was that an anonymised file be stored on the local server after the end of the project. Attempts to coordinate and structure at least the basics of the respective individual studies in one study description, with the purpose of storing and making accessible questionnaires, methods report, publications and to the extent possible the anonymised data files in one place after completion, failed from the start. In retrospect, this process probably failed due to differences in disciplinary background and experience regarding the importance of research data management when it comes to data sharing, but perhaps also because of the different interests of the researchers and the different requirements of the ethical boards of the countries where the studies were conducted.<sup>13</sup> In the meantime, several studies have analysed the attitudes of researchers toward the publishing and sharing of their data,<sup>14</sup> and one of the

---

11 For an overview of the studies see Mochmann, *Children Born of War (CBOW): Genese und Konsolidierung*.

12 See Barbara Stelzl-Marx and Silke Satjukow, eds., *Besatzungskinder. Die Nachkommen alliierter Soldaten in Österreich und Deutschland* (Vienna/Cologne/Weimar: Böhlau, 2015) as well as Elke Kleinau and Ingvill C. Mochmann, eds. *Kinder des Zweiten Weltkrieges Stigmatisierung, Ausgrenzung, Bewältigungsstrategien* (Frankfurt a.M./New York: Campus, 2016) for an overview.

13 See Lukas Schretter, Kanako Kuramitsu and Nastassia Sersté, “Ethical challenges in conducting interviews with children born of war: reflections on navigating participants’ expectations,” in *Children Born of War. Past, Present and Future*, ed. Sabine Lee, Heide Glaesmer, and Barbara Stelzl-Marx (London/New York: Routledge, 2022), 59–74; Marie Kaiser, Sabine Lee and Heide Glaesmer, “Implementing research ethics in an interdisciplinary research and training network – the CHI-BOW project,” in *Children Born of War*, S. 75–86.

14 See Wolfgang Zenk-Möltgen et al., “Factors influencing the data sharing behavior of researchers in sociology and political science,” *Journal of Documentation* 74, no. 5 (2018), accessed June 13, 2023.

results shows that, even if there is now an academic incentive for sharing data, researchers are hesitant to invest time and money in proper data management, particularly if a project does not have earmarked funding for that purpose. However, this is imperative if data is to be shared. The sensitivity with which these ethical issues related to data and material needs to be considered – we will come back to this later. However, addressing what may be required at least to have the opportunity to share data or parts of data after ending a project needs to take place already in step one. For example, if letters of consent do not cite the option of using interviews for secondary analysis, the data from such a study cannot be shared, nor if research proposals submitted to ethical review boards do not include the storing and sharing option. It is also recommended that clear guidelines be documented regarding authorship and ownership of data, where to collect all material throughout, who should be able to access which sources during the project, where to deposit the data, accessibility after the project ends etc.

Research on Children Born of War comprises, as already mentioned, several different data sources, many of which are not necessarily intended for academic research. However, as argued above, it is often the combination of several data sources that opens at least a slight opportunity for gaining an acceptable overall knowledge base from which we can draw conclusions. And to the extent possible, all these relevant data sources need to be considered when planning and designing the study, as they may have totally different requirements regarding collection, sampling, analysis, storage, software needs, sharing, ethics etc. For, example, research on CBOW in present conflict zones such as Ukraine or Cameroon has challenges of its own, but using older administrative data, photographs etc. also requires proper reflection on data management prior to collection.

## Collect & Create

### Public, administrative, digital, and personal data and documentation

As already mentioned, many sources used in the research on Children Born of War are based on a primarily non-scientific origin, i. e., the data was not originally collected for research purposes. This applies, for example, to administrative data, in-

---

doi:10.1108/JD-09–2017–0126; Louise Corti et al., *Managing and Sharing Research Data A Guide to Good Practice* (Los Angeles/London: Sage, 2019), 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, accessed June 13, 2023, [https://www.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/61019\\_Corti\\_Managing\\_and\\_sharing\\_research\\_data.pdf](https://www.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/61019_Corti_Managing_and_sharing_research_data.pdf).

cluding so-called process-generated data.<sup>15</sup> This includes, among other things, all data collected by the state, such as information on health, schooling, change of residence, dates of birth. But it could also be files or documents, such as birth certificates, baptismal certificates, church registers, marriage certificates of parents, files of the children and youth welfare or even court records and government decisions. The advantage of such data is that they are not reactive, i. e., as a respondent you do not influence the data collection, which minimises the manipulation of the results by factors such as social desirability. Nevertheless, process-generated data by no means give a complete picture, because in the end it is important to take into account which data was/is needed from an official point of view or was/is of interest and therefore was/is collected and which was/is not. Also, there are historians who claim that files generally have greater objectivity than, for example, biographical material. However, the subjective factor should not be underestimated there either. Youth welfare workers, for example, keep files on children who are under guardianship, and the reports they write must be carefully analysed in terms of how a ‘normal or deviating family’ and/or a ‘normal or deviating’ childhood are constructed in the narrative.<sup>16</sup>

Many research projects have used such administrative and process-generated data. For example, Borgersrud and Simonsen/Ericsson have been able to analyse the Norwegian government’s treatment of Norwegian so-called ‘krigsbarn’ through a wealth of historical documents, including minutes of parliamentary sessions.<sup>17</sup> Ellingsen, on the other hand, used official register data to analyse the life course of the Norwegian krigsbarn: their health history, their income and their schooling.<sup>18</sup> Olsen was one of the first to examine the experiences of Norwegian ‘krigsbarn’ and their parents on the basis of 8,000 personal records stored in the Norwegian *Riksarkiv*.<sup>19</sup> Norway is an exception compared to many other countries, as a lot of data and documents as described above have been collected here,

---

15 See Nina Baur, “Measurement and Selection Bias in Longitudinal Data. A Framework for Re-Opening the Discussion on Data Quality and Generalizability of Social Bookkeeping Data,” in *Historical Social Research* 34, no. 3 (2009): 9–50.

16 See Eva Gehltoholt and Sabine Hering, *Das verwaarloste Mädchen. Diagnostik und Fürsorge in der Jugendhilfe zwischen Kriegsende und Reform (1945–1965)* (Opladen: Barbara Budrich, 2006).

17 See Lars Borgersrud, *Staten og krigsbarna: En historisk undersøkelse av statsmyndighetenes behandling av krigsbarna i de første etterkrigsårene* (Oslo: Universitetet i Oslo, 2004) and Eva Simonsen and Kjersti Ericsson, *Krigsbarn i fredstid-sosialpolitiske og profesjonelle føringer i synet på tysknorske krigsbarn 1945–1947* (Oslo: Universitetet i Oslo Institutt for kriminologi og rettsossologi, 2005).

18 See Dag Ellingsen, *Krigsbarns levekår. En registerbasert undersøkelse* (Oslo/Konsvinger: Statistisk sentralbyrå, 2004).

19 See Kåre Olsen, *Krigens barn. De norske krigsbarna og deres mødre* (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1998).

which makes analyses possible. Even in Germany, there are files on maintenance payments from Wehrmacht soldiers to Norwegian mothers.<sup>20</sup> But similar databases that can be analysed also exist in other countries, such as Denmark and Germany, where documents on placements of children in children's homes, on adoptions, etc. are accessible or could be made accessible through archives.<sup>21</sup> Organisations such as the UN and the World Health Organisation, Médecins Sans Frontières, Red Cross, Amnesty International, UNICEF, Save the Children, etc. also collect data and write documents that can be of great importance for research on CBOW, especially concerning contemporary conflicts.<sup>22</sup> Most of the above-mentioned data were primarily generated for official purposes. The fact that official sources may be subject to both selection biases as well as may be culturally and socially constructed should be kept in mind when considering the objectivity of data analysis.

At the individual level, there exists a wealth of information that has been and can be used as sources for research on CBOW. Personal records such as diaries, letters and photographs,<sup>23</sup> often found in the estate of the mother, father (or more often stepfather) or adoptive parents, have proved particularly important. Many CBOW have found photos of their mothers with a man in uniform by chance and have then traced back their biological origins. Or they have found their birth

---

20 See Simone Tibelius, *“Grenzverkehr”. Eine transnationale Rechts- und Sozialgeschichte von Vaterschaft und Unterhalt (1940–1980)* (Mannheim: Röhrig Universitätsverlag, 2016); Simone Tibelius, “‘An die Kindesmutter kann ich mich beim besten Willen nicht erinnern.’ – Vaterschaftsanerkennung und Unterhaltszahlung als Ressource für Wehrmachts- und Besatzungskinder,” in *Kinder des Zweiten Weltkrieges – Stigmatisierung, Ausgrenzung, Bewältigungsstrategien*, ed. Elke Kleinau, and Ingvill C. Mochmann (Frankfurt a.M./New York: Campus, 2016), 93–114.

21 See, for example Sabine Lee, ed., “A Forgotten Legacy of the Second World War: GI children in post-war Britain and Germany,” *Contemporary European History* 20, no. 2 (2011), 157–181; Rainer Gries, “‘Les Enfants d’Etat – Kinder des Staates’: Retour en France? Das ‚Repatriierungsprogramm‘ für die Nachkommen französischer Besatzungssoldaten in Deutschland nach 1945,” in *Kinder des Zweiten Weltkrieges. Stigmatisierung, Ausgrenzung, Bewältigungsstrategien*, ed. Elke Kleinau and Ingvill C. Mochmann (Frankfurt a.M./New York: Campus, 2016), 49–71.

22 See Ingvill C. Mochmann, Sabine Lee and Barbara Stelzl-Marx. “The Children of the Occupations Born During the Second World War and Beyond – An Overview.” *Historical Social Research* 34, no. 3 (2009): 274.

23 As for photographs, they have only been used as illustrative material in previous research on CBOW. The instruments for analysing individual as well as larger collections of photographs, which are now well developed in the educational and social sciences, have not been used so far. See Ulrike Mietzner and Ulrike Pilarczyk, *Das reflektierte Bild. Die seriell-ikonographische Fotoanalyse in den Erziehungs- und Sozialwissenschaften* (Bad Heilbrunn: Klinkhardt, 2005); Roswitha Breckner, *Sozialtheorie des Bildes. Zur interpretativen Analyse von Bildern und Fotografien* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2010).



certificates and discovered that they originally had a different name or were born in a completely different place than assumed. Many, as mentioned above, have recorded their experiences in autobiographies or autobiographical sketches and have published them. These non-scientific collections of life experiences and personal documents provide researchers with an equally important basis for analysing the life courses of CBOW alongside objective data. Some of these sources and their use will be presented further below.

There are several challenges with both process-generated official data and documents and individually-generated data that need to be taken into account when using them. For example, one can never know which data and documents have actually been kept, stored, or found and are thus available for further secondary analysis. There are also other concerns: In CBOW research in particular, a distinction is made between white spots and blind spots.<sup>24</sup> White spots are conflicts where it is known that CBOW exists but it is very difficult to obtain information, such as concerning ‘Wehrmacht children’ in Greece<sup>25</sup> and Belgium<sup>26</sup> or CBOW in the Bosnia-Herzegovina war, or in ongoing conflicts such as in Ukraine and Syria.<sup>27</sup> Accordingly, blind spots are (post)conflicts about which it is not yet known whether CBOW exist or within which the topic has not yet received any public or research attention. In addition to the limitation placed by an absence of or ignorance about the existence of relevant data, documents and statistics, there is also a danger that documents of this kind have been or will be manipulated.<sup>28</sup> Researchers must therefore pay particular attention to who the author of a source is and whether he/she was working with a copy or the original. However, this often cannot be verified, which is why caution is required in this regard and all available data must be considered and assessed together. Only in this way can a certain reliability of the results be guaranteed.<sup>29</sup>

---

24 See Ingvill C. Mochmann und Dorien DeTombe, “The COMPRAM Methodology and Complex Societal Problems – an Analysis of the Case of Children Born of War,” *Organizacija* 43, no. 3 (2010): 117.

25 See Kerstin Muth, *Die Wehrmacht in Griechenland – und ihre Kinder* (Leipzig: Eudora-Verlag, 2008).

26 See Gerlinda Swillen, *De Wieg van WO II: Oorlogskinderen op de as Brussel-Berlijn* (Brussel: VUB Press, 2016).

27 See Elke Kleinau and Ingvill C. Mochmann, eds. *Kinder des Zweiten Weltkrieges Stigmatisierung, Ausgrenzung, Bewältigungsstrategien* (Frankfurt a.M./New York: Campus, 2016), 302; Mochmann, “Children Born of War – A Decade of International and Interdisciplinary Research,” 325.

28 See John Scott, “Documents, types of,” in *The Sage Encyclopaedia of Social Science Research Methods*, ed. Michael S. Lewis-Beck, Alan Bryman, and Tim Futing Liao (London: Sage, 2004), 281–284.

29 Mochmann, “Children Born of War – A Decade of International and Interdisciplinary Research,” 328–329.



The media (talk shows on radio and television, newspapers, interviews), nowadays also social media, and films of all kinds (feature films, documentaries, etc.) also play an important role in researching CBOW. However, since articles, films, recordings etc. are made by people who are themselves part of the system of a given time, it should be considered that these are also people who themselves experienced the respective conflict as contemporary witnesses. It is therefore important to consider the context in which a piece of media came into creation.<sup>30</sup>

With regard to all of the different data sources that can be used for CBOW research, the whole research data lifecycle should be kept in mind from step one. Also, it is likely that one may encounter sources along the way that have not so far been considered and thus need to be incorporated into the documentation and storage system setup. Keeping all collected metadata in a structured way, with meaningful file names and using dates and or versions where applicable throughout the project, saves a lot of time and nerves and minimises the risk of mixing up data, which may limit and in the worst case ruin a source's interpretability. Finally, when using any of the various data described in this section, one should not just be aware of their limitations with regard to completeness and reliability, but should also keep in mind that depending on the research question(s), the data to be used in the analysis may need to be sampled according to methodological procedures. This implies that when using, for example, court files or newspaper articles, one should provide a proper description in the methodology section of how this material was searched for and on what basis certain data were selected for the analysis (and not others). This must be done for each of the data sources.

### Research-based CBOW data

An example of data collection in a qualitative research project is the *'Children of the Occupation' in Post-War Germany – Experiences of Education and Difference* carried out by Elke Kleinau and funded by the *German Research Foundation* from 2015 to 2018 (DFG 279094103).<sup>31</sup> In this project, Kleinau and her research as-

---

<sup>30</sup> The analysis of media (fictional or non-fictional) also requires the use of methods from media studies, which have hardly been used in research on CBOW. See Annette Brauerhoch, "Toxi'. Zur filmischen Repräsentation schwarzer Kinder in Nachkriegsdeutschland," in *Besatzungskinder. Die Nachkommen alliierter Soldaten in Österreich und Deutschland*, ed. Barbara Stelzl-Marx and Silke Satjukow (Vienna/Cologne/Weimar: Böhlau, 2015), 321–352.

<sup>31</sup> See Elke Kleinau. "Besatzungskinder in Nachkriegsdeutschland: Bildungs- und Differenzenerfahrungen," accessed June 17, 2023, <https://gepris.dfg.de/gepris/projekt/279094103?context=projekt&task=showDetail&id=279094103&>.

sociate Rafaela Schmid conducted and analysed biographical-narrative interviews with women and men from all four occupation zones. At the beginning of the project, they followed the principle of qualitative-biographical research to find interview subjects who would be willing to talk about their life stories for the first time in a scientific context. The assumption was that through regular repetitive narration, a narrative focused on topoi or reduced narration would solidify, which would hold little new knowledge for the research. However, already when contacting those interested in being interviewed, it turned out that several of the former ‘occupation children’ had already participated in other studies, and that for some of them various autobiographical text types were available, including autobiographical fragments in scientific and popular scholarly anthologies, interviews in magazines, radio or television contributions.<sup>32</sup> Due to the great media interest, the perspective of these media-present ‘occupation children’ shaped public perception of life as an ‘occupation child’ after 1945. Kleinau and Schmid decided to interview these people too, who seemed to present a narrative identity rehearsed through regular repetition.

Through a call for participation in the study distributed via the press office of the University of Cologne, the newsletter of the international and interdisciplinary network Children Born of War,<sup>33</sup> word-of-mouth and an interview of the project leader in a newspaper,<sup>34</sup> access was sought to interview subjects. Twenty narrative interviews were conducted lasting several hours each with members of the 1945–1955 cohort. Access to the field was difficult at first because, on the one hand, a number of people responded to the call who had experienced the occupation period as children or adolescents, but who, in the sense of the definition, did not belong to the ‘occupation children’, but to children born before or during the first years of World War II. This means that the term ‘occupation child’, which was used as a swear word in post-war times, was not (or no longer) familiar to the responding people in its original meaning. On the other hand, the widespread discrimination narrative in research and the media discouraged some of those affected from giving an interview. They were of the opinion that they could not contribute anything ‘spectacular’ to the topic. It took several attempts to make it

---

32 See Elke Kleinau “Besatzungskinder in Nachkriegsdeutschland: Bildungs- und Differenzenerfahrungen.” *Zeitschrift für Pädagogik* 62, no. 2 (2016): 224–240.

33 INIRC-CBOW, International Network for Interdisciplinary research on Children Born of War, accessed June 19, 2023, <http://www.childrenbornofwar.org/>.

34 The Main-Echo was chosen because there were a lot of US soldiers stationed in the Rhine-Main area. Through this newspaper, which has a very wide regional circulation, we were able to recruit interview partners who had not yet come into contact with networks of affected people.

clear that the research team was also interested in life stories that did not correspond to this popular narrative.

An example of a quantitative study on CBOW is *A Comparative study on Danish, Norwegian and Dutch war children (1997–2004)*. This study deserves special attention, as it is a reference study in many respects.<sup>35</sup> Firstly, it was the first study ever to attempt to use a standardised questionnaire to investigate the life courses of CBOW in several countries. Secondly, a special type of method of data collection was used, in which those affected – so-called lay researchers – were involved in the research process. This participatory approach to data collection is often used with so-called hidden populations, such as those of the CBOW.<sup>36</sup> There may be several reasons for this: If only little information is available about the population group being researched, one of the main difficulties is to know what questions and topics are of relevance to that group. This issue was of great importance in this first study:<sup>37</sup> Since towards the end of the 1990s there was hardly any information on these children so that the now adult CBOW were asked for help in developing the questionnaire. In Norway this process was facilitated by the fact that there was an association for Norwegian CBOW.

The *Norges Krigsbarnforbund* (NKBF), an association for Norwegian ‘krigsbarn’, provided access to the population group under investigation. In addition to the board of this association, many of its members were also involved in the different phases of the development of the questionnaire, so as to present the topics that seemed to them to be central to their lives. In this way, it was possible to develop a questionnaire whose contents reflect the reality of life, at least of those who participated in the development of the questionnaire. Afterwards, the questionnaire was translated, adapted in some places and distributed by the head of the *Danish War Children’s Association* (*Dansk Krigsbørnforening*). Finally, the

---

35 See Ingvill C. Mochmann and Stein Ugelvik Larsen, “Kriegskinder in Europa,” *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 18–19 (2005): 34–38, accessed June 18, 2023, <https://www.bpb.de/shop/zeitschriften/apuz/29076/kriegskinder-in-europa/>; Ingvill C. Mochmann and Stein Ugelvik Larsen, “Children born of War: The Life Course of Children fathered by German Soldiers in Norway and Denmark during WWII – Some empirical results,” *Historical Social Research* 33, no. 1 (2005): 347–363; Mochmann, “Children Born of War – A Decade of International and Interdisciplinary Research.”

36 cf. Douglas D. Heckathron, “Respondent-Driven Sampling II: Deriving Valid Population Estimates from Chain-Referral Samples of Hidden Populations,” *Social Problems* 49, no.1 (2002): 11–34.

37 See Ingvill C. Mochmann, “Children Born of War: expanding the evidence base on hidden populations,” (paper presented at the Workshop *Supporting human rights organisations to deliver insights from data*, University of Essex, Colchester (United Kingdom), October 28–29, 2015), accessed May 05, 2019, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/299456597\\_Children\\_Born\\_of\\_War\\_expanding\\_the\\_evidence\\_base\\_on\\_hidden\\_populations](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/299456597_Children_Born_of_War_expanding_the_evidence_base_on_hidden_populations); Mochmann, “Children Born of War – A Decade of International and Interdisciplinary Research,” 330–331.

Dutch historian Monika Diederichs, who is herself a ‘child of the Wehrmacht’, translated the questionnaire into Dutch and distributed it among Dutch CBOW. This was enormously important for data collection, as many members would not have responded to a public call and would only have participated under the protection of anonymity guaranteed by the association or trusted persons in the association. In retrospect it is clear that neither of the steps recommended above were followed systematically when the study was initiated in the mid 1990s, which highly limits both the analysis as well as the re-use of the data; there is no proper methodological report on sampling, field work, recruitment of respondents. The questionnaire leaves many open questions, which have been coded differently in the codebook, partly with unambiguous wording. There are no versions of the various data files. Although the data file has been officially ‘anonymised’, the combination of variables still in the file makes it possible to identify respondents if you know what you are searching for. The comparative aspect of the study complicates this – the Danish data were added to the same codebook but saved in different SPSS files. The questionnaires in Denmark and the Netherlands had been slightly adapted by the respective principle investigators, but this was not documented. Thus, when coding the Danish questionnaires, new variables had to be added in the data file and codebook. As the Dutch data were coded at a much later point in 2017 by a student assistant working at a research data infrastructure, the data file and documentation in the Dutch case has been prepared – to the extent possible – according to standards of research data management. These are only some of the issues that limit the re-use of the study; further aspects of this problematic situation will be addressed in the respective sections below.

In the next section, details on the interview and analysis process of the qualitative research project *‘Children of the Occupation’ in Post-War Germany – Experiences of Education and Difference* and a quantitative survey *A Comparative study on Danish, Norwegian and Dutch war children (1997–2004)* is presented and discussed.

## Analyse & Collaborate

### Conducting and analysing biographical-narrative interviews

Beyond the challenge Kleinau and Schmid faced in accessing possible interview partners, biographical-narrative interviews have particular challenges regarding the data analysis process. The methodological starting point of the project was the assumption that every person who tells his or her life story would strive to present a story that makes sense. The narrative should thus explain how one has be-

come who one is. Self-reflection means “constantly bringing what has already been experienced and witnessed into line with the drafts and ideas that the individual makes of his or her life”.<sup>38</sup> With a chronological analysis of the available autobiographical documents and a view to the respective target group, it is possible to work out which *segments* of a biographical narrative are addressed in each case in order to produce an identity construction that is appropriate to the situation and coherent for the interviewee.<sup>39</sup> Identity in this context is to be understood as an ongoing, lifelong process, “[...] through which the person in question seeks to assure himself/herself of the continuity and coherence of his/her life practice”.<sup>40</sup> Identities thus emerge in the act of biographical narration, through the retrospective description of past experiences and experiences that take place from a specific, present state of consciousness. In each retrospective, evaluations and meanings shift, and different contexts of life and effects are constructed than in the immediate experience itself. In the course of their lives, people reconsider biographically decisive events and, if necessary, reinterpret their existing memories on the basis of current experiences. Triggers for a subsequent processing of memories can also be current discourses that are effective within a society or a social group.<sup>41</sup> Accordingly, biographically controlled self-reflection means repeatedly reconciling what has already been experienced with the meaning that the individual gives to his or her life.<sup>42</sup> Accordingly, we are dealing with the constant rewriting of each individual’s own life story.

The narrated life story represents – to exaggerate – a snapshot of the interviewee’s subjective construction of meaning. But interpretation by the researcher is also based not only on his/her scientific theoretical-methodological approach, but also on his/her subjective life experience. In addition to constant self-reflection, the instrument of inter-communicative validation should therefore also be used as

---

38 Theodor Schulze, “Lebenslauf und Lebensgeschichte,” in *Aus Geschichten lernen. Zur Einübung pädagogischen Verstehens*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, ed. Dieter Baacke and Theodor Schulze (Weinheim/Munich: Juventa, 1993), 217.

39 See Elke Kleinau and Rafaela Schmid, “‘Ich bin nicht ehemaliges Besatzungskind, sondern ich bin es immer noch’. Brüche und Inkonsistenzen in Erzählungen von ‘professionellen’ Zeitzeug\_innen,” *BIOS, Zeitschrift für Oral-History Biographieforschung und Lebenslaufanalysen* 29, no. 2 (2016): 241–252, accessed June 19, 2023. doi:10.3224/bios.v29i2.07.

40 Cited in Hans-Christoph Koller, *Bildung anders denken. Einführung in die Theorie transformatorischer Bildungsprozesse* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2012), 35.

41 See Ulrike Jureit, “Authentische und konstruierte Erinnerung. Methodische Überlegungen zu biographischen Sinnkonstruktionen,” *Werkstatt Geschichte* 18, no. 6 (1997): 98.

42 See Lutz Niethammer, *Ego-Histoire? Und andere Erinnerungs-Versuche* (Vienna/Cologne/Weimar: Böhlau, 2002), 108.

a corrective to one's own subjective interpretation of the interviews, for example in a regularly meeting research workshop with (post-)doctoral students.

The interaction of researchers with affected persons requires *mutual* respect. Interview partners do not have to conform to the researchers' expectations when telling their life stories; on the contrary, qualitative interview studies work according to the principle of maximum contrast in order to capture the entire range of human experiences as far as possible. The task of qualitative biographical researchers is to allow themselves to be permanently challenged by their interviewees, to discard existing presuppositions and to allow for new trains of thought and possibilities of interpretation. Conversely, this also means that the researcher's interpretations do not have to coincide with the expectations or self-interpretations of the interviewees. Some existing studies on CBOW follow an interpretive scheme that is more indebted to an emotional recollection and an inscription of life stories in public memory than to methodologically sound research.<sup>43</sup> However, despite all the empathy that can arise in interview situations, a distance must remain between researchers, whose task it is to place the subjective forms of processing life-historical experiences in the political, social, educational, cultural and gender-historical context, and those who have been affected, whose experience must be measured and analysed.<sup>44</sup> Dorothee Wierling, one of the most distinguished oral history researchers in Germany, even speaks of the fact that distance must be explicitly created in the interpretation process, since "strangeness [...] can awaken motivation for understanding" and "analytical curiosity".<sup>45</sup> Consequently, premature understanding based on empathy is not a criterion of quality in research. So as not to be misunderstood: The subjective memory of those affected is undoubtedly an important dimension in the process of gaining historical knowledge, yet interviewees do not tell 'how it really was', but rather convey a very personal way of processing what they experienced. As long as the people concerned and their life stories are treated with respect, this distance does not collide with ethical considerations in dealing with vulnerable people. In this way, Kleinau distinguishes herself from approaches that generally subordinate their research outputs with the "well-being" of their "research participants".<sup>46</sup> What constitutes this

---

43 See Flavia Guerrini, *Vom Feind ein Kind. Nachkommen alliierter Soldaten erzählen* (Vienna/Berlin: Mandelbaum, 2022).

44 See Alf Lütke, "Alltagsgeschichte, Mikro-Historie, historische Anthropologie," in *Geschichte. Ein Grundkurs*, ed. Hans-Jürgen Goertz (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1998), 631, 628–649.

45 Dorothee Wierling, "Oral History," in *Neue Themen und Methoden in der Geschichtswissenschaft*, ed. Michael Maurer (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2003), 30.

46 Heide Glaesmer, Barbara Stelzl-Marx and Sabine Lee, eds., Introduction to *Children Born of War: Past, Present and Future* (London/New York: Routledge, 2022), 4.

well-being remains strangely undefined here and would also have to be defined on a case-by-case basis.

Every interview started with obtaining written informed consent. The interviewee must be informed about the aim of the research project, the procedure of the interview and the further handling of his/her data. He/she may stop the interview at any time, refuse further interview appointments and withdraw his/her consent to the recording and transcription of the interview without suffering any repercussion. He/she must be assured of anonymity and his/her narrative may only be quoted in excerpts in scientific publications to ensure that he/she is not identifiable to third parties by means of the narrated sequence of events. If the anonymised interview is to be made available to other researchers,<sup>47</sup> the explicit consent of the interviewee must be obtained. After the interview has been completed, the researcher should make him- or herself available for questions, feedback, etc., not only because in this way important information can still be obtained for the project, but also in order to be able to track any psychological after-effects. In the case of highly vulnerable groups such as children who have been exposed to sexualised violence<sup>48</sup> or unaccompanied refugee minors, cooperation with a psychological crisis intervention team is recommended.

Qualitative biographical research faces the problem of principally unfinished communication, which is countered with the concepts of *theoretical sampling* and *theoretical-empirical saturation*.<sup>49</sup> If no fundamentally new points of view emerge after a certain number of interviews, the search for further interview partners can be stopped. This has a “certain degree of plausibility”,<sup>50</sup> but may fall short for two reasons: On the one hand, there may still be interviewees who have new experiences to share; on the other hand, it may be that certain aspects of the topic have not yet been sufficiently thought through, have not been asked about, or that corresponding hints in the interview were not recognised as such. Such pos-

---

47 See “Empfehlungen zur Archivierung, Bereitstellung und Nachnutzung von Forschungsdaten im Kontext erziehungs- und bildungswissenschaftlicher sowie fachdidaktischer Forschung,” accessed June 18, 2023, [https://www.dfg.de/download/pdf/foerderung/grundlagen\\_dfg\\_foerderung/forschungsdaten/stellungnahme\\_forschungsdatenmanagement.pdf](https://www.dfg.de/download/pdf/foerderung/grundlagen_dfg_foerderung/forschungsdaten/stellungnahme_forschungsdatenmanagement.pdf).

48 Sabine Andresen, “Sexual Violence Against Children and Transitional Justice: Bearing Witness and Preserving Testimony About Injustice in Childhood,” *International Journal on Child Maltreatment* 4 (2021): 193–207.

49 See Anselm L. Strauss, *Grundlagen qualitativer Sozialforschung. Datenanalyse und Theoriebildung in der empirischen soziologischen Forschung* (Munich: Fink, 1991).

50 Manuela du Bois-Reymond, “Die Oral-History-Methode. Königsweg oder Schleichpfad der historischen Kinderforschung?” in *Kinder. Kindheit. Lebensgeschichte. Ein Handbuch*, ed. Imbke Behnken and Jürgen Zinnecker (Seelze: Velbert, 2002), 223.



sible misconceptions can also be traced through discussions in a research workshop.

Research that follows a qualitative research paradigm is often criticised for not producing representative results. This is true, but representativeness is not a goal of qualitative research. The aim is to explore little- or non-researched phenomena and to derive theoretical insights from them – as opposed to testing hypotheses. In the case of CBOW, however, even quantitatively oriented research cannot provide representative data, since CBOW – as already mentioned several times – belong to a hidden population. A representative sample can only be drawn from a group whose exact size is known. In the case of the German ‘occupation children’, however, there are simply no reliable figures for West Germany and none for East Germany. Quantitative studies therefore usually draw their data from the networks of those affected. However, the members of these networks do not present a representative cross-section of all ‘occupation children’, but a highly biased group whose members have mostly seen their biological origin as a problem in advance. In this respect, conclusions that seem to suggest that ‘occupation children’ suffer from post-traumatic stress disorders significantly more often than the general German population are misleading. Statements can only be made about a very small and very specific group of organised ‘occupation children’.

Nevertheless, it should be emphasised that it is hardly possible to establish representativeness among this population group and that classic quantitative-empirical evaluations are therefore not very useful. Even though there are increasing attempts to compare CBOW with other war-affected groups of children as control groups, comparisons based on statistical test procedures as usually carried out in psychology and empirical social research are not possible on the basis of the data available so far. Since it is unlikely that it will be possible at all to record a hidden population group like CBOW in a representative way, as the basic population is not known, a methodical approach that analyses different data sources on the basis of their respective methodical rules and finally evaluates them as a whole seems to be the most sensible and objective procedure to record the living conditions and developments of CBOW. It is true that there are now more advanced methods for extrapolating hidden populations, such as the study on female raped victims in the Democratic Republic of Congo by Johnston et. al.<sup>51</sup> However, the additional problem with CBOW is that they themselves often do not know anything about

---

51 See Lisa G. Johnston et al., “Measuring a hidden population: A novel technique to estimate the population size of women with sexual violence-related pregnancies in South Kivu Province, Democratic Republic of Congo,” in *Journal of Epidemiology and Global Health* 7, no. 1 (March 2017): 45–53.



their biological origins or have been given false information about their origins. It is also unknown how many CBOW were or will be murdered at birth etc.

The ‘disregard’ for qualitative research is often based on a lack of knowledge about how many pages of text a biographical narrative interview can produce. A two- to three-hour interview can generate up to 70 pages of text, depending on the pace of speech and the interviewee’s narrative skills. The time required to prepare interview transcripts is often underestimated in research applications. Before transcribing, rules have to be laid down as to how the spoken word is to be put down on paper, since it is not only important for the analysis of *what is said*, but also *how* it is said. The emotions with which certain events are permanently linked can be seen, for example, in the pitch of the voice, in stagnations in the flow of speech, in word-finding problems, etc. The transcription of the spoken word must be done according to a set of rules. For recording first impressions and the atmosphere during the interview, it is advisable to keep a research diary.

For the interviewing process, Kleinau and Schmid decided to use the method of the sociological biographical researcher Gabriele Rosenthal.<sup>52</sup> The biographical narrative interview differs from the guided interview in its open-ended character. According to Rosenthal, it ideally goes through three phases: It begins with the openly posed initial question “Would you please tell me your life story?” During the following narrative phase, the interviewer has to act with restraint in order to give the interviewee the opportunity to unfold the constructed meaning of his or her individual life in the narrative. In biography research, there is deliberate talk of restraint and not of neutrality, since it can be assumed that researchers “in qualitative research are fundamentally actors in a social space that is constituted by their presence and that determines the behaviour of all participants”.<sup>53</sup> Restrained (non-)verbal reactions can also have an influence on the course of the interview. As a methodological consequence, the narrative text must not be understood as a monologue, but the dialogical course of the conversation must also be evaluated and interpreted. The most impressive demonstration of this procedure, how the past emerges in joint conversation, was made by the research group around Harald Welzer in their study “Grandpa was not a Nazi [‘Opa war kein Nazi’]”.<sup>54</sup> In a second phase, the “phase of narrative enquiries”<sup>55</sup>, things

---

52 See Gabriele Rosenthal, *Erlebte und erzählte Lebensgeschichte. Gestalt und Struktur biographischer Selbstbeschreibungen* (Frankfurt a.M.: Campus, 1995).

53 Olaf Jensen and Harald Welzer, “One Thing Leads to Another or: Self-Reflexivity as Method,” *Forum Qualitative Social Research* 4, no. 2 (2003), accessed June 18, 2023, [www.qualitative-research.net/fqs-texte/2-03/2-03jensenwelzer-d.htm](http://www.qualitative-research.net/fqs-texte/2-03/2-03jensenwelzer-d.htm).

54 See Harald Welzer, Sabine Moller and Karoline Tschuggnall, “Opa war kein Nazi”. *Nationalsozialismus und Holocaust im Familiengedächtnis* (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer TB, 2002).

that are not understood or recognisable gaps in the narrative are addressed – again in an open form. Only in the third phase, which takes place at a later time, after listening to the recording again or reading the transcript, can direct follow-up questions be asked. It has proven to be extremely helpful to conduct the interviews in pairs. One person concentrates on conducting the interview and the other on taking notes. This approach, based on ethnographic field research methods, was a suitable corrective for critical reflection on one's own interview conduct and the course of the interview.

Other researchers have already worked with interviews on 'occupation children' in Germany,<sup>56</sup> but the potential that lies in collected life stories is far from exhausted. Either individual text passages are used as a dramatising introduction to a topic or concise individual statements are used to prove one thesis or another. Such an approach, which tears text passages out of their narrative contexts, does not correspond to the *state of the art*. Individual statements that seem to confirm one's own thesis(es) can almost always be taken from an interview, but are they also true in the context of the told life story? In qualitative biographical research, life stories are therefore first analysed as a whole, in the form of *case studies*, before they are compared with each other and cautious conclusions of 'medium range' are drawn.

Compared to written, published forms of memoirs, interviews have some advantages. Published autobiographical testimonies present a – largely – coherent "final version corrected several times without scribbles and corrections".<sup>57</sup> The questioning of these self-interpretations is thus clearly limited. A comparison of published memoirs with the interview material proved to be extremely fruitful. In the interview, the "constraints of narrative" described by Rosenthal set in.<sup>58</sup> The interviewees tell considerably more than they initially intend. Active listening techniques promote the flow of narration and the "slowly growing relationship of trust" between interviewee and interviewer evokes further memories.<sup>59</sup> Often, in-

---

55 Harald Welzer, "Von Fehlern und Daten: zur Rolle des Forschers im interpretativen Paradigma," *Psychologie und Gesellschaftskritik* 14, no. 2–3 (1990): 160, accessed June 18, 2023, <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-266157>.

56 See Silke Satjukow and Reiner Gries, "*Bankerte!*" *Besatzungskinder in Deutschland nach 1945*, (Frankfurt a.M./New York, Campus, 2015).

57 Ingrid Miethe, "Biographieforschung und Ego-Dokumente," *BIOS. Zeitschrift für Biographieforschung, Oral History und Lebensverlaufsanalysen* 29, no. 2 (2016): 303.

58 Gabriele Rosenthal, "Biographisch-narrative Gesprächsführung: zu den Bedingungen heilsamen Erzählens im Forschungs- und Beratungskontext," *Psychotherapie und Sozialwissenschaft* 4, no. 3 (2002): 9, accessed July 21, 2020, <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-56763>.

59 Rosenthal, "Biographisch-narrative Gesprächsführung".

interviewees do not succeed in maintaining the coherent life story they want to tell.<sup>60</sup> In a narrative about a supposedly ‘happy relationship’, for example, the interviewee’s voice breaks because the memory of racist and sexist insults by her partner’s brother comes up.<sup>61</sup> It is important that, following the principles of biographical narrative interviewing, no one should be released from the interview situation in such a mood. The interview must be concluded in such a way that the interviewees can temporally ‘talk themselves out’ of the situation that is obviously stressing them. This means that in the last third of the interview, the interviewee is directed toward positively connoted or less stressful passages of his or her narrative, e.g. the good relationship with one’s own children, professional successes, reliable friendships, etc.

In many of the interviews Kleinau and Schmid conducted, breaks, inconsistencies and changes over time became apparent, which were analysed following Theodor Schulze’s *Reflexive Hermeneutics* and the associated topos analysis.<sup>62</sup> So-called “key scenes”<sup>63</sup> or also “critical events”,<sup>64</sup> which indicate biographical decision-making and/or upheaval situations, are of particular importance. In the German research context there are other tried and extensively proven evaluation methods, such as *Objective Hermeneutics* according to Ulrich Oevermann,<sup>65</sup> the *Depth Hermeneutic Method* according to Leithäuser and Volmerg,<sup>66</sup> *Hermeneutic Dialogue Ana-*

---

60 See Elke Kleinau, “Autobiographical writing, autobiographical narration: memoirs of a ‘child of the occupation’ in the mirror of two genres,” *Paedagogica Historica. International Journal of the History of Education* 58, no. 3 (2021): 378–389, accessed June 18, 2023, doi:10.1080/00309230.2021.1941144.

61 See Elke Kleinau, “Einschluss- und Ausschlussprozesse – Schwarze deutsche ‘Besatzungskinder’ in der deutschen Nachkriegsgesellschaft,” in *Inklusion als Chiffre? Bildungshistorische Analyse und Reflexionen*, ed. Michaela Vogt, Mai-Anh Boger and Patrick Bühler (Bad Heilbrunn: Klinkhardt, 2021), 218–227.

62 See Theodor Schulze, “Zur Interpretation autobiographischer Texte in der erziehungswissenschaftlichen Biographieforschung,” in *Handbuch Qualitative Forschungsmethoden in der Erziehungswissenschaft*, ed. Barbara Friebertshäuser, Antje Langer, and Annedore Prengel, 4<sup>th</sup> edition (Weinheim/Basel: Beltz Juventa, 2013), 413–436.

63 Charlotte Heinritz, *Auf ungebahnten Wegen. Frauenautobiographien um 1900* (Königstein/Taunus: Helmer, 2000), 24.

64 Theodor Schulze, “Lebenslauf und Lebensgeschichte,” 208–209.

65 See Ulrich Oevermann et al., “Die Methodologie einer ‘objektiven Hermeneutik’ und ihre allgemeine forschungslogische Bedeutung in den Sozialwissenschaften,” in *Interpretative Verfahren in den Sozial- und Textwissenschaften*, ed. Hans-Georg Soeffner (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1979), 352–434.

66 See Thomas Leithäuser and Birgit Volmerg, *Anleitung zur empirischen Hermeneutik: psychoanalytische Textinterpretation als sozialwissenschaftliches Verfahren* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1979), accessed May 19, 2023, <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-10632>.

lysis according to Harald Welzer,<sup>67</sup> and *Qualitative Content Analysis* according to Philipp Mayring,<sup>68</sup> etc., which can be used to analyse the data. MAXQDA, a software for computer-assisted qualitative data and text analysis, is a good tool for opening up large collections of sources. Which methodological procedure is ultimately chosen depends crucially on the research questions the researcher wants to pursue. Making the individual analysis steps intersubjectively comprehensible remains one of the great challenges of qualitative research.

In some CBOW research contexts, interviewers and respondents have to communicate with each other in a foreign language, if they do not have to rely on the help of a translator. Since the linguistic turn, it has been known that language does not depict reality, but creates realities. Language forms both the precondition and the boundary of the recognisable. Communicating in a differentiated way about feelings in a foreign language requires a high level of linguistic competence, which sometimes neither the interviewee nor the interviewer possesses. In addition, due to a different cultural understanding of what can be said in public, some questions can be perceived as indiscreet, unseemly, even encroaching, and are therefore answered evasively or not at all. This experience was already recorded by the German traveller and writer Ida Hahn-Hahn in 1844, who took a burning interest in the handling of sexual customs during her visit to a high-class harem in Constantinople. She complained that the questions she was most interested in were simply ignored by the harem ladies.<sup>69</sup>

### A comparative questionnaire survey

As mentioned above, the study *A Comparative study on Danish, Norwegian and Dutch war children (1997–2004)* is in many respects quite unique, as it was the first academically-based, standardised study on children born of war in several countries. The study was initiated by Stein Ugelvik Larsen, professor in the Department of Comparative Politics at the University of Bergen in Norway and founder of the *War and Children Identity Project* (WCIP). He had heard about the mostly negative experiences of Norwegian CBOW in post-war Norway at an event to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the end of the Second World War in 1995. Larsen worked together with the Norwegian so-called ‘Wehrmacht children’, who

---

<sup>67</sup> See Welzer, “Von Fehlern und Daten”.

<sup>68</sup> Philipp Mayring, *Qualitative Inhaltsanalyse. Grundlagen und Techniken* (Weinheim/ Basel: Beltz Juventa, 2010).

<sup>69</sup> See Ida Hahn-Hahn, *Orientalische Briefe* (1844), ed. Gabriele Habinger (Wien: Promedia, 1991), 82.

since the mid-1980s had established the association *Norges Krigsbarnforbund* (NKBF), and other researchers<sup>70</sup> and developed a questionnaire that was distributed in Norway in 1997. As described above, this was not generated hypothetically-deductively on the basis of existing theories, as is usually the case in surveys of this kind, but with the help of the participatory approach, in which the affected group, in this case the Norwegian CBO, actively took part in the development of the questionnaire. The Norwegian version was then, as already described, translated and adapted by the Danish and Dutch principle investigators before it was distributed among CBO in the respective countries.

Mochmann commented on several versions of the Norwegian questionnaire and was later responsible for coding the Danish data. This experience gave her keen insight into methodological pitfalls both of the wording of several questions and of the potential for redundancy and unclarity of questions, which could limit the analysis of the data. Furthermore, the codebook was quite unstructured, as the answers to all open questions were written in exact wording, which made the answer categories to each question in many cases endless. Also, the large number of open questions and the length of the questionnaire led respondents to fill in the same information in several places and sometimes also the wrong information in the wrong place because the question wording was unclear. Having said this, many questions were still useful for analysis and have been published.<sup>71</sup> But, due to the methodological limitations, only descriptions and frequencies that could be identified as reliable and valid were analysed. In order for all the data for all countries to be analysed and compared, some severe data cleaning, data management and harmonisation would be necessary. This would require a good deal of funding and expertise both from CBO research and data management experts. Thus, even though there may be now limitations to sharing data from this study from the confidentiality point of view, quite a bit of work is required if we want to make it accessible for further research. However, as pointed out above with regard to the Dutch data, the documentation of the coding process and development of the SPSS files was planned in such a way from the start that it could be used by other researchers. So far the data have not been made available for distribution. This is mainly because the sample is quite small and also because no decision has been made with regard to how and where would be best to share it.

---

<sup>70</sup> Including Mochmann, now Ødegaard.

<sup>71</sup> See Mochmann and Larsen, “Kriegskinder in Europa”; Mochmann and Larsen, “Children born of War”; Ingvill C. Mochmann and Arne Øland, “Der lange Schatten des Zweiten Weltkriegs: Kinder deutscher Wehrmachtssoldaten und einheimischer Frauen in Dänemark,” *Historical Social Research* 34, no. 3 (2009): 283–303.

A positive aspect of this rather cumbersome data production and analysis process in previous decades has been that experiences from this first study were taken into account in the development of further studies<sup>72</sup> such as, for example, in the development of the study on psychosocial well-being, experiences with prejudice and identity development of ‘occupation children’ in Germany, which was later carried out in Austria, Norway and Bosnia in partly adapted form. Parts of the questionnaire were taken over from the original study at the University of Bergen, translated and adopted.<sup>73</sup> However, although data from these studies might have the quality to be shared, this has not been done so far, as already mentioned. Beyond the different policy regulations with regard to data management and open science, personal, disciplinary and cultural factors are relevant. Issues such as data ownership, authorship of publications, and who may share what with whom easily become potential conflicts if not sorted out at the beginning of a project. Lack of collaboration and trust within research teams – often due to simple, uncommunicated differences of understanding and assumptions about various steps in the research lifecycle – may terminate all chances for broad dissemination and re-use, unless this is clearly agreed upon from start.

Finally, a critical note on the contents of the questionnaire itself. From the perspective of gender theory and gender history, the questionnaire, developed in the 1990s, also reproduces highly problematic patriarchal normative prescriptions about ‘intact’ families and ‘good’ motherhood, which only seem conceivable within the framework of bourgeois marriage.<sup>74</sup> The questionnaire reproduces the policy of “refamiliarisation” cultivated in almost all post-war Western European societies, which was intended to remedy the alleged “‘crisis of the family’ attributed to the war-related loss of men and broken family relationships”.<sup>75</sup> Thus, in order to evaluate the usefulness and quality of the data for reuse, the questionnaires, code-

---

72 See Mochmann, “Children Born of War – A Decade of International and Interdisciplinary Research,” 331–332.

73 Marie Kaiser et al., “Psychoziale Konsequenzen des Aufwachsens als Besatzungskind in Deutschland,” in *Besatzungskinder – Die Nachkommen alliierter Soldaten in Österreich und Deutschland*, ed. Barbara Stelzl-Marx and Silke Satjukow (Vienna/Cologne/Weimar: Böhlau, 2015), 56.

74 Elke Kleinau and Christoph Piske, “Normalitätskonstruktionen von Familie in einer Befragung niederländischer *Children Born of War*,” in *Familie und Normalität. Diskurse, Praxen und Aushandlungsprozesse*, ed. Anne-Christin Schondelmayer, Christine Riegel and Sebastian Fitz-Klausner (Opladen/Berlin/Toronto: Barbara Budrich, 2021), 225–244.

75 Robert G. Moeller, “Unbenannt und allgegenwärtig. Die Familie in der deutschen Zeitschichtsschreibung,” in *Geschichte und Geschlechter. Revisionen der neueren deutschen Geschichte*, ed. Karen Hagemann and Jean H. Quataert (Frankfurt a. M./New York: Campus, 2008), 322.

books, methods reports and all other relevant documentation and information needs to be accessible to the extent possible.

## **Evaluate & Archive, Share & Disseminate, and Access & Reuse**

In an assessment of the various CBOW data sources presented so far, little emphasis has been put on steps 4, 5, and 6 of the research data cycle. These steps address questions related to where the datasets will be stored, how secure this storage is and how it will be accessed. Furthermore, these steps address questions related to sharing policies to be considered and the selection of a data repository, which is strongly linked to the final step with respect to broad access to and reused of the data.

This is probably the reason why so far very little CBOW sources are re-usable: even safe data centers to our knowledge do not offer secondary analysis of qualitative and quantitative CBOW data. As emphasised, the challenges are multidimensional and complex. However, at the same time, one may argue that research teams have thus far put little energy into defining from the start – in step one – ways in which at least parts of the data could be made available. With CBOW projects increasingly being awarded significant funding from national and international agencies, this is likely to improve. The Norwegian based ERC consolidator grant *EuroWARCHILD* (2023) led by professor Inger Skjelsbæk at the University of Oslo, for example, has clear requirements for data handling and research data management which had to be approved by the Norwegian National Data Service prior to project start.

When Kleinau submitted her project application in 2014, the application form from the *German Research Foundation* asked how the collected interviews would be stored, but no data management plan was yet required. The interview passages that contained personal and location information were redacted and entered into a Citavi database, which remained in the possession of the project leader. Since 2020, a detailed data management plan must be submitted. Kleinau and Schmid do not want to hide a certain scepticism about the re-use of narrative-biographical interviews, since they have seen in their interview material how many text passages of the transcription have to be blacked out for anonymisation.



## Ethical issues, reflections, recommendations

From the information provided in this chapter so far it is quite obvious that both quantitative and qualitative research projects on CBOW encounter methodological and ethical challenges.

One may run the risk of subjecting participants to great emotional strain if they are confronted with events from the past. In the first study on the Norwegian CBOW, the primary researcher, Stein Ugelvik Larsen, received many calls from people who had received the questionnaire by post. The questionnaire had upset them so much that they had not managed to write down their impressions and experiences on paper. However, they still wanted to share what they had experienced. Also, for some members of the association who were involved in the research process as lay researchers it had been emotionally difficult to engage with their experiences in this way. In follow-up studies, contact details of psychologists and psychiatrists were thus included in the cover letter. These were psychologists and psychiatrists who were involved in the studies and whom interviewees could contact at any time.

One of the greatest methodological challenges was to maintain the necessary scientific distance despite close contact with those affected. Keeping the necessary distance in spite of necessary close contact, while at the same time endeavouring to invite lay researchers and all respondents to conferences and to co-author publications, is no simple task.

With regard to work with eyewitnesses, it should be explicitly emphasised that researchers must be well aware that memories that lie far in the past are more likely to reflect the processing of subjective experience rather than the subjective experience itself.<sup>76</sup> Moreover, the events can only be meaningful in relation to the group that is willing to cooperate or complete the questionnaire, which applies to both qualitative and quantitative studies. Since there is no information on the population for the CBOW, it will therefore never be known exactly to what extent the respondents are representative of the CBOW group, even if a large number of respondents are surveyed. Moreover, control groups would have to be used for further analyses, for example, of the Norwegian register analysis.<sup>77</sup> Here, Ellingsen compared the life course of Norwegian 'krigsbarn' with children of single mothers

---

<sup>76</sup> See Hans J. Markowitsch and Harald Welzer, *Das autobiographische Gedächtnis. Hirnorganische Grundlagen und biosoziale Entwicklung*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2006).

<sup>77</sup> See Mochmann, "Children Born of War – A Decade of International and Interdisciplinary Research," 340.



born 1940 and 1947.<sup>78</sup> In addition, the number of abortions or those murdered at birth is left out of all statistics.<sup>79</sup>

Ultimately, it must be clear to all those involved that researchers and those affected are likely to have different motivations for conducting or participating in a study. While the primary goal of researchers is to carry out a research project and to publish the results, the lay researchers and other interviewees often want to draw attention to their fates, sometimes with the aim of apologising and/or sometimes with the aim of receiving an apology and/or compensation from the state. These expectations must be communicated clearly and unambiguously from the beginning, as otherwise considerable conflict can arise in the course of a project.<sup>80</sup> Researchers should also be aware of the fact that CBOW, even if they have agreed to be interviewed, do not always know or understand exactly in what context and for what purposes their statements will be used. Nor are they always aware of the consequences that participation may have for them, e.g. within the family or the community. This is especially true for analysis of qualitative interviews, which – even if anonymised – may reveal the identities of interviewees to insiders such as family members. Although it was developed for a different purpose than research, the Survivor-Centered Documentation of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence – The MURAD Code Project – is also highly relevant to anyone collecting data and information on survivors of conflict-related sexual violence, which may well be relevant to the study of CBOW in various contexts.<sup>81</sup>

Furthermore, in their life stories, those affected often use an everyday psychological vocabulary in which the concept of trauma dominates.<sup>82</sup> This term, which has been increasingly used to describe the experiences of Holocaust witnesses since the 2000s,<sup>83</sup> has also found its way into research on CBOW. But by no means must everything that the great 20<sup>th</sup>- and 21<sup>st</sup>-century atrocities held in

---

78 Ellingsen used children of single mothers born 1940 and 1947 to avoid having war children in the control group, as most of these children born 1940–1945 were born to single mothers. See Ellingsen, *Krigsbarns levekår. En registerbasert undersøkelse* and Ellingsen, *Living Conditions of Norwegian War Children. A register-based study*, 18.

79 See Charli R. Carpenter, *Born of War. Protecting Children of Sexual Violence Survivors*, 2.

80 See Mochmann, “Children Born of War: expanding the evidence base on hidden populations.”

81 See “Global Code Of Conduct For Gathering And Using Information About Systematic And Conflict-Related Sexual Violence,” accessed June 18, 2023, [https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5eba1018487928493de323e7t/6255fdf29113fa3f4be3add5/1649802738451/220413\\_Murad\\_Code\\_EN.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5eba1018487928493de323e7t/6255fdf29113fa3f4be3add5/1649802738451/220413_Murad_Code_EN.pdf).

82 See Rafaela Schmid, *Vaterdezentrierungen. Psychoanalytische Entgegnungen zum Fachdiskurs über Besatzungskinder* (Weilerswist: Velbrück Wissenschaft, 2022).

83 See José Brunner, “Medikalisierte Zeugenschaft. Trauma, Institutionen, Nachträglichkeit,” in *Die Geburt des Zeitzengen nach 1945*, ed. Martin Sabrow, and Norbert Frei (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2012).

store for people in terms of terrible experiences trigger a trauma per se. Incidentally, trauma can neither be diagnosed on the basis of a questionnaire survey, which is based on the self-assessment of interviewees, nor on the basis of biographical narrative interviews, and certainly not by historians or social scientists. For that, a careful psychiatric or psychotherapeutic diagnosis is needed: an anamnesis that is taken at the beginning of a therapeutic process. Even if the interviewer had a psychotherapeutic qualification, one can only warn against mixing research and therapy. Role conflicts would be the inevitable consequence. The task of historical and/or social science research is to explore the “complex field of tension” between emotional memory and scientific research in order to work out and convey socio-political connections beyond the subjective horizon of knowledge of the individual.<sup>84</sup>

In countries where the state itself participated in the discrimination of CBOW, for example by depriving them of their civil rights, this narrative of traumatisation taken up by research may be justified. But it is not suitable as a globally accepted blueprint for CBOW, although it was aggressively used in the early days of historical research on German ‘occupation children’.<sup>85</sup> It secured the necessary media attention for the topic and the emerging networks of those affected. This narrative only applies to a limited extent to German ‘occupation children’. The life stories Kleinau and Schmid collected, as well as the reconstruction of the pedagogical discourse on ‘occupation children’, only allow the conclusion that Black German children who stood out visibly within the *white* German majority society were increasingly exposed to experiences of discrimination.<sup>86</sup> Whether these experiences also had traumatising effects remains a matter for psychotherapeutic experts. This does not exclude the possibility that *white* ‘occupation children’ were also exposed to individual and/or institutional discrimination, but a very specific racist tone was prevalent in the post-war society of West Germany and Austria, one which did not apply to all children equally. For *white* children, experiences of exclusion were often more related to a child’s illegitimate status.

Researchers should therefore not assume in advance that *every* CBOW has been exposed to experiences of discrimination and *must* consequently *be* trauma-

---

<sup>84</sup> Sybille Steinbacher, “Zeitzeugenschaft und die Etablierung der Zeitgeschichte in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland,” in *Die Geburt des Zeitzeugen nach 1945*, ed. Martin Sabrow, and Norbert Frei (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2012), 145.

<sup>85</sup> See Satjukow and Gries, “Bankerte!” *Besatzungskinder in Deutschland nach 1945*.

<sup>86</sup> See Kleinau and Schmid, “Aufwachsen ohne Eltern – ein Risikofaktor für Besatzungskinder?”; for Austria see Philipp Rohrbach, “This Has Finally Freed the Welfare Agency from a considerable Burden’: The Adoption of Black Austrian Occupation Children in the United States,” *zeitgeschichte* 48, no. 1, (2021): 35–55.

tised. This statement is by no means as absurd as it may sound now. When Kleinau and Schmid presented their project and solicited interview participants at a meeting of *Coeur sans frontière – Hearts without Borders* (a transnational network of French ‘Wehrmacht Children’ and French ‘Occupation Children’) in March 2015, they had to face a tough questioning by those affected according to their research premises. Some of those present had already participated in a study before, and one of them had been confronted at the end of the interview situation with the statement that *either he was the great exception or he was not telling the truth because he claimed not to be traumatised*. This statement shows the researcher’s disappointment that the person concerned refuses to tell the story he/she had previously invented, that his life story does not fit the one the researcher wants to tell. There is little sign of the lasting displeasure mentioned above, which sets in when the researcher “perceives the reality of his interlocutors’ lives and the interpretations of their memories, is unsettled in the questions and concepts he has brought with him and is led beyond them”.<sup>87</sup> The urge to lead the story to a predetermined end prevails.

Overall, it is important to be wary of rigid assumptions that need to be confirmed. This applies, for example, to possible consequences of how certain CBOW came to be (rape versus love relationship). This is not possible on the basis of the empirical findings to date. Contrary to expectations, however, findings to date show that many children born of supposed love relationships were ostracised by their mothers and closest family members after the war and in some cases experienced (gross) abuse and neglect.<sup>88</sup> Furthermore, there are also documented cases of children who were and are raised with love and affection by their mothers despite rape.<sup>89</sup>

Therefore, researchers should also ask about individual processing and coping strategies, because with too strong a focus on experiences of discrimination, “pos-

---

87 Lutz Niethammer, “Fragen – Antworten – Fragen. Methodische Erfahrungen und Erwägungen zur Oral History,” in *Wir kriegen jetzt andere Zeiten. Auf der Suche nach der Erfahrung des Volkes in nachfaschistischen Ländern*, ed. Lutz Niethammer and Alexander von Plato (Bonn: J.H.W. Dietz Nachf., 1985), 410.

88 Kjersti Ericsson and Eva Simonsen, *Krigsbarn i fredstids* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2005); Kjersti Ericsson and Eva Simonsen, *Children of World War II. The hidden legacy* (Oxford/New York: Berg, 2005); Mochmann and Larsen, “Kriegskinder in Europa”; Mochmann and Øland, “Der lange Schatten des Zweiten Weltkriegs”; Monika Diederichs, *Kinderen van duitse militairen in Nederland 1941–1946. Een verborgen leven* (Soesterberg: Aspekt, 2012).

89 See Elisa van Ee and Rolf J. Kleber, “Growing up under a shadow: Key issues in research on and treatment of children born of rape,” *Child Abuse Review* 22, no. 6 (2013): 386–397.

sible forms of long-term resilient processing could be lost from view”.<sup>90</sup> Defence and exclusion can result in painful feelings of ‘otherness’, but they can also be the spur to achieving self-determination. People, adults as well as children, should not be understood exclusively as vulnerable, passive victims of adverse social conditions or impositions.<sup>91</sup> In the history of education, biographical research looks at people as actors, as active (co-)designers of their educational and socialisation processes. Biographical research asks in particular how children and young people deal with predefined societal norms and values, what they acquire, what they modify, what they reject. However, it is also important to ask under which social-structural and individual-biographical conditions distortions and redefinitions of socially presented lifeworlds were or are possible and how individually different modes of appropriation or rejection can be explained within a social class, ethnicity or gender despite structural commonalities.<sup>92</sup>

## Conclusion and outlook

The aim of this chapter was to discuss good scientific research on vulnerable populations, in this case with a particular focus on CBOW alongside the research data cycle. By presenting various data sources in the wider sense often used in CBOW research, as well as more in-depth presentation of two research-based projects, case-study experiences of how steps in the research cycle have been handled in the past were discussed. The challenges and opportunities with regard to data collection, analysis, sharing, reuse, and to ethical concerns occurring in all these steps are in no way meant to offer a complete picture.

Needless to say, data collection on CBOW, such as in present refugee camps or conceived by forced pregnancies or sexual violence in present conflict zones, requires that many of the above discussed steps be dealt with in less structured

---

<sup>90</sup> Insa Fooker, “‘Ich wollte ihm eine Freude machen’. Spuren ‘toter Kriegsväter’ in den Lebensverläufen der Töchter aus entwicklungspsychologischer Sicht.” In *Vaterlosigkeit in vaterarmen Zeiten. Beiträge zu einem historischen und gesellschaftlichen Schlüsselthema*, ed. Barbara Stambolis (Weinheim/Basel: Beltz Juventa, 2013), 91.

<sup>91</sup> See Sabine Andresen, Claus Koch and Julia König, eds., *Vulnerable Kinder. Interdisziplinäre Annäherungen* (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2015).

<sup>92</sup> See Ernst Cloer, Dorle Klika and Michael Seyfarth-Stubenrauch, “Versuch zu einer pädagogischen-biographischen historischen Sozialisations- und Bildungsforschung. Kindsein in Arbeiter- und Bürgerfamilien des Wilhelminischen Reiches,” in *Kinderwelten*, ed. Christa Berg (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1991), 72.

ways than suggested here. To us it is, however, important to emphasise at least two things:

Firstly, in CBOW research relevant data sources encompass a great variety of forms, and some of these may be collected for other purposes and/or may become available or relevant at later points in time. Examples include all kinds of information collected by NGOs and civil society in conflict and post-conflict regarding health, reproductive/maternal health, sexual violence, poverty, education etc. In all these areas we know of research that has primarily targeted women, but has incidentally revealed the existence of children born of war. For various reasons, much of this information is not shared by the NGOs, and both the methodological basis and the transparency of analysis is often limited. However, as such projects are often funded by governmental, i. e. tax-payer, money as part of development projects, our argument is that – if the interviewees have been fully informed and their declaration of consent has been obtained – all sources should be made available for re-use. This would increase both the reliability and the validity of the findings, as well providing a more cost-effective modus operandi, as evidence gaps could be more easily detected and funding provided more strategically.

Secondly, beyond the cost-efficiency and transparency of quality, findings, and conclusions, this is also an ethical question. In the meantime, several projects have been carried out both among CBOW of World War II and those in northern Uganda, Rwanda, Bosnia, and the Democratic republic of Congo (DRC), to name a few countries.<sup>93</sup> Many of these projects – as has been addressed – engage the same persons in their studies. As these persons mostly belong to hidden populations and the topics examined are highly sensitive, the danger of over-exposing already vulnerable persons is high and should be avoided if possible. Boniface Ojok has found a good methodological way to minimise the burden on children under study with essay research conducted in a Ugandan school.<sup>94</sup> All children in a class were included in the writing process, i. e. the CBOW were not separated from their classmates, and it was clearly communicated that only the researcher, not the teachers, would read the essays. Essay research is by no means a recently conceived methodology in child and youth research. It was already being used by German researchers in the late 1920s in the newly institutionalised vocational schools to obtain au-

---

<sup>93</sup> In this context, it is striking that a study by Rosenthal, one of the pioneers of biography research, on child soldiers in Uganda, is not even noted in the research discourse on CBOW, although it has been available in an English translation since 2020. See Artur Bogner and Gabriele Rosenthal, *Child Soldiers in Context. Biographies, Familial and Collective Trajectories in Northern Uganda* (Göttingen: Universitätsverlag, 2020), accessed June 13, 2023, doi:10.17875/gup2020-1325.

<sup>94</sup> See Eunice Akullo and Boniface Ojok, “Researching Children Born of War in Uganda: Methodological Reflections on the inclusion of minors in CBOW Research,” in *Children Born of War*, 87–110.

tobiographical material about youth groups that had hardly been researched up to then.<sup>95</sup>

So, in conclusion, although different disciplines and stakeholders have different aims and methodological approaches to CBOW research and information gathering, we suggest that they adapt an open-minded attitude to the various steps of the research data cycle presented here by critically analysing – to the extent possible – already from the start how the data and information collected may wholly or partly be made available for secondary analysis. This way, at least the possibility may exist that data can be deposited and re-used after a project ends or at a later point in time. Research data infrastructures specialised on providing support for data-sharing and re-use exist all over the world and we recommend that funding schemes implement requirements and money ear-marked to make CBOW and other relevant data reusable. The first step in this direction would be to fund a (virtual) CBOW repository where the data from all relevant sources mined so far could be made available to the research community.

## References

- Akullo, Eunice, and Boniface Ojok. “Researching Children Born of War in Uganda: Methodological Reflections on the inclusion of monors in CBOW Research.” In *Children Born of War. Past, Present and Future*, edited by Sabine Lee, Heide Glaesmer, and Barbara Stelzl-Marx, 87–110. London/New York: Routledge, 2022.
- Andresen, Sabine. “Sexual Violence Against Children and Transitional Justice: Bearing Witness and Preserving Testimony About Injustice in Childhood.” *International Journal on Child Maltreatment* 4 (2021): 193–207.
- Andresen, Sabine, Claus Koch, and Julia König, eds. *Vulnerable Kinder. Interdisziplinäre Annäherungen*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2015.
- Baur, Nina. “Measurement and Selection Bias in Longitudinal Data. A Framework for Re-Opening the Discussion on Data Quality and Generalizability of Social Bookkeeping Data.” *Historical Social Research* 34, no. 3 (2009): 263–282.
- Bogner, Artur, and Gabriele Rosenthal. *Child Soldiers in Context. Biographies, Familial and Collective Trajectories in Northern Uganda*. Göttingen: Universitätsverlag, 2020. Accessed June 13, 2023. doi:10.17875/gup2020–1325.
- Bois-Reymond, Manuela du. “Die Oral-History-Methode. Königsweg oder Schleichpfad der historischen Kinderforschung?” In *Kinder. Kindheit. Lebensgeschichte. Ein Handbuch*, edited by Imbke Behnken, and Jürgen Zinnecker, 218–232. Seelze: Velbert, 2002.
- Borgersrud, Lars. *Staten og krigsbarna: En historisk undersøkelse av statsmyndighetenes behandling av krigsbarna i de første etterkrigsårene*. Oslo: Universitetet i Oslo (Institutt for Kulturstudier), 2004.

---

<sup>95</sup> See Günter Krolzig, *Der Jugendliche in der Großstadtfamilie. Aufgrund von Niederschriften Berliner Berufsschüler und -schülerinnen* (Berlin: Herbig, 1930).

- Brauerhoch, Annette. "‘Toxi’. Zur filmischen Repräsentation schwarzer Kinder in Nachkriegsdeutschland." In *Besatzungskinder. Die Nachkommen alliierter Soldaten in Österreich und Deutschland*, edited by Barbara Stelzl-Marx, and Silke Satjukow, 321–352. Vienna/Cologne/Weimar: Böhlau, 2015.
- Breckner, Roswitha. *Sozialtheorie des Bildes. Zur interpretativen Analyse von Bildern und Fotografien*. Bielefeld: transcript, 2010.
- Brunner, José. "Medikalisierte Zeugenschaft. Trauma, Institutionen, Nachträglichkeit." In *Die Geburt des Zeitzeugen nach 1945*, edited by Martin Sabrow, and Norbert Frei, 93–110. Göttingen: Wallstein, 2012.
- Carroll, Stephanie Russo, Ibrahim Garba, Oscar L. Figueroa-Rodríguez, Jarita Holbrook, Raymond Lovett, Simeon Materechera, Mark Parsons, Kay Raseroka, and Desi Rodriguez-Hudson. *The CARE Principles for Indigenous Data Governance*. Accessed June 13, 2023. doi:10.5334/dsj-2020-043.
- Carpenter, Charli R. *Protecting Children Born of Sexual Violence and Exploitation in Conflict Zones: Existing Practice and Knowledge Gaps. Findings from Consultations with Humanitarian Practitioners*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005.
- Carpenter, Charli R. *Born of War. Protecting Children of Sexual Violence Survivors*. Bloomfield: Kumarian Press, 2007.
- Cloer, Ernst, Dorle Klika, and Michael Seyfarth-Stubenrauch. "Versuch zu einer pädagogischen-biographischen historischen Sozialisations- und Bildungsforschung. Kindsein in Arbeiter- und Bürgerfamilien des Wilhelminischen Reiches." In *Kinderwelten*, edited by Christa Berg, 68–100. Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1991.
- Corti, Louise, Veerle Van Den Eynden, Libby Bishop, and Matthew Woollard. *Managing and Sharing Research Data A Guide to Good Practice*. Los Angeles/London: Sage, 2019. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Accessed June 13, 2023. [https://www.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/61019\\_Corti\\_Managing\\_and\\_sharing\\_research\\_data.pdf](https://www.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/61019_Corti_Managing_and_sharing_research_data.pdf).
- Deutsche Forschungsgesellschaft. "Besatzungskinder in Nachkriegsdeutschland: Bildungs- und Differenzenerfahrungen." Accessed June 17, 2023. <https://gepris.dfg.de/gepris/projekt/279094103?context=projekt&task=showDetail&id=279094103&>.
- Deutsche Forschungsgesellschaft. "Empfehlungen zur Archivierung, Bereitstellung und Nachnutzung von Forschungsdaten im Kontext erziehungs- und bildungswissenschaftlicher sowie fachdidaktischer Forschung." Accessed June 18, 2023. [https://www.dfg.de/download/pdf/foerderung/grundlagen\\_dfg\\_foerderung/forschungsdaten/stellungnahme\\_forschungsdatenmanagement.pdf](https://www.dfg.de/download/pdf/foerderung/grundlagen_dfg_foerderung/forschungsdaten/stellungnahme_forschungsdatenmanagement.pdf).
- Diederichs, Monika. "Stigma and Silence. Dutch Women, German Soldiers and their Children." In *Children of World War II. The Hidden Enemy Legacy*, edited by Kjersti Ericsson, and Eva Simonsen, 151–163. Oxford/New York: Berg, 2005.
- Diederichs, Monika. *Kinderen van duitse militairen in Nederland 1941–1946. Een verborgen leven*. Soesterberg: Aspekt, 2012.
- Ellingsen, Dag. *Krigsbarns levekår. En registerbasert undersøkelse*. Oslo/Konsvinger: Statistisk sentralbyrå, 2004.
- Ellingsen, Dag. *Living Conditions of Norwegian War Children. A register-based study* (English translation). Oslo/Konsvinger: Statistisk sentralbyrå, 2023.
- Ericsson, Kjersti, and Eva Simonsen. *Krigsbarn i fredstids*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2005.
- Ericsson, Kjersti, and Eva Simonsen, eds. *Children of World War II. The hidden legacy*. Oxford/New York: Berg, 2005.



- European Commission. "2012/417/EU: Commission Recommendation of 17 July 2012 on access to and preservation of scientific information." Accessed June 18, 2023. <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reco/2012/417/oj>.
- EuroWARCHILD. Accessed June 18, 2023. <https://www.eurowarchild.org/about>.
- Fooken, Insa. "Ich wollte ihm eine Freude machen". Spuren 'toter Kriegsväter' in den Lebensverläufen der Töchter aus entwicklungspsychologischer Sicht." In *Vaterlosigkeit in vaterarmen Zeiten. Beiträge zu einem historischen und gesellschaftlichen Schlüsselthema*, edited by Barbara Stambolis, 86–114. Weinheim/Basel: Beltz Juventa, 2013.
- Gehltomholt, Eva, and Sabine Hering. *Das verwahrloste Mädchen. Diagnostik und Fürsorge in der Jugendhilfe zwischen Kriegsende und Reform (1945–1965)*. Opladen: Barbara Budrich, 2006.
- Glaesmer, Heide, Barbara Stelzl-Marx, and Sabine Lee, eds. *Introduction to Children Born of War. Past, Present and Future*, 1–22. London/New York: Routledge, 2022.
- Grieg, Kai. *The War Children of the World. War and Children Identity Project*. Bergen: Report. 2001.
- Gries, Rainer. "'Les Enfants d'Etat – Kinder des Staates': Retour en France? Das 'Repatriierungsprogramm' für die Nachkommen französischer Besatzungssoldaten in Deutschland nach 1945." In *Kinder des Zweiten Weltkrieges. Stigmatisierung, Ausgrenzung, Bewältigungsstrategien*, edited by Elke Kleinau, and Ingvill C. Mochmann, 49–71. Frankfurt a. M./New York: Campus, 2016.
- Guerrini, Flavia. *Vom Feind ein Kind. Nachkommen alliierter Soldaten erzählen*. Vienna/Berlin: Mandelbaum, 2022.
- Hahn-Hahn, Ida. *Orientalische Briefe (1844)*. Edited by Gabriele Habinger. Wien: Promedia, 1991.
- Harvard University. *Research Data Lifecycle* by LMA Research Data Management Working Group. Cambridge: Harvard University, 2023.
- Heckathron, Douglas D. "Respondent-Driven Sampling II: Deriving Valid Population Estimates from Chain-Referral Samples of Hidden Populations." *Social Problems* 49, no.1 (2002): 11–34.
- Heinritz, Charlotte. *Auf ungebahnten Wegen. Frauenautobiographien um 1900*. Königstein/Taunus: Helmer, 2000.
- INIRC-CBOW. "International Network for Interdisciplinary research on Children Born of War." Accessed June 19 2023. <http://www.childrenbornofwar.org>.
- Jensen, Olaf, and Harald Welzer. "One Thing Leads to Another or: Self-Reflexivity as Method." *Forum Qualitative Social Research* 4, no. 2 (2003). Accessed June 18, 2023. [www.qualitative-research.net/fqs-texte/2-03/2-03jensenwelzer-d.htm](http://www.qualitative-research.net/fqs-texte/2-03/2-03jensenwelzer-d.htm).
- Johnston, Lisa G., Katherine R. McLaughlin, Shada A. Rouhani, and Susan A. Bartels. "Measuring a hidden population: A novel technique to estimate the population size of women with sexual violence-related pregnancies in South Kivu Province, Democratic Republic of Congo." In *Journal of Epidemiology and Global Health* 7, no. 1 (March 2017): 45–53.
- Jureit, Ulrike. "Authentische und konstruierte Erinnerung. Methodische Überlegungen zu biographischen Sinnkonstruktionen." *Werkstatt Geschichte* 18, no. 6 (1997): 91–101.
- Kaiser, Marie, Svenja Eichhorn, Philipp Kuwert, and Heide Glaesmer. "Psychosoziale Konsequenzen des Aufwachsens als Besatzungskind in Deutschland." In *Besatzungskinder – Die Nachkommen alliierter Soldaten in Österreich und Deutschland*, edited by Barbara Stelzl-Marx, and Silke Satjukow, 39–61. Vienna/Cologne/Weimar, Böhlau, 2015.
- Kaiser, Marie, Philipp Kuwert, Elmar Braehler, and Heide Glaesmer. "Depression, Somatization and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder in Children Born of Occupation after WW II in comparison with a general population." *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease* 203, no. 10 (2015): 742–748.



- Kaiser Marie, Sabine Lee, and Heide Glaesmer. "Implementing research ethics in an interdisciplinary research and training network – the CHIBOW projekt." In *Children Born of War. Past, Present and Future*, edited by Sabine Lee, Heide Glaesmer, and Barbara Stelzl-Marx, S. 75–86. London/New York: Routledge, 2022.
- Keupp, Heiner. *Identitätskonstruktionen – Das Patchwork der Identitäten in der Spätmoderne*. Hamburg: Rowohlt, 2006.
- Kleinau, Elke, and Ingvill C. Mochmann. "Kinder des Zweiten Weltkrieges – Stigmatisierung, Ausgrenzung, Bewältigungsstrategien." In *Kinder des Zweiten Weltkrieges – Stigmatisierung, Ausgrenzung, Bewältigungsstrategien*, edited by Elke Kleinau, and Ingvill C. Mochmann, 13–28. Frankfurt a. M./New York: Campus, 2016.
- Kleinau, Elke, and Ingvill C. Mochmann, eds. *Kinder des Zweiten Weltkrieges Stigmatisierung, Ausgrenzung, Bewältigungsstrategien*. Frankfurt a. M./New York: Campus, 2016.
- Kleinau, Elke, and Rafaela Schmid. "Aufwachsen ohne Eltern – ein Risikofaktor für Besatzungskinder?" In *Kinder des Zweiten Weltkrieges – Stigmatisierung, Ausgrenzung, Bewältigungsstrategien*, edited by Elke Kleinau, and Ingvill C. Mochmann, 187–205. Frankfurt a. M./New York: Campus, 2016.
- Kleinau, Elke, and Rafaela Schmid. "‘Ich bin nicht ehemaliges Besatzungskind, sondern ich bin es immer noch’. Brüche und Inkonsistenzen in Erzählungen von ‘professionellen’ Zeitzeug\_innen." *BIOS, Zeitschrift für Oral-History Biographieforschung und Lebenslaufanalysen* 29, no. 2 (2016): 241–252. Accessed June 19, 2023. doi:10.3224/bios.v29i2.07.
- Kleinau, Elke. "Besatzungskinder in Deutschland nach 1945 – Bildungs- und Differenzenerfahrungen." *Zeitschrift für Pädagogik* 62, no. 2 (2016): 224–240.
- Kleinau, Elke. "Autobiographical writing, autobiographical narration: memoirs of a ‘child of the occupation’ in the mirror of two genres." *Paedagogica Historica. International Journal of the History of Education* 58, no. 3 (2021): 378–389. Accessed June 18, 2023. doi:10.1080/00309230.2021.1941144.
- Kleinau, Elke. "Einschluss- und Ausschlussprozesse – Schwarze deutsche ‘Besatzungskinder’ in der deutschen Nachkriegsgesellschaft." In *Inklusion als Chiffre? Bildungshistorische Analyse und Reflexionen*, edited by Michaela Vogt, Mai-Anh Boger, and Patrick Bühler, 218–227. Bad Heilbrunn: Klinkhardt, 2021.
- Kleinau, Elke. "Children Born of War in der deutschen Nachkriegsgesellschaft – Pädagogischer Diskurs und biografische Erzählungen." In *Über die Notwendigkeit der Historischen Bildungsforschung*, edited by Friederike Thole, Sarah Wedde, and Alexander Kather, 77–88. Bad Heilbrunn: Klinkhardt, 2021.
- Kleinau, Elke, and Rafaela Schmid. "‘Ich bin nicht ehemaliges Besatzungskind, sondern ich bin es immer noch’. Brüche und Inkonsistenzen in Erzählungen von ‘professionellen’ Zeitzeug\_innen." *BIOS, Zeitschrift für Oral-History, Biographieforschung und Lebenslaufanalysen* 29, no. 2 (2016): 241–252. Accessed June 18, 2023. doi:10.3224/bios.v29i2.07.
- Kleinau, Elke, and Rafaela Schmid. "‘Occupation Children’ in Germany after World War II – Problems and Coping Strategies." *Children & Society* 33, no. 3 (2019): 239–252. Special issue *Children at Risk in the 20th and 21st Century*, edited by Ingvill C. Mochmann, and Elke Kleinau.
- Kleinau, Elke, and Rafaela Schmid. "Das ‘fremde’ Kind. ‘Besatzungskinder’ im pädagogischen Diskurs der Nachkriegszeit." In *Un-/Zugehörigkeit. Bildungsphilosophische Reflexionen und machtheoretische Studien*, edited by Markus Rieger-Ladich, Rita Casale, and Christiane Thompson, 211–227. Weinheim/Basel: Beltz Juventa, 2020.

- Kleinau, Elke, and Christoph Piske. "Normalitätskonstruktionen von Familie in einer Befragung niederländischer *Children Born of War*." In *Familie und Normalität. Diskurse, Praxen und Aushandlungsprozesse*, edited by Anne-Christin Schondelmayer, Christine Riegel, and Sebastian Fitz-Klausner, 225–244. Opladen/Berlin/Toronto: Barbara Budrich, 2021.
- Koller; Hans-Christoph. *Bildung anders denken. Einführung in die Theorie transformatorischer Bildungsprozesse*. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2012.
- Krolzig, Günter. *Der Jugendliche in der Großstadtfamilie. Aufgrund von Niederschriften Berliner Berufsschüler und -schülerinnen*. Berlin: Herbig, 1930.
- Lee, Sabine. *Children Born of War in the Twentieth Century*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017.
- Leithäuser, Thomas and Birgit Volmerg. *Anleitung zur empirischen Hermeneutik: psychoanalytische Textinterpretation als sozialwissenschaftliches Verfahren*. Frankfurt a.M: Suhrkamp, 1979. Accessed May 19, 2023. <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-10632>.
- Longwood Research Data Management. "Harvard Biomedical Data Management." Accessed June 19, 2023. <https://datamanagement.hms.harvard.edu>.
- Lüdtke, Alf. "Alltagsgeschichte, Mikro-Historie, historische Anthropologie." In *Geschichte. Ein Grundkurs*, edited by Hans-Jürgen Goertz, 628–649. Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1998.
- Markowitsch, Hans J., and Harald Welzer. *Das autobiographische Gedächtnis. Hirnorganische Grundlagen und biosoziale Entwicklung*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2006.
- Max-Planck-Gesellschaft. "Holocaust-Überlebende geben Trauma an ihre Kinder weiter." Accessed May 04, 2019. <https://www.mpg.de/9375561/holocaust-vererbung-epigenetik>.
- Mayring, Philipp. *Qualitative Inhaltsanalyse. Grundlagen und Techniken*. Weinheim/Basel: Beltz Juventa, 2010.
- McKelvey, Robert S. *Dust of Life. America's Children Abandoned in Vietnam*. Seattle/London: University of Washington Press, 1999.
- Meckel, Andrea, Ingvill C. Mochmann, Bogdan Voicu, and Martin Miertsch. "Children Born of War and Social Trust. Analyzing Consequences of Rejection." *Social Change Review* 15, no. 1 (2017): 25–51.
- Meckel, Andrea, Ingvill C. Mochmann, and Martin Miertsch. "Soziales Vertrauen bei norwegischen Wehrmachtskindern." In *Kinder des Zweiten Weltkrieges – Stigmatisierung, Ausgrenzung, Bewältigungsstrategien*, edited by Elke Kleinau, and Ingvill C. Mochmann, 157–184. Frankfurt a. M./New York, Campus, 2016.
- Miertsch, Martin, Heide Glaesmer, Ingvill C. Mochmann, Marie Kaiser, Harald J. Freyberger, Jan Terock, Ketil J. Ødegaard, and Philipp Kuwert. "Norwegische 'Wehrmachtskinder' – psychosoziale Aspekte, Identitätsentwicklung und Stigmatisierung." *Trauma & Gewalt* 4 (2015): 303–314.
- Miethe, Ingrid. "Biographieforschung und Ego-Dokumente." *BIOS. Zeitschrift für Biographieforschung, Oral History und Lebensverlaufsanalysen* 29, no. 2 (2016): 301–316.
- Mietzner, Ulrike, and Ulrike Pilarczyk. *Das reflektierte Bild. Die seriell-ikonographische Fotoanalyse in den Erziehungs- und Sozialwissenschaften*. Bad Heilbrunn: Klinkhardt, 2005.
- Mochmann, Ingvill C., and Stein Ugelvik Larsen. "Kriegskinder in Europa." *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 18–19 (2005): 34–38. Accessed June 18, 2023. <https://www.bpb.de/shop/zeitschriften/apuz/29076/kriegskinder-in-europa/>.
- Mochmann, Ingvill C. "Consolidating the Evidence Base of Children Born of War." Zentralarchiv für Empirische Sozialforschung (2006), 198–199.
- Mochmann, Ingvill C. "Children Born of War." In *OBETS – Revista de Ciencias Sociales* 2 (2008): 53–61.

- Mochmann, Ingvill C., and Stein Ugelvik Larsen. "Children Born of War: The Life Course of Children fathered by German Soldiers in Norway and Denmark during WWII –Some empirical results." *Historical Social Research* 33, no. 1 (2008): 347–363.
- Mochmann, Ingvill C., Sabine Lee, and Barbara Stelzl-Marx. "The Children of the Occupations Born During the Second World War and Beyond – An Overview." *Historical Social Research* 34, no. 3 (2009): 263–282.
- Mochmann, Ingvill C., and Arne Øland. "Der lange Schatten des Zweiten Weltkriegs: Kinder deutscher Wehrmachtssoldaten und einheimischer Frauen in Dänemark." *Historical Social Research* 34, no. 3 (2009): 283–303.
- Mochmann, Ingvill C., and Sabine Lee. "The Human Rights of children born of war: case analyses of past and present conflicts." *Historical Social Research* 35, no. 3 (2010): 268–298.
- Mochmann, Ingvill C., and Dorien DeTombe. "The COMPRAM Methodology and Complex Societal Problems – an Analysis of the Case of Children Born of War." *Organizacija* 43, no. 3 (2010): 113–124.
- Mochmann, Ingvill C. "Children Born of War. Individual destinies between societal and international responsibilities." *Replik* 33 (2012): 32–39.
- Mochmann, Ingvill C. "Besatzungskinder, tyskerbarn, Amerasians: Krigsbarn i historisk og internasjonalt kontekst." *Internasjonalt Politikk* 72, no. 4 (2014): 537–550.
- Mochmann, Ingvill C. "Children Born of War: expanding the evidence base on hidden populations." Paper presented at the Workshop *Supporting human rights organisations to deliver insights from data*, University of Essex, Colchester (United Kingdom), October 28–29, 2015. Accessed May 05, 2019. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/299456597\\_Children\\_Born\\_of\\_War\\_expanding\\_the\\_evidence\\_base\\_on\\_hidden\\_populations](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/299456597_Children_Born_of_War_expanding_the_evidence_base_on_hidden_populations).
- Mochmann, Ingvill C., and Elke Kleinau. "Kinder des Krieges in Gegenwart und Zukunft – Hilfestellungen und Selbstbemächtigung." In *Kinder des Zweiten Weltkrieges – Stigmatisierung, Ausgrenzung, Bewältigungsstrategien*, edited by Elke Kleinau, and Ingvill C. Mochmann; 301–307. Frankfurt a. M./New York: Campus, 2016.
- Mochmann, Ingvill C. "Children Born of War – A Decade of International and Interdisciplinary Research." *Historical Social Research* 42, no. 1 (2017): 320–346.
- Mochmann, Ingvill C. *Children Born of War (CBOW): Genese und Konsolidierung des Forschungsfeldes*. Unpublished Habilitation Thesis, 2019.
- Moeller, Robert G. "Unbenannt und allgegenwärtig. Die Familie in der deutschen Zeitgeschichtsschreibung." In *Geschichte und Geschlechter. Revisionen der neueren deutschen Geschichte*, edited by Karen Hagemann and Jean H. Quataert, 317–346. Frankfurt a. M./New York: Campus, 2008.
- Muth, Kerstin. *Die Wehrmacht in Griechenland – und ihre Kinder*. Leipzig: Eudora-Verlag, 2008.
- Murad Code. "Global Code Of Conduct For Gathering And Using Information About Systematic And Conflict-Related Sexual Violence." Accessed June 18, 2023. [https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5eba1018487928493de323e7/t/62555df29113fa3f4be3add5/1649802738451/220413\\_Murad\\_Code\\_EN.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5eba1018487928493de323e7/t/62555df29113fa3f4be3add5/1649802738451/220413_Murad_Code_EN.pdf).
- Niethammer, Lutz. "Fragen – Antworten – Fragen. Methodische Erfahrungen und Erwägungen zur Oral History." In *Wir kriegen jetzt andere Zeiten. Auf der Suche nach der Erfahrung des Volkes in nachfaschistischen Ländern*, edited Lutz Niethammer, and Alexander von Plato, 392–445. Bonn: J.H.W. Dietz Nachf., 1985.
- Niethammer, Lutz. *Ego-Histoire? Und andere Erinnerungs-Versuche*. Vienna/Cologne/Weimar: Böhlau, 2002.

- Olsen, Kåre. *Krigens barn. De norske krigsbarna og deres mødre*. Oslo: Aschehoug, 1998.
- Øland, Arne. *Horeunger og helligdage – tyskerbørns beretninger*. Århus: Schønberg, 2001.
- Oevermann, Ulrich, Tilman Allert, Elisabeth Konau, and Jürgen Krambeck. “Die Methodologie einer ‘objektiven Hermeneutik’ und ihre allgemeine forschungslogische Bedeutung in den Sozialwissenschaften.” In *Interpretative Verfahren in den Sozial- und Textwissenschaften*, edited by Hans-Georg Soeffner, 352–434. Stuttgart: Metzler, 1979.
- Picaper, Jean Paul, and Ludwig Norz. *Die Kinder der Schande. Das tragische Schicksal deutscher Besatzungskinder in Frankreich*. München: Piper, 2005.
- Radebold, Hartmut. *Kindheiten im II. Weltkrieg und ihre Folgen*. Gießen: Psychosozial-Verlag, 2004.
- Rohrbach, Philipp. “‘This Has Finally Freed the Welfare Agency from a considerable Burden’: The Adoption of Black Austrian Occupation Children in the United States.” *zeitgeschichte* 48, no. 1, (2021): 35–55.
- Rosenthal, Gabriele. *Erlebte und erzählte Lebensgeschichte. Gestalt und Struktur biographischer Selbstbeschreibungen*. Frankfurt a. M.: Campus, 1995.
- Rosenthal, Gabriele. “Biographisch-narrative Gesprächsführung: zu den Bedingungen heilsamen Erzählens im Forschungs- und Beratungskontext.” *Psychotherapie und Sozialwissenschaft* 4, no. 3 (2002): 1–27. Accessed July 21, 2020. <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-56763>.
- Satjukow, Silke, and Reiner Gries. *“Bankerte!” Besatzungskinder in Deutschland nach 1945*. Frankfurt a. M./New York, Campus, 2015.
- Schmid, Rafaela. *Vaterdezentrierungen. Psychoanalytische Entgegnungen zum Fachdiskurs über ‘Besatzungskinder’*. Weilerswist: Velbrück Wissenschaft, 2022.
- Scott, John. “Documents, types of.” In *The Sage Encyclopaedia of Social Science Research Methods*, edited by Michael S. Lewis-Beck, Alan Bryman, and Tim Futing Liao, 281–284. London: Sage, 2004.
- Schretter, Lukas, Kanako Kuramitsu, and Nastassia Sersté. “Ethical challenges in conducting interviews with children born of war: reflections on navigating participants’ expectations.” In *Children Born of War. Past, Present and Future*, edited by Sabine Lee, Heide Glaesmer, and Barbara Stelzl-Marx, S. 59–74. London/New York: Routledge, 2022.
- Schulze, Theodor. “Lebenslauf und Lebensgeschichte.” In *Aus Geschichten lernen. Zur Einübung pädagogischen Verstehens*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, edited by Dieter Baacke, and Theodor Schulze, 174–228. Weinheim/Munich: Juventa, 1993.
- Schulze, Theodor. “Zur Interpretation autobiographischer Texte in der erziehungswissenschaftlichen Biographieforschung.” In *Handbuch Qualitative Forschungsmethoden in der Erziehungswissenschaft*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, edited by Barbara Friebertshäuser, Antje Langer, and Annedore Prengel, 413–436. Weinheim/Basel: Beltz Juventa, 2013.
- Simonsen, Eva, and Kjersti Ericsson. *Krigsbarn i fredstid-sosialpolitiske og profesjonelle føringer i synet på tysk-norske krigsbarn 1945–1947*. Oslo: Universitetet i Oslo Institutt for kriminologi og retts sosiologi, 2004.
- Sinclear, Stephanie. “Child, Bride, Mother: Nigeria. Young women who were captives of Boko Haram speak.” *New York Times*, 2017. Accessed May 04, 2019. [https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/01/27/sunday-review/29Exposures-child-bride-interactive.html?\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/01/27/sunday-review/29Exposures-child-bride-interactive.html?_r=0).
- Steinbacher, Sybille. “Zeitzeugenschaft und die Etablierung der Zeitgeschichte in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland.” In *Die Geburt des Zeitzeugen nach 1945*, edited by Martin Sabrow, and Norbert Frei, 145–156. Göttingen: Wallstein, 2012.
- Stelzl-Marx, Barbara, and Silke Satjukow, eds. *Besatzungskinder. Die Nachkommen alliierter Soldaten in Österreich und Deutschland*. Vienna/Cologne/Weimar: Böhlau, 2015.

- Strauss, Anselm L. *Grundlagen qualitativer Sozialforschung. Datenanalyse und Theoriebildung in der empirischen soziologischen Forschung*. Munich: Fink, 1991.
- Swillen, Gerlinda. *De Wieg van WO II: Oorlogskinderen op de as Brussel-Berlijn*. Brussel: VUB Press, 2016.
- Tagay, Sefik, Ellen Schlotzbohm, and Marion Lindner. *Posttraumatische Belastungsstörung: Diagnostik, Therapie und Prävention*, Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2016.
- Tibelius, Simone. “Grenzverkehr”. *Eine transnationale Rechts- und Sozialgeschichte von Vaterschaft und Unterhalt (1940–1980)*. Mannheim: Röhrig Universitätsverlag, 2016.
- Tibelius, Simone. “‘An die Kindesmutter kann ich mich beim besten Willen nicht erinnern.’ – Vaterschaftsanerkennung und Unterhaltszahlung als Ressource für Wehrmachts- und Besatzungskinder.” In *Kinder des Zweiten Weltkrieges – Stigmatisierung, Ausgrenzung, Bewältigungsstrategien*, edited by Elke Kleinau, and Ingvill C. Mochmann, 93–114. Frankfurt a. M./New York: Campus, 2016.
- van Ee, Elisa, and Kleber, Rolf J. “Growing up under a shadow: Key issues in research on and treatment of children born of rape.” *Child Abuse Review* 22, no. 6 (2013): 386–397.
- Virgili, Fabrice. *Naître ennemi. Les enfants de couples franco-allemands nés pendant la Seconde Guerre Mondiale*. Paris: Payot, 2009.
- Welzer, Harald. “Von Fehlern und Daten: zur Rolle des Forschers im interpretativen Paradigma.” *Psychologie und Gesellschaftskritik* 14, no. 2–3 (1990): 153–174. Accessed June 18, 2023. <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-266157>.
- Welzer, Harald, Sabine Moller, and Karoline Tschuggnall. “Opa war kein Nazi”. *Nationalsozialismus und Holocaust im Familiengedächtnis*. Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer TB, 2002.
- Wierling, Dorothee. “Oral History.” In *Neue Themen und Methoden in der Geschichtswissenschaft*, edited by Michael Maurer, 81–151. Stuttgart: Reclam, 2003.
- Wilkinson, Mark D. et al. “The FAIR Guiding Principles for scientific data management and stewardship.” *Scientific Data* 3, no. 160018 (2016): 1–9. Accessed June 13, 2023. doi:10.1038/sdata.2016.18.
- Zenk-Möltgen, Wolfgang, Esra Akdeniz, Alexia Katsanidou, Verena Naßhoven, and Ebru Balaban. “Factors influencing the data sharing behavior of researchers in sociology and political science.” *Journal of Documentation* 74, no. 5 (2018): 1053–1073. Accessed June 13, 2023. doi:10.1108/JD-09–2017–0126.



---

Part II: **Children & Youth in World War II and its  
Aftermath**





Wiebke Hiemesch

# Witnessing Children's Lives under National Socialism: Oral Testimonies and Children's Drawings from Ghettos and Concentration Camps

## Introduction

More than one million Jewish children were murdered under the Nationalist-Socialist regime.<sup>1</sup> This figure doesn't include murdered Sinti and Roma children, children of opponents of the regime, under-age forced labourers and children with an alleged disability. Millions of children suffered persecution, deportation, displacement and the loss of their loved ones under National Socialism. As the "new generation" of the persecuted groups, children were targeted victims and particularly vulnerable.

The concentration camps and ghettos were an integral element of a system designed for the exploitation and murder of racially, politically and socially persecuted persons. They were sites of imprisonment, forced labour and the industrial extermination of entire groups to serve racist ideologies.<sup>2</sup> The inhuman conditions within the camps were such that children rarely survived them. And yet the presence of children is indeed documented for numerous camps and ghettos. But their total number remains unclear. Deportation lists and records were often destroyed before the Allies arrived at the camps. In the extermination camps children were often not even registered, but murdered immediately upon arrival.<sup>3</sup> The living conditions and survival chances of children varied in relation to the different camps and camp sections, their function and the different periods of the camps' history.

This chapter describes the dangers children faced in concentration camps and ghettos, as well as their experience of the inhumane conditions from the perspec-

---

**Note:** I would like to thank Edel Sheridan-Quantz for her careful editing and comments.

1 Patricia Heberer, *Children during the Holocaust* (Plymouth: AltaMira Press, 2011), xiv.

2 See Nikolaus Wachsmann and Jane Caplan, *Concentration Camps in Nazi Germany: The New Histories* (London: Routledge, 2010).

3 Reported for Auschwitz-Birkenau, see Verena Buser, *Überleben von Kindern und Jugendlichen in den Konzentrationslagern Sachsenhausen, Auschwitz und Bergen-Belsen* (Berlin: Metropol, 2011), 116–121, Heberer, *Children*, 154–162.

tive of a history of children's everyday lives. For this purpose, it focuses on the Ravensbrück women's concentration camp and the Theresienstadt ghetto. Due to their function within the camp system, children could survive here at least for a while. The Ravensbrück camp was built in 1939 about 90 km north of Berlin for the imprisonment of women. Particularly at the beginning, the camp was not designed for industrial-scale murder, but for the incarceration of political opponents and forced labourers. Many children under fourteen were deported together with their mothers. Around 120,000 women and children passed through the camp. Children had a slim chance of survival in Ravensbrück, even if they were not forced to work. Deadly living conditions and murder, medical experiments and, increasingly by the end of the war, targeted killings characterised Ravensbrück.<sup>4</sup> In Theresienstadt ghetto (Terezín) there was also a relatively large number of children, deported with their families. The National Socialist regime used Terezín as a transit camp and for propaganda reasons to deceive the public about the horror of the camps. The conditions here were in fact as life-threatening as in the other camps. Many of the children here were later deported to extermination camps and murdered there. In spite of the extreme living conditions in the ghetto, clandestine activities were organised for children.<sup>5</sup> A remarkable stock of drawings has been preserved, as discussed later in this chapter.

The aim of this chapter is to describe children's lives and to analyse their (mostly fragile) agency despite the extreme conditions they experienced in the camps. With a focus on the Ravensbrück women's concentration camp and the Theresienstadt ghetto, I discuss small moments of relating to the inhuman conditions and "seemingly small acts of serious instance of choice".<sup>6</sup> To avoid either reducing children to passive victims or essentialising and naturalising children's agency, I draw on a relational agency concept.<sup>7</sup> This stresses "discourses and practices of generational ordering [...] as the conditions for children's agency", which is produced in practices and relationships.<sup>8</sup> It also simultaneously draws attention to

---

4 See Bernhard Strebel, *Das KZ Ravensbrück. Geschichte eines Lagerkomplexes* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2003).

5 See Anna Hájková, *The Last Ghetto. An Everyday History of Theresienstadt* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020); Dana Kasperova, "Reflections on the focus of education in the Theresienstadt ghetto based on reports by Theresienstadt's educators," *Studia paedagogica* 18, no. 4 (2013), 37–56.

6 Hájková, *The Last Ghetto*, 6.

7 See Florian Esser et. al., eds., *Reconceptualising Agency and Childhood: New Perspectives in Childhood Studies* (London/New York: Routledge, 2015); Mona Gleason, "Avoiding the agency trap: caveats for historians of children, youth, and education," *History of Education* 45, no. 4 (2016), 446–459.

8 See Esser et. al., *Agency*, 8.

children's lack of agency and their vulnerability within constellations of power and violence. In a similar manner, Meike S. Baader argues in favour of questioning how children's vulnerability was historically and culturally differently produced, interpreted and translated into practices.<sup>9</sup> The concepts of children's agency and vulnerability thus emphasise the necessity of contextualizing the analysis. Hence the description of any agency in the camps – its appearance in minimal moments as well as its boundaries and negation – must grasp the relations of violence as its inescapable horizon.

My considerations are based on oral testimonies and children's drawings. In order to describe children's everyday lives and agency in historical perspective, researchers seek out sources produced by children themselves. These are limited and rather unconventional ones, which present challenges in their creation and preservation as well as their identification and source-critical interpretation. This situation is aggravated in the study of sources produced and preserved during the Holocaust and under National Socialist persecution.<sup>10</sup> In this chapter, I refer on the one hand to interviews conducted decades later and shaped by memory and trauma. On the other hand, I draw on children's drawings that were mostly made in the camps, but which bring with them special challenges due to their aesthetic and visual character.

The chapter begins by elaborating on children's lives during National Socialism as part of a history of children and childhood (part 1). In the following paragraphs, I will structure my argument along the two different types of sources. First, I present findings of an analysis of (remembered) experiences as a child in Ravensbrück camp using secondary and primary qualitative interviews (part 2).<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, I discuss children's drawings as a rare source for an everyday history of children and childhood in the camps (part 3). I conclude by returning to the question of describing children's agency despite the extreme conditions of the camps and the possibilities each of the two sources offer for researching multi-perspective histories (part 4).

---

9 See Meike S. Baader, "Vulnerable Kinder in der Moderne in erziehungs- und emotionsgeschichtlicher Perspektive", in *Vulnerable Kinder. Interdisziplinäre Annäherungen*, ed. Sabine Andresen et al. (Wiesbaden: VS, 2015), 79–101.

10 See Wiebke Hiemesch, "Tracing the Absence of Children's Voices – Artefacts of Children's Persecution Under the National Socialist Regime," *Paedagogica Historica* 58, no. 3 (2022), special issue "Power relations, preservation and voice. Writing histories of education with autobiographical materials," ed. Karen Lillie, Lisbeth Matzner, and Lilli Riettiens, 329–348; Nell Musgrove, Carla Pascoe Leahy and Kristine Moruzi, eds., *Children's Voices from the Past: New Historical and Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019).

11 Wiebke Hiemesch, *Kinder im Konzentrationslager Ravensbrück. (Über-)Lebenserinnerungen* (Cologne/Vienna/Weimar: Böhlau 2017).

## Persecution and murder under National Socialism in the history of children and childhood

The persecution and murder of children under National Socialism have been the subject of selected studies, but are still scarcely researched.<sup>12</sup> In the late 1980s, the psychoanalyst Judith Kestenberg and colleagues published various studies on child survivors and their lives after the Holocaust.<sup>13</sup> Further studies on the aftermath of the camps have been published, integrating theories of memory, trauma and social dynamics.<sup>14</sup> By the early 1990s, a few studies focused on the specific experiences of children in concentration camps. They also pinpointed children as subjects and the need to reflect their stories as a part of social history.<sup>15</sup> In recent years, interest in this field has been growing.<sup>16</sup>

The persecution and murder of children under National Socialism, however, has hardly ever been reflected in a historiography of children and childhood,<sup>17</sup> although the history of children and childhood aims to research the construction of childhood in its social conditions.<sup>18</sup> Thus it should have the potential and the terminology to discuss critically what it means to consider childhood during war and genocide. As early as 1991, Deborah Dwork demanded that, in view of the crimes committed against children under National Socialism, “our understanding of child-

---

12 See for the review Hiemesch, *Kinder*, 22–32.

13 See f.e. Judith S. Kestenberg and Charlotte Kahn, ed., *Children Surviving Persecution. An International Study of Trauma and Healing*, Westport (Connecticut: Praeger, 1998). See also the early work of Hans Keilson, *Sequential Traumatization in Children: A Clinical and Statistical Follow-up Study on the Fate of the Jewish War Orphans in the Netherlands* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1992).

14 See Sharon Kangisser Cohen, *Child Survivors of the Holocaust in Israel. Social Dynamics and Post-War Experiences: Finding Their Voice* (Brighton: Sussex, 2005); Rebecca Clifford, *Survivors. Children's Lives after the Holocaust* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020).

15 See Deborah Dwork, *Children With a Star: Jewish Youth in Nazi Europe* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1991); George Eisen, *Spielen im Schatten des Todes. Kinder und Holocaust* (Munich: Piper, 1993).

16 See f.e. Nicolas Stargardt, *Witnesses of War: Children's Lives under the Nazis* (New York: Knopf, 2006); Heberer, *Children*; André Rozenberg, *Les enfants dans la Shoah. La déportation des enfants juifs et tsiganes de France* (Paris: Les Éd. de Paris Max Chaleil, 2013); Alwin Meyer, *Vergiss deinen Namen nicht: die Kinder von Auschwitz* (Göttingen: Steidl, 2015).

17 See for exceptions: Jeffrey T. Zalar, “Holocaust,” in *Encyclopedia of children and childhood. In History and Society*, ed. Paula Fass (New York: Macmillan, 2004), 431–434; Martina Winkler, *Kindheitsgeschichte. Eine Einführung* (Göttingen: Vadenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2017).

18 Meike Sophia Baader, “Kindheit,” in *Historische Bildungsforschung. Konzepte – Methoden – Forschungsfelder*, ed. Gerhard Kluchert, Klaus-Peter Horn, Carola Groppe, and Marcelo Caruso (Regensburg: UTV, 2021), 149.

hood in a situation of politically engendered trauma” had to be improved or to be refined in order to “add to the general discourse of the history of childhood”.<sup>19</sup> However, instead of critically discussing the underlying concept of childhood, most studies on the history of childhood still tend to avoid presenting the fates of persecuted children in their broader historical analysis, which often traces the “the rise of ‘modern’ childhoods”.<sup>20</sup>

With reference to Dwork, I assume that research on children and childhood also needs to reflect a dialectical understanding of modernisation in terms of de-centering normative conceptions of childhood in order to grasp the variety of children's pasts.<sup>21</sup> This refers to power and violence in general and crimes of the National Socialist regime in particular as dimensions of childhood and children's lives.<sup>22</sup> Various theories of modernisation and society emphasise the complex relation between the rise of humanitarian and civilizational values and their destruction in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>23</sup> I am interested in how these relations affect the lives of children. For this purpose, I follow the approach of a “history of children”, which aims to research children's everyday lives within different social constellations in order to gain a broader understanding of history and society.<sup>24</sup>

---

19 Deborah Dwork, *Children With a Star*, xlv.

20 James Marten, *The History of Childhood. A very short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 50.

21 See Hiemesch *Kinder*, 68–118. See for such a History of Childhood in modern Society, including an article on children in Nazi Concentration Camps: Meike S. Baader, Florian Eßer and Wolfgang Schröer, eds., *Kindheiten in der Moderne. Eine Geschichte der Sorge* (Frankfurt/Main: Campus, 2014).

22 See Meike S. Baader, *Vulnerable Kinder*, 91; Hiemesch, *Kinder*, 68–118.

23 See for theories of modernisation and society: Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung. Philosophische Fragmente*, 18<sup>th</sup> edition (Frankfurt a. M.: Fischer, 2009); Zygmunt Bauman, *Dialektik der Ordnung. Die Moderne und der Holocaust* (Hamburg: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1992); Riccardo Bavaj, *Die Ambivalenz der Moderne im Nationalsozialismus. Eine Bilanz der Forschung* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 2003).

24 See for example: Egle Becchi, *Il Bambini nella storia* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1994); Paula S. Fass, ed., *The Routledge History of Childhood in the Western World* (London: Routledge, 2013); Colin Heywood, *Childhood in Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Medford, 2018); Sarah Maza, “The Kids Aren’t All Right: Historians and the Problem of Childhood,” *The American Historical Review* 125, no. 4 (2020): 1261–1285.

## (Remembered) children's lives in Ravensbrück women's concentration camp

In the following, I present the results of an interview study on children's lives in the Ravensbrück women's concentration camp. I title it *remembered* children's lives, since I am approaching the question via autobiographical memories of adult child survivors. First, I discuss the methodological approach and critically reflect on the interviews regarding aspects of witnessing, memory and trauma. I continue with results of the study, starting with contextual information about the numbers and situation of children in the Ravensbrück camp, followed by findings on remembered experiences as a child in the camp between violence and moments of care.

### Methodological approach

The following analysis is based on five videographed qualitative interviews with three female and two male survivors born between 1930 and 1937.<sup>25</sup> Four of them lived in the Netherlands, Slovakia and France and were persecuted as Jews. One woman was born in Poland and arrested in the suppressed Warsaw uprising. When the interviews took place, between 2003 and 2013, the survivors were between 71 and 80 years old. Four interviews were analysed as secondary, one as a primary source. The interviews were conducted by different interviewers with various disciplinary backgrounds and in different settings. Two interviews were accessed via the online archive "Die Frauen von Ravensbrück" [women of Ravensbrück]. They were conducted by Loretta Walz, a filmmaker with broad experience in oral history and National Socialism. These two interviews took place in 2003 at the Ravensbrück Memorial, one in German, the other in English. The other two interviews were conducted by the staff of the Ravensbrück Memorial, also at the Memorial site. One interview was done in 2012 by a historian and ethnologist researcher, in German, with small parts in English. The other was conducted in 2007 by a member of the memorial archival staff in Polish, with the help of the survivor's daughter translating into German. The whole interview had been translated into German for the analysis. In 2013 I conducted one interview myself

---

<sup>25</sup> For the purpose of anonymity, only initials or pseudonyms and limited personal data are given here. The transcription is by the author and follows nearly the spoken word without capitalisation. Punctuation marks are used for better readability.

at the survivor's home in France. The interview took place in German and French with the help of a translator. It was also translated into German for analysis. All interviews were oriented towards a biographical narrative approach, starting with birth and the early years before deportation. The interviews range in length from 60 to 210 minutes. Given the mentioned interviews' heterogeneity, I reflect on each interview in a source-critical manner regarding the setting and the interview guidance, e.g. narrative impulse or conversational dynamics. I paid great attention to the interviewer's role, the atmosphere created to give room for relating the painful past and the interpersonal verbal and non-verbal communication.<sup>26</sup>

As oral testimonies of crimes under National Socialism, the interviews must be particularly reflected in the context of memory and trauma. The interviews emerge dialogically as remembered narratives addressed to a recipient. This is an attempt to face the "impossibility of telling" the crimes.<sup>27</sup> Memories, though, do not emerge autonomously, i.e. they are not preserved as such, but are re-constructed repeatedly at different points in life, affected by collective memory-cultural contexts.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, memories of being a child may be less structured in terms of dates and places, and more strongly shaped by affects and emotions.<sup>29</sup> This is especially true when it comes to traumatic events that still exceed the capacity of comprehension and expression.<sup>30</sup>

In order to reflect the specificity of the interviews in terms of memory and trauma, I used biographical research methods in the analysis.<sup>31</sup> They aim not only at "what" is told, but also work to identify modes of "how" it is narrated. These modes are presented in the following under aspects of violence and moments of care. For this purpose, memory processes and the inscription of traumatically induced experiences in the narrative are reflected. Yet contradictions, gaps

---

<sup>26</sup> See Hiemesch, *Kinder*, 142, 169–189.

<sup>27</sup> Dori Laub, "An Event Without a Witness: Truth, Testimony and Survival," in *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, ed. Shoshana Felmann, and Dori Laub (London: Routledge, 1992), 79. See Sonja Knopp, Sebastian Schulze, Anne Eusterschulte, eds., *Videografierte Zeugenschaft: Ein interdisziplinärer Dialog* (Velbrück: Weilerswist, 2016).

<sup>28</sup> See Maurice Halbwachs, *Das Gedächtnis und seine sozialen Bedingungen* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1966); Aleida Assmann, *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit. Erinnerungskultur und Geschichtspolitik* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2006), 21–63.

<sup>29</sup> See Imbke Behnken and Jürgen Zinnecker, ed., *Kinder – Kindheit – Lebensgeschichte* (Seelze-Velber: Kallmeyer, 2001).

<sup>30</sup> See Ilka Quindeau, *Trauma und Geschichte. Interpretationen autobiographischer Erzählungen von Überlebenden des Holocaust* (Frankfurt a. M.: Brandes & Apsel, 1995).

<sup>31</sup> See Gabriele Rosenthal, *Erlebte und erzählte Lebensgeschichte: Gestalt und Struktur biographischer Selbstbeschreibungen* (Frankfurt a. M.: Campus, 1995); Arnd-Michael Nohl, *Interview und dokumentarische Methode. Anleitungen für die Forschungspraxis*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (Wiesbaden: VS, 2009).



and silences contained in them are not understood as inconsistencies, but as indicators to approach the children's experience. This research is also unavoidably coloured by my putting into words what the child survivors witnessed.<sup>32</sup>

In the larger study on which this chapter is based, additional sources were added to widen the dense interview analysis. For this purpose, I used further oral testimonies from the Visual History Archive of the USC Shoah Foundation<sup>33</sup> as well as the Witnessing Genocide Archive at the University of Lund,<sup>34</sup> the collection of the Ravensbrück Memorial as well as autobiographies and historical studies.

## Children in the Ravensbrück women's concentration camp

According to the (incompletely preserved) arrival lists for Ravensbrück women's camp, out of 55,549 recorded inmates at least 881 people in the camp were sixteen years old or younger, 221 between four months and fourteen years old. The children came from eighteen nations. They were either persecuted as "Jews" and Sinti and Roma or arrived on transports from occupied countries (among others Poland, Russia, Ukraine). A large number came from the suppressed uprising of the *Armia Krajowa* (Home Army) in Warsaw in August 1944, as well as from camps near the eastern front.<sup>35</sup> The following passages refer mainly to the final period from mid-1944 to April 1945, when the number of prisoners and also of children increased rapidly. The camp was severely overcrowded, living conditions deteriorated rapidly, and targeted killings were carried out.<sup>36</sup>

Newborn infants were also brought to the camp, and births took place there. The preserved "Geburtenbuch" [births register] from Ravensbrück records 560 births between September 1944 and April 1945; most of the new-born infants were marked as dead.<sup>37</sup>

---

<sup>32</sup> See Hiemesch, *Kinder*, 18–22; 129–137.

<sup>33</sup> <https://sfi.usc.edu/>, accessed January 3, 2023.

<sup>34</sup> "Witnessing genocide," <https://www.uu.se/hitta/digitala-samlingar/witnessing-genocide>, accessed January 03, 2023.

<sup>35</sup> See Britta Pawelke, "Als Häftling geboren. Kinder in Ravensbrück," in *Dachauer Hefte* 9 (1993), 96; Hiemesch, *Kinder*, 316–329. Britta Pawelke kindly provided the author with her statistics.

<sup>36</sup> See for the history of Ravensbrück Strebel, *Das KZ Ravensbrück*; Iris Nachum and Dina Porat, "Die Geschichte des Konzentrationslagers Ravensbrück im Spiegel seiner Funktionen," in *Schnittpunkt des Holocaust: Jüdische Frauen und Kinder im Konzentrationslager Ravensbrück*, ed. Irith Dublon-Knebel (Berlin: Metropol, 2009), 27–40.

<sup>37</sup> See Christl Wickert, "In Ravensbrück geboren. Fallstudie: Zwangsarbeitseinsatz von Häftling-särztinnen und -pflegerinnen in der Geburtenabteilung," in "... unmöglich, diesen Schrecken aufzu-



However, it is difficult to give an exact number of children, their names and their stories that were there. Lists are missing and ages were given incorrectly. Sometimes other prisoners changed the names and ages of the youngest either to protect them – as supposedly too young – *from* forced labour or to protect them – as supposedly old enough – *through* forced labour. It is reported that children from the age of twelve had to carry out forced labour. However, much younger children were forced to work at Siemens & Halske AG.<sup>38</sup> Children were sent to the forced labour sites and to the camp's own factories. Their tasks included working as camp messengers and sorting the prisoners' confiscated possessions.<sup>39</sup>

There is another indication of a more or less official different treatment of younger prisoners, with regard to the separation of male and female prisoners in the camp. This was part of the National Socialist gender policy, and also had a serious impact on the children's lives. Female children stayed with their mothers when arriving together at the camp. Male children were sent to a separate men's camp from the age of twelve, some placed in a separate barracks.<sup>40</sup> However, in the men's camp there were also much younger children, so that a strict regulation cannot be assumed.<sup>41</sup>

## Remembered experience as a child

The idea of being protected and cared for as a child serves as a point of orientation for many of the child survivors' narratives.<sup>42</sup> They describe the absolute denial of this idea and the negation of basic human rights in the camp in order to communicate their experiences. These were very heterogeneous and it is impossible to present the entire variety here. In the following, I will therefore only outline

---

halten". *Die medizinische Versorgung durch Häftlinge im Frauen-KZ Ravensbrück*, ed. Ramona Saavedra Santis, and Christl Wickert (Berlin: Metropol, 2017), 92.

38 See Nachum and Porat, *Ravensbrück*, 33.

39 See for "forced labour" Hiemesch, *Kinder*, 355–357.

40 See Wiebke Hiemesch, "Der ‚Kinderblock‘ im Männerlager des Frauen-Konzentrationslagers Ravensbrück," in *Zwischen Verfolgung und "Volksgemeinschaft". Kindheit und Jugend im Nationalsozialismus* (Beiträge zur Geschichte der nationalsozialistischen Verfolgung 1), ed. Jens-Christian Wagner (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2020), 90–101.

41 See Hiemesch, *Kinder*, 325, 331–332.

42 See Wiebke Hiemesch, "'Unsagbares' beschreiben. Kindheitsnormen als narrative Orientierungsfigur in (Über-) Lebenserinnerungen von Child Survivors nationalsozialistischer Zwangslager," in *Normativität in der Erziehungswissenschaft*, ed. Wolfgang Meseth, Rita Castle, Anja Tervooren, and Jörg Zirfas (Weinheim: Springer VS, 2019), 291–308.

two different aspects that I identified in the interviews – the *violence* they suffered and the struggle for *moments of care*.

*Violence* is described in the interviews primarily as assaults that destroyed physical and mental integrity as well as family privacy. It pervaded all living conditions. Violent attacks could strike the children at any time and from any direction. Here the limits and negation of any agency in the camp become obvious.

The “arrival procedures” established the camp’s order of violence from the beginning.<sup>43</sup> Personal belongings were taken away, people had to undress, many had their hair shaved off and they had to shower in front of the guards. One boy born in 1932 came from the Netherlands to Ravensbrück via the Westerbork camp together with his mother and younger siblings. As an adult, he remembers the confrontation with a “different world”. Never before had he seen naked women, especially not his mother “and this was a real shock that was the first real shock that I got when I came into the camp.”<sup>44</sup>

This moment, which can be read as a complete lack of orientation, is also remembered by other child survivors. Many of them, dominated by the fear of death, would not even have recognised their parents among the others. The sister of the boy quoted above, herself born in 1937, also remembers this moment, which frightened her so much that she just ran away. This brief moment of acting to protect herself was immediately punished. “[A]nd when I was scared and I wanted to escape – I ran away and my mother, *she run [sic!] after me and they hit her and I think they hit me too. But I am not sure.*”<sup>45</sup>

The child survivors’ descriptions often orbit around the violence with which their physical and psychological integrity was destroyed at the most fundamental level, denying the basic right to governance over their own bodies.

The children knew that they had to be as discreet as possible, not giving the guards the slightest reason to notice them. This fear becomes evident when child survivors talk about the “Appell” [roll call].<sup>46</sup> Lili K. was born in 1932 in the north of France, where she was arrested in October 1943 together with her parents and two younger brothers. Together with her brothers and her mother she was brought to Ravensbrück women’s camp in 1943. Like many other child survivors, Lili K. remembers the “Appell” as being extremely brutal. “[I]f we did not im-

---

<sup>43</sup> See Hiemesch, *Kinder*, 333–335.

<sup>44</sup> Interview with M. K. by Loretta Walz 22 October 2003, Memorial Ravensbrück. Online-archive “Die Frauen von Ravensbrück” von Loretta Walz, accessed January 3, 2023, <https://www.videoarchiv-ravensbrueck.de/de>.

<sup>45</sup> Interview with E. A. by Jeanette Toussaint, 23. April 2012, Memorial Ravensbrück, MGR/StGB 2012 d12/15–3 (German, author’s translation into English, italics originally in English).

<sup>46</sup> See Hiemesch, *Kinder*, 352–355.

mediately respond to the command from the SS, we received *schlag* (speaks German 'beatings'). So it was important for us to avoid this."<sup>47</sup>

Whether in freezing cold or scorching heat, prisoners had to stand in the square for hours. The children feared collapsing during "Appell", losing their mother, siblings or other relatives or not being able to do anything if they were beaten by the guards. Eva B., born in 1940, had to witness the death of her younger sister in Ravensbrück, and saw her mother being brutally beaten up several times.<sup>48</sup>

The forced labour is remembered by the child survivors as both threatening and as offering potential small acts of survival. Children could get extra food under certain circumstances. But the sheer physical exertion also affected them in a life-threatening way.<sup>49</sup> Moments of acting to secure one's own life could become dangerous. A man, born 1932, remembers taking paper from the labour site and being caught during an inspection: "[A]nd here I was trying to go to the end of the line. I was the first in line. Had a piece of paper. So they played football with me for a little while. They kicked me."<sup>50</sup>

Children who were not subjected to forced labour tried to hide in the barracks during the day and avoided the camp streets where the SS patrolled. The yells of the guards and their dogs are described as particularly threatening for children in several interviews. The dogs were trained to attack people and moved at the children's height.<sup>51</sup> When her mother had to work during the day, Lili K. and her brothers were in constant fear of the SS guards until she returned. This can be read as an experience of the inability to act in any way to affect a situation. Lili describes a physical paralysis focused on mere survival, while the children only started to "live" again when their mother returned: "[W]e only began to live at that moment; the whole day was dominated by fear and anxiety; we started to live when she came back."<sup>52</sup>

Children were confronted with a system of violence designed to destroy personal relationships. Despite this, adults and children fought for *moments of care* and thus also the (re)establishment of generational order. This can be identified as another aspect of the remembered experience. If children were together with

---

47 Author's interview with Lili K., August 8, 2013, France (France, author's translation into English).

48 Ursula Krause-Schmidt, "Eva Bäckerova – a hidden child. Erinnerungen aufgezeichnet im Oktober 2003 von Ursula Krause-Schmitt," in *Informationen* 59 (2004), 14–17.

49 See Hiemesch *Kinder*, 355–357.

50 Interview with Eddie W., 1997 in Bourbank/USA, Interview 27881, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation Institute (2015), accessed July 30, 2014, <https://vha.usc.edu>.

51 See Hiemesch, *Kinder*, 228.

52 Author's interview with Lili K. (France, author's translation into English).

their parents, and – due to the separation of men and women – especially with their mothers, these are often the main focus of their narration. The fear of being abruptly separated from loved ones is repeatedly described. Lili K. also speaks about this perceived danger in the quote above and she emphasises how much her mother sacrificed for her children: “[M]aman was incredible. We had so little to eat, little *nicht viel* (speaks German ‘not much’) and then she sacrificed herself to give us an extra bite. She lived only for her children. Never could she have imagined leaving the camp without one of us three. She fought for us.”<sup>53</sup>

Lili K.’s quote also reflects that it was often the children who gave their siblings, mothers, fathers or other adults the emotional strength to stay alive in order to care of them. A particular phenomenon is that of the “Lagermütter” (camp mothers). Women took care of abandoned children during the day or for a longer period of time, which also strengthened the women emotionally.<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, there are reports of clandestine cultural and educational activities by prisoners. With very little material, Polish women in Ravensbrück created textbooks for studying foreign languages, poetry and history. These are currently being researched from the perspective of cultural and educational history.<sup>55</sup>

There was solidarity within the children’s group too.<sup>56</sup> While some child survivors indicate that they lacked the mental and physical strength to interact with others, there are a few reports of shared practices and play among the children’s group in Ravensbrück. One woman remembers that they hid with other children to tell stories and imagine other realities:

[A]nd we used to play. and what do I mean when I say we used to play? There were no flowers, there was no grass, there was nothing at all. I remember when – you know during the day we had nothing to do, the kids. So we were lying. We kept out of everybody’s way. So it was like a little [shows a hollow] in the ground and we were lying on it and we used [to] tell each other stories of all these things. We liked to do when we weren’t there. And I know all I wanted to do was to grow wings and fly away.<sup>57</sup>

---

53 Author’s interview with Lili K (France, author’s translation into English, italics originally in German/France).

54 See Insa Eschebach, “Kinder und Jugendliche im Frauen-Konzentrationslager Ravensbrück. Erinnerungen ehemaliger Häftlinge,” in *Zwischen Verfolgung und “Volksgemeinschaft”. Kindheit und Jugend im Nationalsozialismus*, ed. Jens-Christian Wagner (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2020), 78–84.

55 German Research Foundation-funded project “Paradoxical Education – Resistance – Surviving. Secret teaching and children’s drawings in the Ravensbrück Women’s Concentration Camp” (no. 416725854, Meike S. Baader and Wiebke Hiemesch). Witness testimonies and books can be found at the “Witnessing Genocide Archive” at the University of Lund.

56 See also Hiemesch, *‘Kinderblock’*.

57 Interview with Irene F.-K., 1995 in Johannesburg/South Africa, Interview 6869, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation Institute (2015), accessed July 30, 2014, <https://vha.usc.edu>.

The quotation exemplifies, sometimes children at Ravensbrück related to the horrible conditions around them by imagining another world. As autonomous practices these may be interpreted as fragile moments of agency.<sup>58</sup>

## Children's drawings from concentration camps and ghettos

Personal relationships were a mainstay for children in the camp that provided a glimpse of security and could open up moments of agency. These could enable children to arrive at other ways of dealing with their situation. In the previous section, I referred to interviews as retrospective narratives of the camp experience to make this point. In the following section, I discuss children's drawings created in Ravensbrück camp and Theresienstadt ghetto. As aesthetic products made by the child at the time, these sources provide a different approach to the everyday lives of children and their forms of agency, but bring their own specific features. In the following, I first present selected collections of children's drawings. I then discuss how these drawings can be interpreted in terms of agency.

### Collections of drawings

The three exemplary collections of children's drawings presented in the following were created at different times and places. Most of them were made in the camp or ghetto, some shortly after liberation. Furthermore, some collections are held (rather unsystematically) in archives, while others have been curated and published. The uniqueness of all these drawings has to be emphasised. First of all, drawing materials were forbidden and lacking in the camps. The struggle for survival, forced labour, sickness, hunger, fear and murder – all of this suppressed creativity.<sup>59</sup> This poses questions about the contexts of creation, the impulse to draw and the forms of agency that this aesthetic practice opened up. The drawings also pose questions about their heterogeneous preservation, curation and their attributed significance in research and public memory.

---

<sup>58</sup> See Wiebke Hiemesch, "Behind the Baracks' – Spielen und Kinderkultur in nationalsozialistischen Ghettos und Konzentrationslagern," in *Museum und Bildung* 92–93 (Berlin/Münster: Lit-Verlag, 2022), 58–72.

<sup>59</sup> See Josée Leclerc, "Re-Presenting Trauma: The Witness Function in the Art of the Holocaust," *Art Therapy Journal of the American Art Therapy Association* 28, no. 2 (2011), 83.

The first collection includes drawings of a fourteen-year-old Polish girl made in Ravensbrück women's camp, in a forced labour camp near Porta Westfalica and in a Displaced Persons (DP) camp near Emmerich on the Rhine.<sup>60</sup> In Ravensbrück, female Polish prisoners managed to gather children together and protect them from forced labour in Block 20.<sup>61</sup> One of them was the Polish girl. A female prisoner noticed her passion for drawing and secretly got her materials. During the day, the children in Block 20 took refuge on the "3rd floor" of the plank bunk beds, where the girl drew the children's conversations, ideas and wishes. The drawings made with pencil and crayons show manifold motifs such as female portraits, dancing girls, scenes from fairy tales and Polish sagas and myths, as well as religious motifs and those of nature and household scenes. They also show clothing and scenes from within the camp. The lack of available material can be seen in the various sheets used, for example torn paper. Dozens of small drawings on the front and back of single sheets show how the girl dealt with limited space. Those drawings that can be attributed to the DP camp tend to be larger, drawn on the back of forms and with bright colours. It can be assumed that here the girl had more drawing materials at her disposal, with which she could develop other forms of expression. The artist survived, preserved the drawings privately and donated them to the memorial's archive Ravensbrück in 2006, finally also telling her story in an interview.<sup>62</sup> Drawings and the interview can be accessed via the archive. The drawings have not been published yet but are the subject of current research by the author and colleagues.<sup>63</sup>

The second collection was made by 12-year-old Helga Weissová.<sup>64</sup> She arrived at the Theresienstadt ghetto in December 1941 and stayed there for almost three years together with her parents. She brought with her a sketchbook, watercolours and pencils. It was her father who asked her to "draw what you see [Zeichne, was du siehst]".<sup>65</sup> Helga Weissová was placed in the girls' home, where women took care of the girls and offered them education in secret.<sup>66</sup> There on her bunk bed,

---

<sup>60</sup> Archive of the Ravensbrück Memorial, MGR/StGB, Depot V 3342–3391\_E1.

<sup>61</sup> Hiemesch, *Kinder*, 361–363.

<sup>62</sup> Interview with Kry. Z. by Monika Herzog, July 16, 2006, Memorial Ravensbrück, MGR/StGB – Mediathek, D11/23.

<sup>63</sup> See Hiemesch, *Kinder*, 381–394. The drawings are also part of the research project "Paradoxical Education – Resistance – Surviving" and are being studied by scholars from different fields (see footnote 83).

<sup>64</sup> Helga Weissová, *Zeichne, was Du siehst. Zeichnungen eines Kindes aus Theresienstadt/Terezín* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag 1998).

<sup>65</sup> See Weissová, *Zeichne, was du siehst*.

<sup>66</sup> See Hannelore Brenner-Wonschnick, *The Girls of Room 28: Friendship, Hope, and Survival in Theresienstadt* (New York: Schocken Books, 2009).

she drew her view of the daily life in Theresienstadt. Her drawings are moving in their rich detail and they show the development of her artistic expression over the years. A selection of the approximately 100 drawings has been curated and published. In a preface, Helga Weissová provides information about their creation and preservation. Before she was deported to Auschwitz with her mother, she gave the drawings to her uncle, who preserved them until liberation. After liberation, she added further drawings about her experiences in Auschwitz and Mauthausen.<sup>67</sup>

It must have been particularly difficult for children to keep their drawings with them under the extreme conditions, and if they were sent to another camp. The two girls mentioned here were quite old, and they survived. This may also be the reason why their drawings were preserved in the camps and through liberation until today.

The best-known and largest collection of drawings by younger children was also created in the Theresienstadt ghetto, in the children's homes. Some 4,000 drawings and paintings were saved, not by the children themselves, but were recovered after liberation and are preserved today in the Jewish Museum in Prague.<sup>68</sup> A large number of the children were murdered. Thus, the stories behind the drawings cannot be fully clarified. The drawings were created in art classes held by the artist and teacher Friedel Dicker-Brandeis, who was deported to Auschwitz in autumn 1944 and murdered there. Before her transport left, she hid the drawings in the children's dormitories. Dicker-Brandeis used experimental art methods in her classes, which she had learned at the Bauhaus in Weimar, to help the children develop their creativity and self-expression. The majority of drawings were made by girls and document exercises with materials and technique. The drawings follow themes – probably set by Dicker-Brandeis – or record memories and hopes as well as everyday life in Theresienstadt.<sup>69</sup> Parts of the collection have been exhibited in various contexts, published and have also been subject to research.<sup>70</sup> In her study, Sarah Kass explores the drawings' meanings in

---

<sup>67</sup> See Weissová, *Zeichne, was du siehst*, 10.

<sup>68</sup> "Children's Drawings From The Terezín Ghetto," accessed June 19, 2023, <https://www.jewishmuseum.cz/en/collection-research/collections-funds/visual-arts/children-s-drawings-from-the-terezin-ghetto/>.

<sup>69</sup> See Nicholas Stargardt, "Children's Art of the Holocaust," *Past and Present. A Journal of Historical Studies* 161, no. 1 (1998), 191–235, here 194–195; Sarah Kass, *Kinderzeichnungen aus dem Ghetto Theresienstadt (1941–1945): Ein Beitrag zur Erinnerungs- und Vermächtniskultur* (Marburg: Tectum Verlag, 2015), 59.

<sup>70</sup> See Hana Volavkova, *I Never Saw Another Butterfly: Children's Drawings & Poems from Terezin Concentration Camp, 1942–44*, new edition (New York: Schocken, 1994).

order to foster a culture of remembrance, gathering what little information was available about the children.<sup>71</sup> As early as 1998, Nicolas Stargardt discussed the drawings from Theresienstadt in the context of their significance as historical sources with which to examine children as “historical subjects”.<sup>72</sup>

## Children’s drawings and agency

I conclude this section by discussing the possibilities of describing children’s agency despite camp conditions by focusing on children’s drawings. Visual studies have emphasised the value of images for historical research and have proposed methods that consider the specifics of the visual, with its simultaneity and ambiguity.<sup>73</sup> As an aesthetic practice, drawing enables other forms of expression than language or writing. But methods reach limits when it comes to children’s drawing.<sup>74</sup> Although a source from the “children’s hand”, there is a twofold gap created by translating the visual into the verbal and “translating children’s experience into the language of adults”.<sup>75</sup> As Higonnet reminds us, the drawings cannot be seen as “truth” telling, as meaning is always mediated by the researcher’s interpretation.<sup>76</sup> But the provenance and genesis of historical children’s drawings are often uncertain. Their history continues even after their creation, carrying on (re)writing their biographies of preservation, archiving and curating.<sup>77</sup> Therefore, the drawings need to be contextualised with further information of “the story behind” them.

Using methods of material cultures and artefact analysis,<sup>78</sup> I have shown elsewhere how a case study of just two drawings by one girl “read as a trace” can be

---

71 Kass, *Kinderzeichnungen*, 363–510.

72 Stargardt, *Children’s Art*, 228

73 See Gerhard Paul, ed., *Visual History Ein Studienbuch* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006); Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing. The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001).

74 See f.e. Sara Eldén, “Inviting the messy: Drawing methods and ‘children’s voices’,” *Childhood* 20, no. 1 (2012), 66–81; Mirja Kekeritz and Melanie Kubandt, *Kinderzeichnungen in der qualitativen Forschung. Herangehensweisen, Potenziale, Grenzen* (Wiesbaden: VS, 2022).

75 Stargardt, *Children’s Art*, 231

76 Margaret R. Higonnet, “The Cases of World War 1 and Darfur,” *PMLA (Publications of the Modern Language Association of America)* 121, no. 5 (2006), 1574.

77 See f.e. Jody Joy, “Reinvigorating Object Biography: Reproducing the Drama of Object Lives,” *World Archeology* 41, no. 4 (2009), 540–556.

78 See Manfred Lueger und Ulrike Froschauer, *Artefaktanalyse. Grundlagen und Verfahren* (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2018); Thomas Meier, Michael R. Ott and Rebecca Sauer, eds., *Materiale Textkul-*



taken as a starting point to unfold the complexity of its multidimensional entanglement. The analysis starts with the drawings and follows several steps. At the beginning there is a brief description of the drawing's materiality and representations. Based on this, assumptions about possible contexts of creation and use are elaborated. By using further sources and studies, the conditions of origin and the continued existence of the drawings are explored. Following this, the shifting meanings attributed to the drawings are outlined to sketch out each object's biography. Above all, this approach aims to make the story of the drawing child visible by taking its aesthetic product seriously as a trace of cultural involvement.<sup>79</sup>

With these considerations in mind and with reference to the collections above, I suggest three levels of addressing children's drawings to gain insight into moments of agency despite the conditions in the camp:

On the *first level*, the drawings can be analysed in terms of what they depict. A variety of themes can be identified by the researcher that children dealt with in the camp. Helga Weissová's drawings show her view on everyday life in Theresienstadt, documenting the lack of food and clothing and the imminent risk of illness, violence and death. The drawings of the Polish girls also show that children imagined other worlds, connected to memories of earlier times or possible futures. This also took place in generationally ordered constellations of learning, as in Theresienstadt, where the children practised drawing techniques.

On the *second level*, referring to Josée Leclerc's reflections on trauma and the art of the Holocaust, I address the children's drawings not as "images of the Holocaust but rather images created within the Holocaust".<sup>80</sup> They bear witness to the struggle to survive and to maintain mental vitality "in a universe sworn to eradicate not just life but the will to live."<sup>81</sup> Not the depiction, but the act of drawing as an aesthetic practice in the context of the camps forms the research focus. Here, aspects of the drawings' materiality, their origin and their involvement in practices are of relevance. Drawing, when possible, offered an activity distanced from the external control of the camp's violence, one in which children made their own choices and created their own worlds. In particular, the drawings of the 14-year-old girl, which were conceived collectively, indicate to us questions of collective forms of agency. They can also be framed as a practice of sharing and co-creating

---

turen. *Konzepte – Materialien – Praktiken* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2015); Karin Priem, Gudrun König and Rita Casale, eds., *Die Materialität der Erziehung: Kulturelle und soziale Aspekte pädagogischer Objekte* (Weinheim/Basel: Beltz, 2012), 105–123; Marianne Hirsch and Leo Spitzer, "Testimonial Objects: Memory, Gender, and Transmission," *Poetics Today* 27, no. 2 (2006), 353–383.

<sup>79</sup> See Hiemesch, *Tracing*.

<sup>80</sup> Leclerc, *Trauma*, 82.

<sup>81</sup> Leclerc, *Trauma*, 88.

cultural knowledge and reclaiming humanity and basic moral values. The history of their origin testifies to their creativity in finding and creating (kind of) protective spaces.

On the *third level*, drawings can be considered in terms of their “biography” – and that also means their specific agency – within social contexts. Children’s drawings of conflict and war are embedded in narratives and circulate in discourses of commemorative culture and politics. Mainly in curated exhibitions and publications, they act as testimonies of historical situations.<sup>82</sup> They are perceived not only as “aesthetic objects” but also as “social objects, whose production, circulation, and reception transform [...] [their] political effects”.<sup>83</sup> Once set in the world, children’s drawings – if they are discovered and noticed at all – are engaged in discourses of crises and war. They are integrated into dominant narratives, but can also subvert them by making children’s own stories visible and by complicating ideas of dependency and vulnerability.<sup>84</sup>

## Conclusion

This chapter describes children’s lives under National Socialism despite extreme camp conditions and sheds light on often hidden and marginalised stories. I argued first that we should consider these children’s lives as part of a multi-perspective history, including times of childhood during war and genocide.<sup>85</sup> Second, it is necessary to address children’s everyday lives and to draw attention to their various pasts. A relational agency concept allows us to question the production of agency in both its conditions and its boundaries. Third, researchers must explore sources produced by children or such that allow them to approach children’s perspectives. Fourth, these sources must be reflected in their specifics, potentials and limitations. This also covers the histories and the process of meaning-making that pertain to the researchers.

---

<sup>82</sup> See for instance Anthony L. Geist and Peter N. Carroll, *Children’s Art in Wartime from Spanish Civil War to Kosovo* (Urbana/Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2002); Higonnet, “The Cases.”

<sup>83</sup> Claudia Aradau and Andrew Hill, “The Politics of Drawing: Children, Evidence, and the Dafur Conflict,” *International Politics Sociology* 7, no. 4 (2013), 368.

<sup>84</sup> See Alexis Artaud de La Ferrière, “The voice of the innocent: propaganda and childhood testimonies of war,” *History of Education Journal of the History of Education Society* 43, no. 1 (2014): 105–123.

<sup>85</sup> See f.e. Mischa Honeck and James Marten, *War and Childhood in the Era of the Two World Wars* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

In this chapter, I used two different types of sources – oral testimonies and drawings – searching for fragile moments of agency, following children's stories based on retrospective narration and artefacts. Finally, I conclude by comparing the similar and different insights that the two types of sources open up: The interview study on the remembered experience of children in the Ravensbrück women's concentration camp was based on autobiographical memories, which have to be reflected in the context of witnessing, memory and trauma. The child survivors bear witness to the inhumane destruction and permanent fear that paralysed them and confined them to merely fighting for survival. The ambivalences of vulnerability and agency become obvious in the limits of agency and the impossibility to act. In order to communicate this experience to the interviewer, in their retrospective narratives the survivors follow the idea of being protected and cared for as a child. In several remembered situations, it can be seen that they tried to adapt to the camp situations, to make minimal but important decisions to ensure their survival and/or to help others. They tried to be inconspicuous, navigating the menaces of the camp, but always bearing in mind that each of their efforts could also mean their death. Relationships with others, children and adults, are described as important. This indicates that children contributed to establishing such relationships and that these relationships at the same time could be an essential precondition for developing forms of agency. These personal relations allowed brief moments of feeling protected, which enabled the children to relate to the situation via their own practices.

In the third part, a few of those exceptional practices were discussed, referring to children's drawings from the Ravensbrück camp and the Theresienstadt ghetto. These drawings are sources from that time, which distinguishes them from interviews. The historical conditions of their creation, preservation and their intertextual entanglement have to be considered, and oral testimonies can contribute to this. Furthermore, most of the drawings mentioned are available as pre-curated publications. Research must still be done in order to address the complexity of children's drawings as historical sources in broad scope.

The potential of children's drawings outlined here lies in their offering further approaches to analyse (fragile) agency for children facing the horrors of the camps. They document aesthetic practices of individual children and of children's groups in the midst of cruelty and inhumanity, as well as their own forms of "making sense" of the world around them. Children dealt with themes of their everyday lives and imagined other realities; they gave expression to the everyday horrors they witnessed or countered them with their own visions. The majority of the sources mentioned here came from children who survived. But collective drawings or those saved by others witness to the story of innumerable murdered children. The

drawings' sheer existence can be read as material testimony of these children's struggle to survive in a situation in which they were not supposed to exist.

## References

### Sources

- "Interview with Lili K." Interview by Wiebke Hiemesch. August 8, 2013 in France. French and German, 210 minutes.
- Archive of the Ravensbrück Memorial. "Interview with E. A." Interview by Jeanette Toussaint. April 23, 2012 at the Memorial Ravensbrück, MGR/StGB 2012 d12/15–3. German, 60 minutes.
- Archive of the Ravensbrück Memorial. "Interview with Kry. Z." Interview by Monika Herzog. Juli 16, 2006 at the Memorial Ravensbrück, MGR/StGB – Mediathek, D11/23. Polish and German, 110 minutes.
- Archive of the Ravensbrück Memorial. "Drawings of Kry. Z." MGR/StGB, Depot, V 3342–3391.
- Jewish Museum in Prague. "Children's drawings from the Terezín Ghetto." Accessed January 06, 2023. <https://www.jewishmuseum.cz/en/collection-research/collections-funds/visual-arts/children-s-drawings-from-the-terezin-ghetto/>.
- Universitet Lund. "Witnessing Genocide." Accessed January 03, 2023. <https://www.ub.lu.se/hitta/digitala-samlingar/witnessing-genocide>.
- Video Archive "Die Frauen von Ravensbrück" [women of Ravensbrück]. "Interview with M. K." Interview by Loretta Walz. October 22, 2003. English, 103 minutes. Accessed February 11, 2023. <https://www.videoarchiv-ravensbrueck.de/de>.
- Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation. "Interview with Eddie Wissen." 1997 in Bourbank/USA. Interview 27881. English. Accessed July 03, 2014. <https://sfi.usc.edu/>.
- Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation. "Interview with Irene Fainman-Krausz." 1995 in Johannesburg/South Africa. Interview 6869. English. Accessed July 30, 2014. <https://sfi.usc.edu/>.
- Volavkova, Hana. *I Never Saw Another Butterfly: Children's Drawings & Poems from Terezin Concentration Camp, 1942–44*. New York: Schocken, 1994.
- Weissová, Helga. *Zeichne, was Du siehst. Zeichnungen eines Kindes aus Theresienstadt/Terezín*. Göttingen: Wallstein, 1998.

### Literature

- Aradau, Claudia, and Andrew Hill. "The Politics of Drawing: Children, Evidence, and the Dafur Conflict." *International Politics Sociology* 7, no. 4 (2013): 368–387.
- Artaud de La Ferrière, Alexis. "The voice of the innocent: propaganda and childhood testimonies of war." *History of Education Journal of the History of Education Society* 43, no. 1 (2014): 105–123.
- Assmann Aleida. *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit. Erinnerungskultur und Geschichtspolitik*. München: C.H. Beck 2006.
- Baader, Meike Sophia. "Kindheit." In *Historische Bildungsforschung. Konzepte – Methoden – Forschungsfelder*, edited by Gerhard Kluchert, Klaus-Peter Horn, Carola Groppe, and Marcelo Caruso, 149–160. Regensburg: UTV, 2021.

- Baader, Meike Sophia. "Vulnerable Kinder in der Moderne in erziehungs- und emotionsgeschichtlicher Perspektive." In *Vulnerable Kinder. Interdisziplinäre Annäherungen*, edited by Sabine Andresen, Claus Koch, and Julia König, 79–101. Wiesbaden: VS, 2015.
- Baader, Meike Sophia, Florian Eßer, and Schröer, Wolfgang, eds. *Kindheiten in der Moderne. Eine Geschichte der Sorge*. Frankfurt a. M.: Campus, 2014.
- Bauman, Zygmunt. *Dialektik der Ordnung. Die Moderne und der Holocaust*. Trans. Uwe Ahrens. Hamburg: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1992.
- Bavaj, Riccardo. *Die Ambivalenz der Moderne im Nationalsozialismus. Eine Bilanz der Forschung*. Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 2003.
- Becchi, Egle. *Il Bambini nella storia*. Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1994.
- Behnken Imbke and Jürgen Zinnecker, eds. *Kinder – Kindheit – Lebensgeschichte*. Seelze-Velber: Kallmeyer, 2001.
- Brenner-Wonschnick, Hannelore. *The Girls of Room 28: Friendship, Hope, and Survival in Theresienstadt*. New York: Schocken Books, 2009.
- Burke Peter. *Eyewitnessing. The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001.
- Buser, Verena. *Überleben von Kindern und Jugendlichen in den Konzentrationslagern Sachsenhausen, Auschwitz und Bergen-Belsen*. Berlin: Metropol, 2011.
- Clifford, Rebecca. *Survivors. Children's lives after the Holocaust*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020.
- Dwork, Deborah. *Children With a Star. Jewish youth in Nazi Europa*. New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1991.
- Esser, Florian, Baader, Meike S., Tanja Betz, and Beatrice Hungerland, eds. *Reconceptualising Agency and Childhood: New Perspectives in Childhood Studies*. London/New York: Routledge, 2015.
- Eisen, George. *Spielen im Schatten des Todes. Kinder und Holocaust*. Munich: Piper, 1993.
- Eldén Sara. "Inviting the messy: Drawing methods and 'children's voices'" *Childhood* 20, no. 1 (2012): 66–81.
- Eschebach, Insa. "Kinder und Jugendliche im Frauen-Konzentrationslager Ravensbrück. Erinnerungen ehemaliger Häftlinge." In: *Zwischen Verfolgung und "Volksgemeinschaft". Kindheit und Jugend im Nationalsozialismus*, edited by Jens-Christian Wagner, 76–89. Göttingen: Wallstein, 2020.
- Fass, Paula S., ed. *The Routledge History of Childhood in the Western World*. London: Routledge, 2013.
- Geist Anthony L., and Peter N. Carroll *Children's Art in Wartime from Spanish Civil War to Kosovo*. Urbana/Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2002.
- Gleason, Mona. "Avoiding the agency trap: caveats for historians of children, youth, and education," *History of Education* 45/4 (2016): 446–459.
- Hájková, Anna. *The Last Ghetto. An Everyday History of Theresienstadt*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2020.
- Halbwachs Maurice. *Das Gedächtnis und seine sozialen Bedingungen*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1966.
- Heberer, Patricia. *Children during the Holocaust*. Plymouth: AltaMira Press, 2011.
- Heywood, Colin. *Childhood in Modern Europe*. Cambridge: Medford, 2018.
- Hiemesch, Wiebke. *Kinder im Konzentrationslager Ravensbrück. (Über-)Lebenserinnerungen*. Cologne/Vienna/Weimar: Böhlau, 2017.
- Hiemesch, Wiebke. "'Unsagbares' beschreiben. Kindheitsnormen als narrative Orientierungsfigur in (Über-) Lebenserinnerungen von Child Survivors nationalsozialistischer Zwangslager." In

- Normativität in der Erziehungswissenschaft*, edited by Wolfgang Meseth, Rita Casale, Anja Tervooren, and Jörg Zirfas, 291–308. Weinheim: Springer VS, 2019.
- Hiemesch, Wiebke. “Der ‚Kinderblock‘ im Männerlager des Frauen-Konzentrationslagers Ravensbrück.” In *Zwischen Verfolgung und „Volksgemeinschaft“: Kindheit und Jugend im Nationalsozialismus* (Beiträge zur Geschichte der nationalsozialistischen Verfolgung, Band 1), edited by Jens-Christian Wagner, 90–101. Göttingen: Wallstein, 2020.
- Hiemesch, Wiebke. “Tracing the Absence of Children’s Voices – Artefacts of Children’s Persecution Under the National Socialist Regime.” *Paedagogica Historica* 58, no. 3 (2022): 329–348. Special issue *Power relations, preservation and voice. Writing histories of education with autobiographical materials*, edited by Karen Lillie, Lisbeth Matzner, and Lilli Riettiens.
- Hiemesch, Wiebke. “‘Behind the Baracks’. Spielen und Kinderkultur in nationalsozialistischen Ghettos und Konzentrationslagern.” In *Museum und Bildung* 92–93. Berlin/Münster: Lit-Verlag, 2022: 58–72.
- Higonnet, Margaret R. “The Cases of World War 1 and Darfur.” *PMLA* 121, no. 5 (2006): 1565–1576.
- Hirsch, Marianne, and Leo Spitzer. “Testimonial Objects: Memory, Gender, and Transmission.” *Poetics Today* 27, no. 2 (2006): 353–83.
- Horkheimer, Max, and Theodor W. Adorno. *Dialektik der Aufklärung. Philosophische Fragmente*. 18<sup>th</sup> edition. Frankfurt a. M.: Fischer, 2009.
- Honeck, Mischa, and James Marten. *War and Childhood in the Era of the Two World Wars*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019.
- Joy, Jody. “Reinvigorating Object Biography: Reproducing the Drama of Object Lives.” *World Archeology* 41, no. 4 (2009): 540–556.
- Kass, Sarah. *Kinderzeichnungen aus dem Ghetto Theresienstadt (1941–1945): Ein Beitrag zur Erinnerungs- und Vermächtniskultur*. Marburg: Tectum, 2015.
- Kangisser Cohen, Sharon. *Child Survivors of the Holocaust in Israel. Social Dynamics and Post-War Experiences: ‘Finding Their Voice’*. Brighton: Sussex, 2005.
- Kekeritz, Mirja and Melanie Kubandt. *Kinderzeichnungen in der qualitativen Forschung. Herangehensweisen, Potenziale, Grenzen*. Wiesbaden: VS, 2022.
- Kasperova, Dana. “Reflections on the focus of education in the Theresienstadt ghetto based on reports by Theresienstadt’s educators.” *Studia paedagogica* 18, no. 4 (2013), 37–56.
- Kestenberg, Judith S., and Charlotte Kahn, eds. *Children Surviving Persecution. An International Study of Trauma and Healing*. Connecticut: Praeger, 1998.
- Keilson, Hans. *Sequential Traumatization in Children: A Clinical and Statistical Follow-up Study on the Fate of the Jewish War Orphans in the Netherlands*. Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1992.
- Knopp, Sonja, Sebastian Schulze, and Anne Eusterschulte, eds. *Videographierte Zeugenschaft: Ein interdisziplinärer Dialog*. Velbrück: Weilerswist, 2016.
- Krause-Schmidt, Ursula. “Eva Bäckerova – a hidden child. Erinnerungen aufgezeichnet im Oktober 2003 von Ursula Krause-Schmitt.” *Informationen* 59 (2004): 14–17.
- Laub, Dori. “An Event Without a Witness: Truth, Testimony and Survival.” In *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, edited by Shoshana Felmann, and Dori Laub, 75–92. London: Routledge, 1992.
- Leclerc, Josée. “Re-Presenting Trauma: The Witness Function in the Art of the Holocaust, Art Therapy.” *Journal of the American Art Therapy Association* 28, no. 2 (2011): 81–89.
- Lueger, Manfred, and Ulrike Froschauer. *Artefaktanalyse. Grundlagen und Verfahren*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2018.

- Marten, James. *The History of Childhood. A very short Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018.
- Maza, Sarah. "The Kids Aren't All Right: Historians and the Problem of Childhood." *The American Historical Review* 125, no. 4 (2020): 1261–1285.
- Meier, Thomas, Michael R. Ott, and Rebecca Sauer, eds. *Materiale Textkulturen. Konzepte – Materialien – Praktiken*. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2015.
- Musgrove, Nell, Carla Pascoe Leahy, and Kristine Moruzi, eds. *Children's Voices from the Past: New Historical and Interdisciplinary Perspectives*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019.
- Meyer, Alwin. *Vergiss deinen Namen nicht: die Kinder von Auschwitz*. Göttingen: Steidl, 2015.
- Nachum, Iris, and Dina Porat. "Die Geschichte des Konzentrationslagers Ravensbrück im Spiegel seiner Funktionen." In *Schnittpunkt des Holocaust: Jüdische Frauen und Kinder im Konzentrationslager Ravensbrück*, edited by Irith Dublon-Knebel, 27–40. Berlin: Metropol, 2009.
- Nohl, Arnd-Michael. *Interview und dokumentarische Methode. Anleitungen für die Forschungspraxis*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. Wiesbaden: VS, 2009.
- Pawelke, Britta. "Als Häftling geboren. Kinder in Ravensbrück." *Dachauer Hefte* 9 (1993): 91–101.
- Paul, Gerhard, ed. *Visual History. Ein Studienbuch*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006.
- Priem, Karin, Gudrun König, and Casale, Rita, eds. *Die Materialität der Erziehung: Kulturelle und soziale Aspekte pädagogischer Objekte*. Weinheim/Basel: Beltz, 2012.
- Quindeau, Ilka. *Trauma und Geschichte. Interpretationen autobiographischer Erzählungen von Überlebenden des Holocaust*. Frankfurt a.M.: Brandes & Apsel, 1995.
- Rosenthal, Gabriele. *Erlebte und erzählte Lebensgeschichte: Gestalt und Struktur biographischer Selbstbeschreibungen*. Frankfurt a.M.: Campus, 1995.
- Rozenberg, André. *Les enfants dans la Shoah. La déportation des enfants juifs et tsiganes de France*. Paris: Les Éd. de Paris Max Chaleil, 2013.
- Stargardt, Nicolas. *Witnesses of War: Children's Lives under the Nazis*. New York: Knopf, 2006.
- Stargardt, Nicholas. "Children's Art of the Holocaust." *Past and Present. A Journal of Historical Studies* 161, no. 1 (1998): 191–235.
- Strebel, Bernhard. *Das KZ Ravensbrück. Geschichte eines Lagerkomplexes*. Paderborn: Schönigh, 2003.
- Wickert, Christl. "In Ravensbrück geboren. Fallstudie: Zwangsarbeitseinsatz von Häftlingsärztinnen und -pflegerinnen in der Geburtenabteilung." In "... unmöglich, diesen Schrecken aufzuhalten". *Die medizinische Versorgung durch Häftlinge im Frauen-KZ Ravensbrück*, edited by Ramona Saavedra Santis, and Christl Wickert, 91–99. Berlin: Metropol, 2017.
- Wachsmann, Nikolaus, and Jane Caplan. *Concentration Camps in Nazi Germany. The New Histories*. London: Routledge, 2010.
- Winkler, Martina. *Kindheitsgeschichte. Eine Einführung*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2017.
- Zalar, Jeffrey T. "Holocaust." In *Encyclopedia of children and childhood. In History and Society*, edited by Paula Fass, 431–434. New York: Macmillan, 2004.





Kristina Schierbaum and Anja Schierbaum

# Reflecting on Janusz Korczak: On his Care for Jewish Orphans in the Warsaw Ghetto

## Introduction

Historical research on childhood in Germany has since the 1980s focused primarily on childhood during the Second World War.<sup>1</sup> Child self-representations of Jewish children from the Warsaw Ghetto and accounts of life in the ghetto and concentration camps from a child's perspective are rare.<sup>2</sup> Children represent the smallest group of Holocaust survivors. They were often victims of National Socialist crimes, even before their murder was ordered by the state. They were exposed to national mobilisation and propaganda, violence, terror, destruction and expulsion. They experienced their childhoods with great deprivation, burdens and social hardships, homesickness, and states of exhaustion, hunger, helplessness and fear. In order to explore their wartime childhoods and understand growing up in the ghetto from a child's perspective, a historical reconstruction is essential. For this reason, in this chapter we examine the childhood of Jewish children from a Warsaw orphanage during the National Socialist era within the framework of a qualitative secondary analysis of published sources. The orphanage was called *Dom Sierot*. Janusz Korczak, who himself had a Jewish background, directed it from 1912–1942. The invasion of Poland by the *German Wehrmacht* brought significant changes to this orphanage. The living conditions became increasingly catastrophic after the institution moved itself to the Ghetto.

Korczak is mainly remembered as an educator who had the opportunity to save himself from the Holocaust but stayed with his children in the Ghetto and ac-

---

1 See Martina Winkler, *Kindheitsgeschichte* (Göttingen: V & R, 2017); Alexander Denzler et. al., *Kinder und Krieg* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016); Till Kössler, "Aktuelle Tendenzen der historischen Kindheitsforschung," *Neue Politische Literatur* 64 (2019); Elke Kleinau and Ingvill C. Mochmann, *Kinder des Zweiten Weltkrieges* (Frankfurt a.M.: Campus, 2016).

2 Previously, there were only a few publications to fill this gap. See George Eisen, *Spielen im Schatten des Todes* (Munich/Zurich: Piper, 1988): a monograph that looks in more detail at the play of children in Ghettos, transit camps and concentration camps in the context of theories of play in developmental psychology; Deborah Dwork, *Die Kinder mit dem gelben Stern* (Munich: Beck, 1994): a Reconstruction and analysis of the living conditions of Jewish children in their homes, underground, in transit camps, ghettos and extermination camps, and after the War; and Feliks Tych et al., *Kinder über den Holocaust* (Berlin: Metropol, 2008): fifty-five interviews from 1944–1948 conducted with children who survived persecution in Poland.

accompanied them to their deaths. In contrast to his reception history, e.g. in Germany, and the fact that the focus has always been on the children's deportation to the Treblinka extermination camp, we want to ask *how their everyday lives were organised by Korczak in the Ghetto years until they were murdered*.<sup>3</sup>

Starting with a historiographical classification of the Polish-Jewish educator and physician and his pedagogy, as well as his educational practice in his orphanage, we briefly trace the institutional history of the *Dom Sierot* during the War and Ghetto years. After presenting the data basis and methodology we used in the analysis, we deal with wartime childhood in the *Dom Sierot*. We will describe the children's everyday lives through the life-history narrations of contemporary witnesses. Further, we try to elaborate on the extent to which the normality of the children's everyday lives were upheld despite National Socialist exclusion and extermination logic. Finally, we will summarise our results and reflect on them.

## Janusz Korczaks, pedagogy and educational practice in the orphanage

Korczak,<sup>4</sup> who was born Henryk Goldszmit (1878/79–1942) in Warsaw, was a famous author and practitioner of education, often placed alongside Kate Wiggin, Ellen Key and Eglantyne Jebb as a pioneer of children's rights.<sup>5</sup> His exact year of birth is unknown because his father failed to issue him a birth certificate. Born as a Polish Jew under Russian foreign rule,<sup>6</sup> he grew up in a lawyer's family. His family oriented itself more towards the Polish way of life and culture than the Jewish. Since the generation of Korczak's grandfathers, the family had spoken Polish. They no longer appeared to the outside world as Jews and aimed for a secular education in public schools and universities.<sup>7</sup>

Korczak studied medicine at the *Imperial University of Warsaw* from 1898–1905 and worked in the *Berson-Bauman children's hospital* after graduation. He

---

3 The complete annihilation of European Jews planned by the National Socialists is also known as the "Final Solution" or "Endlösung".

4 Korczak's *complete works* are published in 16 volumes and two supplementary volumes in German. We quote them as "*Sämtliche Werke*".

5 Stefan Weyers, "Kinderrechte zwischen Paternalismus und Autonomie. Das Unbehagen an der Erziehung und die Ambivalenz der Kinderrechte," in *Kind(er) und Kindheit(en) im Blick der Forschung*, ed. Anja Schierbaum et. al. (Wiesbaden: VS, i. p.).

6 *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 15 (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2005), 54.

7 On the history of the Goldszmits over four generations as part of a genogram analysis, see Kristina Schierbaum, *Janusz Korczak, der Brückenbauer* (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2020), chapter 2.

gave up this job to run a Jewish orphanage in 1912. The *Dom Sierot* provided a home for Jewish children between the ages of seven and fourteen who mostly came from poor and often large families. In the orphanage, Korczak established a “model of a new home education”.<sup>8</sup> On the one hand, he ran the orphanage as an “educational clinic”. Because the health conditions came first, his pedagogical guideline was to keep the children healthy through health education.<sup>9</sup> ‘Good’ and comprehensive care of the children and the observance of high hygiene standards were just as decisive for his pedagogical actions as the promotion of mental health.

On the other hand, what is known today as the *pedagogy of respect* is primarily associated with the works of Korczak. He was against authoritarian, disciplinarian and subjugating education. Instead, he focused on the self-activity and the independence of the child. In this way, he placed children at the centre of his pedagogical thinking and actions as the active creators of their own development, offering “gentle guidance”.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, he institutionalised *the child's right to respect*. This idea is based on his observation of the child's position in society. He attributed the supposed tension between the generations to the child's dependence and vulnerability on the one hand and its claim to independence, individuality and scope for action on the other. Korczak assumed that the child is already a human being before it receives any education.<sup>11</sup> He thus not only denied differences in principle between the generations, but was also oriented towards the present reality and individuality of the child.

The child's right to respect is described in a text Korczak wrote in 1929<sup>12</sup> and recurs in his *Magna charta libertatis* (1920),<sup>13</sup> which is to be understood as a basic law for the child. There, Korczak formulated for the first time three basic tenets:

- (1) *The right of the child to his or her own death* (to die prematurely) allows the child to have self-reliant and stimulating experiences because he or she is generally overprotected and constrained by over-concern.
- (2) *The right of the child to the present day* is against the traditional thinking that childhood is a preparation for life as an adult member of society.

---

8 Michael Kirchner et al., *Janusz Korczaks 'schöpferisches Nichtwissen' vom Kind* (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2018), 10.

9 Kristina Schierbaum, *Janusz Korczak, der Brückenbauer*, 227.

10 “Pädagogik der Achtung,” accessed November 02, 2022, <https://www.socialnet.de/lexikon/27969>.

11 Sabine Andresen, “Wie liebt man Kinder – eine kindheitstheoretische Einordnung Janusz Korczaks,” in *Wie man ein Kind lieben soll* (Göttingen: V&R, 2018), XVI and XVII.

12 *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 4, *Das Recht des Kindes auf Achtung* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1999).

13 *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 4, *Wie liebt man ein Kind* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1999).

- (3) With the *right of the child to be what he or she is* Korczak relativises the pedagogical idea that children first become, and are not already, human beings.<sup>14</sup>

After characterising childhood as a phase of lawlessness, injustice and dependence (of the child vis-à-vis the adult) in the monograph *The right of the child to respect*, Korczak called for childhood to be identified as an independent phase of life. Therefore, he demanded a change in the position of the child and in children's rights. His pedagogy of respect grants children human rights based on respect for their dignity as valuable human beings equal to adults. This led not only to rights to care and protection, but also to rights to freedom of action and individual experiences, recognition of individuality, the present day of the child, and a voice and participation in all their affairs. Children deserve respect, because the "child is a rational being; it knows very well the needs, difficulties and obstacles of its life".<sup>15</sup> In summary, respect for the child includes two dimensions: respect for the competencies of the child (regardless of age) and respect for the uniqueness of each child.<sup>16</sup>

Korczak understood children's rights as legal entitlements, which he implemented in his practice. The rights of the child determined the guiding principles of his pedagogical thinking and action. Within the framework of a *constitutional pedagogy* Korczak created spaces for self-governance in the *Dom Sierot*, such as a *peer court*, a *self-government council*, a *parliament* and a *newspaper* by and for children.<sup>17</sup> These institutions gave the children the opportunity to be citizens of a children's society and to participate in its organisational forms. The peer court ensured children's equality with adults. It gave the orphanage a constitution and the children the possibility to have their affairs taken seriously and judged by themselves. The self-administration council emerged from the judicial council. In addition to dealing with norms and laws, it regulated the children's coexistence within their society. It was able to influence the children's opinions, challenge them to take initiative in shaping everyday life in the orphanage and strengthen their ability to act. The children's parliament stood for self-administration, self-activity and the independence of and for the children. It confirmed or rejected the laws passed by the self-government council. It also passed resolutions for important events concerning the orphanage. Opportunity for free expression was given to the children through writing for the *Dom Sierot* newspaper, for instance.

---

14 Stefan Weyers, "Zwischen Schutz und Partizipation, Achtung und Eugenik," in *zeitschrift für menschenrechte* 16, no.1 (2022): 39–40.

15 Sämtliche Werke, vol. 4, *Wie liebt man ein Kind*, 402.

16 "Pädagogik der Achtung."

17 Friedhelm Beiner, *Was Kindern zusteht* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2008), 72.

It was a documentation and reflection tool, which was read out aloud once a week in the presence of all of the children.

The organisation of the *Dom Sierot* was based on the *help of its residents*, too. It included services as well as voluntary help, assigned work but also schoolwork, craft and leisure activities. Korczak emphasised the equal value of manual and cognitive activities in the home. This not only replaced the paid work of the staff, but was also of educational importance. Moreover, it fostered the children's sense of co-responsibility for the well-being of the community. Self-government organised the relationship between the younger and older generations. The adults and children searched together for rules of coexistence. In this way, an educational model emerged in *Dom Sierot* that was unique in Warsaw.

Korczak's pedagogy of respect, his concept of childhood and the children's rights he demanded and institutions of self-government he helped form were fundamental to life in *Dom Sierot* at the time of the occupation. We will return to them when we describe how Korczak tried to maintain normality in the Ghetto by upholding his pedagogical credo.

## The *Dom Sierot* during the war and ghetto years

When the German Wehrmacht invaded the Second Polish Republic on 1 September 1939, the Polish population was expelled from the border areas. This was followed by the arrest and decimation of the Polish intelligentsia. Finally, the Polish Jews were ghettoised, deported and exterminated. Numbering about three million, they comprised around 10 percent of the total Polish population.<sup>18</sup> The capital, Warsaw, capitulated unconditionally on 27 September 1939. The occupation of the city brought drastic changes, especially for the urban Jewish population.

The *Dom Sierot* was still located at 92 Krochmalna Street at the beginning of the War. The children lived in a three-storey detached and white-painted building, which had electricity and running water. Seven grenades hit the building when the war broke out. The children were unharmed, but a member of the orphanage staff died. With the impending relocation to the Warsaw Ghetto, there was consideration of releasing the children from the *Dom Sierot*. Because Korczak was not called up for military service as he had been during the First World War (1914–1918) and the Polish-Russian War (1919–1921), he demanded that the orphanage continues to operate under his management in the ghetto. Neither the children nor the staff

---

18 "Die Ermordung der polnischen Juden," accessed February 28, 2023, [https://www.yadvashem.org/de/holocaust/about/fate-of-jews/poland.html#narrative\\_info](https://www.yadvashem.org/de/holocaust/about/fate-of-jews/poland.html#narrative_info).

were dismissed.<sup>19</sup> Nothing was to change, and he wanted to continue to bear the responsibility for the children entrusted to him.

The pedagogical employees were Jewish Poles of both sexes: *Stefania Wilczyńska* (1886–1942) was Korczak's closest co-worker and the main educator next to him. After attending a private girls' school, she studied natural sciences at the University of Liège in Belgium. She came to *Dom Sierot* as a volunteer in 1912, where she soon took on management tasks and helped Korczak in introducing innovative pedagogical methods.<sup>20</sup> In addition, trainee educators and former residents (who were interested in education and did not want to leave the orphanage yet) supported the pedagogical work. In return for free board and lodging, they helped take care of the children.

When the Warsaw Ghetto was established on 2 October 1940, up to 500,000 people (including over 100,000 children under the age of fifteen) were crammed together in about three square kilometres under inhumane conditions, locked up and policed.<sup>21</sup> The *Dom Sierot* had to move into a former commercial school on Chłodna Street in mid-November. The situation in the orphanage worsened in the second year of the occupation, when living conditions in the Warsaw Ghetto became increasingly desperate. There was a lack of food and medicine. Famine was rampant and diseases such as typhus and tuberculosis spread rapidly.<sup>22</sup> Due to a reduction of the size of the ghetto, which came into effect on 21 October 1941, the *Dom Sierot* had to move once again. The transit house on Śliska Street lacked living rooms and restrooms to accommodate the more than 200 children. Despite the cramped and oppressive living conditions, though, it still was possible to provide basic care for them. But although Korczak paid attention to hygiene and to keeping the body healthy, the children in *Dom Sierot* also fell seriously ill with dysentery, pneumonia and angina pectoris. In order to provide medical care for them, he asked Anna Margolisowa, a doctor friend who ran the tuberculosis department in the *Berson-Bauman-hospital*, to set up a room for seriously ill and dying children from the orphanage.<sup>23</sup>

In the third year of occupation, in August 1942, the orphanage residents had to assemble at the *Umschlagsplatz*. Korczak, eight of his staff and more than 200

---

19 Stella Eliasbergowa, "Unser Alltag während der Okkupation," in *Janusz Korczak in der Erinnerung von Zeitzeugen* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1999), 496.

20 Shimon Sachs, *STEFA* (Weinheim and Munich: Juventa, 1989), 17.

21 Eisen, *Spielen im Schatten des Todes*, 46.

22 "Das Leben im Warschauer Ghetto," accessed September 06, 2022, <https://www.bpb.de/themen/nationalsozialismus-zweiter-weltkrieg/geheimsache-Ghettofilm/141785/das-warschauer-Ghetto/>.

23 Anna Margolisowa, "Im letzten Jahr," in *Janusz Korczak in der Erinnerung von Zeitzeugen* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1999), 532.

nine- to twelve-year-old children were forced into one of many cattle cars that took them to the Treblinka extermination camp.<sup>24</sup> Densely packed, they were transported away and murdered after their arrival. Based on the verdict of the District Court in Lublin of 27 March 2015, the date of death of Korczak and all his children is assumed to have been 7 August 1942.<sup>25</sup>

## On data basis and methodology

In relation to the Second World War, the term “war children” conceals a multitude of stories, including those that tell of the persecution of the Jewish people. In the following, we focus on the fate of a few of the Polish Jewish children who lived in the *Dom Sierot* at the time of the occupation. These children were persecuted, deported and eventually murdered. Their childhood can only be empirically revealed through the memories of contemporary witnesses. In this chapter we examine, within the framework of a *qualitative secondary analysis*, how and by what means Korczak succeeded in creating a safe place for children to grow up in the Warsaw Ghetto, if only temporarily. Re-using qualitative data offers the opportunity to examine the material of previous research,<sup>26</sup> as we do in our examination of the everyday life of (persecuted) Jewish children. We use different sources of data in order to describe their lives in the *Dom Sierot* and Korczak’s pedagogical practice. We want to work out the special features of upbringing and education in this place.

It is indisputable that a contextualisation of one’s data is necessary to explain its meaning(s).<sup>27</sup> The sources of our qualitative secondary analysis are (1) a *transcribed interview* (1995), (2) the collection *Janusz Korczak in der Erinnerung von Zeitzeugen (Contemporary Witnessess Volume, 1999)* and (3) Korczak’s *diary from the Warsaw Ghetto (Memories, 1942/2005)*:

(1) The interview with Erwin Baum is the only life narrative from the ghetto orphanage known to us. The interview (initiated by the *Survivors of the Shoah Vis-*

---

<sup>24</sup> 200 out of 1.5 million children killed in the Holocaust. See Dieter Sengling, “Aus dem Unglück leben,” in *Die Institutionalisierung von Lehren und Lernen*, ed. Achim Leschinsky (Weinheim u. a.: Beltz, 1999), 8.

<sup>25</sup> “80. rocznica śmierci Janusza Korczaka,” accessed January 19, 2023, <https://ipn.gov.pl/pl/dla-mediu/komunikaty/168646,80-rocznica-smierci-janusza-korzaka.html>.

<sup>26</sup> Louise Corti and Paul Thompson, “Secondary analysis of archived data,” in *Qualitative research practice* (London: Sage, 2004), 302.

<sup>27</sup> Niamh Moore, “The contexts of context,” in *Methodological Innovation Online* 1, no. 2 (2006): 21.



ual History Foundation<sup>28</sup>) was conducted in Riverdale (N.Y., USA) on 26 October 1995. Martha Frazer<sup>29</sup> interviewed Erwin Baum in English. The interview was recorded with a video camera and archived as an electronic resource (video) in the collection *Holocaust Survivors and Victims Resource Center digital indices*. It is also provided with the keyword “oral history”. The *Böblingen-Herrenberg-Tübingen section* of the association *Gegen Vergessen/Für Demokratie e.V. (Against Forgetting/For Democracy)* acquired the video material and published the audio track, a transcription in English and a translation in German. In the interview, Erwin Baum talks about life in the ghetto orphanage and tells Martha Frazer his life story.

(2) The second set of source materials consists of 90 translated reports. They are based on oral history. The contemporary witnesses remember the childhoods of those forced to gather with Korczak and his associates at the *Umschlagplatz* and who thus did not survive the Second World War. With the deportation of all the orphanage residents, their childhood memories were lost. For our contribution, we focus primarily on selected reports published under the heading *The Time of Annihilation*. The individuals we briefly introduce in the following knew Korczak personally. They were collaborators, contemporaries or persons close to him:

*Yona Tosnian Bocian* (born 1920) was a trainee educator in Korczak’s orphanage from 1940 to 1942. She emigrated to Israel after her imprisonment in the Majdanek-Lublin concentration camp.

*Stella Eliasbergowa* (born 1879) was one of the most active members of the Society *Help for Orphans* and the wife of Izaak Eliasberg, one of Korczak’s teachers. She had probably known Korczak since the 1910s.

*Anna Margolisowa* (born 1893) was a pediatrician. She was a doctor friend of Korczak and ran the tuberculosis department in the Berson-Bauman-hospital.

*Hanna Morkowicz-Olczkowa* (born 1905) was the daughter of Korczak’s publisher. She had known him since childhood and wrote one of his biographies.

*Marek Rudnicki’s* (born 1927) father was a collegial friend of Korczak.

*Zofia Szymańska* (born 1889) was an active member of the Polish Psychiatric Society and worked for *CENTOS*, an organisation that supported the *Dom Sierot* with money, food and donations of goods.

---

<sup>28</sup> *The Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation* is a non-profit organisation founded in 1994 by Steven Spielberg that videotaped Holocaust survivors’ accounts around the world to make them available as teaching and educational materials. In the mid-2000s, they were transferred to the *Shoah Foundation Institute for Visual History and Education*, founded at the *University of Southern California* (USC) in L.A.

<sup>29</sup> Assistant Director, *Manhattan College Holocaust Resource Center*.



*Michael Zylberberg* was an educator and Judaist, who lived in the ghetto next door to Korczak and the orphans.<sup>30</sup>

(3) Korczak's ghetto diary, the third source, bears the title *Pamiętnik* (Memoirs). These are his last notes, which were smuggled out of the ghetto and published by his secretary, Igor Newerly. Korczak started writing these notes in January 1940. They contain his memoirs as well as diary entries recording events up to the last weeks in the ghetto 1942.

We approach the selected data in the context of a secondary analysis with a method of *qualitative content analysis* by Gläser and Laudel (1999).<sup>31</sup> We will present their method only briefly because in the following the focus is on the results of our analysis and not on the method itself: The two authors understand qualitative content analysis as an extraction procedure that takes information from the text in a first evaluative step and processes it separately from the text. Information extraction is done with the help of a category system. The information contained in text passages relevant to answering the research question is interpreted and assigned to an evaluation category based on this method. The procedure is divided into five main steps: (1) *theoretical preliminary considerations*, (2) *preparation of the extraction*, (3) *extraction*, (4) *preparation of the data* and (5) *evaluation*.<sup>32</sup> In our case, the first step involved an examination of both wartime childhood in *Dom Sierot* and Korczak's pedagogy of respect. Then we defined the units of analysis in terms of both *a chronological sequence* and according to *Korczak's children's rights*. We then prepared the raw data so that we were able to clearly reduce the data with a view to the research questions, and we then sorted and reassembled it. The result was a structured information base that supported us in answering our research questions, i. e.: *How were children's everyday lives organised in the Ghetto years and how did they survive until August 1942?*

---

30 Friedhelm Beiner and Silvia Ungermann, "Biographische Angaben zu den Zeitzeugen und Quellennachweise," in *Janusz Korczak in der Erinnerung von Zeitzeugen* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1999), 554–564.

31 Jochen Gläser and Grit Laudel, *Theoriegeleitete Textanalyse? Das Potential einer variablenorientierten qualitativen Inhaltsanalyse*, accessed November 02, 2022, <https://bibliothek.wzb.eu/pdf/1999/p99-401.pdf>, 02.11.2022.

32 Gläser and Laudel, *Theoriegeleitete Textanalyse?*, 10.

## The *Dom Sierot* as an enabling space for childhood and children's rights in a time of war

Instead of presenting the individual steps of our qualitative content analysis, we focus in the following on the results of the analysis of the various qualitative secondary sources as they are presented and summarised in terms of the chronological sequence and Korczak's children's rights as described above. The life narrative of Erwin Baum was the starting point of our analysis because his person fulfills two conditions. He was still a child when the war reached Poland; in the interview with Martha Frazer, he recalls his childhood during the war. He was also a resident of *Dom Sierot*. As such, he was able to report on everyday life in the orphanage both before and after the occupation started. First, it is a matter of looking at the years of the occupation chronologically. Then, on the basis of our system of categories, information is extracted to make connections with Korczak's pedagogy of respect and children's rights. In this context the relevant rights will be named and explained in more detail. In this way, we can look at childhood as an independent phase of life and describe how everyday life was organised in the orphanage during the occupation and how it was possible for the children to survive for two years.

### Erwin Baum – an orphan who survived the Holocaust

Erwin Baum was born in Warsaw as the youngest of seven children on 15 April 1926. His parents called him Ephraim (Froim in Yiddish). His father, Chaim Baum, was a tailor for soldiers' uniforms. His mother Bayla Baum ran a kiosk. Their one-room flat on Solec Street was also his father's workshop. There was a wood stove but no running water. Erwin Baum was five years old when his father, who suffered from diabetes and asthma, died. His mother then had to give up the kiosk and the flat. Erwin Baum supported his mother with a small wage he got for sweeping out a hairdressing salon and working in a factory.<sup>33</sup> They lived in poverty and his mother did not have enough money to support her children. For this reason, Icek Baum, his two-year older brother, moved into *Dom Sierot*. When he left the orphanage in 1938, Erwin Baum moved in.

---

<sup>33</sup> Erwin Baum, "USC Interview," Code 08001, ed. Sektion Böblingen-Herrenberg-Tübingen des Vereins Gegen Vergessen/Für Demokratie e. V., 4–5, accessed July 12, 2022, [https://www.kz-gedenkstaette-hailfingen-tailfingen.de/pdf/kzht.ar.ju.bau\\_usctrans\\_a.pdf](https://www.kz-gedenkstaette-hailfingen-tailfingen.de/pdf/kzht.ar.ju.bau_usctrans_a.pdf).

Erwin Baum was 13 years old when the war began. While he was visiting his mother a “lady neighbour came in [...] with a newspaper. And the headline said, ‘War has started’. It didn’t mean anything to me. It was fun, [...]. I was too young to understand, but then the bombs start[ed] falling. [...] And we lost our home”.<sup>34</sup> The boy received the news without understanding what it meant. He had no idea of the suffering, hopelessness and cruelty of war yet.<sup>35</sup> The brutality was beyond his imagination; he could not understand the consequences associated with it. He saw the world through the eyes of a child, curious and with little previous knowledge.<sup>36</sup> What news and excitement he recalls as “fun” soon became real when his family home was razed to the ground.

In retrospect, Erwin Baum seems to have found it difficult to decide on where he wanted to stay, at the *Dom Sierot* or with his mother and his siblings.

Because when the bombs started falling, [...] we lost our room, [...] the building got burned down and every one of my brothers and sisters had to be somewhere else. My mother was somewhere else, so I was confused whether to help out mother [...]. I stayed in the orphanage, stayed with my mother.<sup>37</sup>

The family was separated after the destruction of their home. Because Erwin Baum wanted to be close to his mother and felt responsible for her, he alternated between staying with her and at the orphanage. He was able to do this because at that time the orphanage did not have enough staff to manage the steadily growing number of children.

[T]here were times when there were more than 200. So I mean, the supervision got a little bit more relaxed because many supervisors, many teachers also left, and some of them went to Russia. They wanted to save their own lives. So I used to come and go as much as I could.<sup>38</sup>

The death of his father, the increasing deterioration of the family’s living conditions and his admission to the orphanage were caesuras that shaped Erwin Baum’s childhood. The transition from family to orphan home marked the beginning of his wartime childhood and was followed by political changes, the experi-

---

<sup>34</sup> Baum, “USC Interview,” Code 08001, 17.

<sup>35</sup> Wiesław Tomasz Theiss, “Kindheit im Zweiten Weltkrieg,” in *Zwischen Zwangsarbeit, Holocaust und Vertreibung. Polnische, jüdische und deutsche Kindheiten im besetzten Polen*, ed. Krzysztof Ruchniewicz et al. (Weinheim: Beltz Juventa, 2007), 80.

<sup>36</sup> Ingeborg Weber Kellermann, *Die Kindheit* (Frankfurt a.M.: Insel, 1989), 9.

<sup>37</sup> Erwin Baum, “USC Interview,” Code 08001, 20–21.

<sup>38</sup> Erwin Baum, “USC Interview,” Code 08001, 9.

ence of violence and exclusion towards Jews, loss of social relationships, hunger and hardship.

1940 was the last summer the children spent outside the ghetto walls. They spent their holidays in *Różyczka*, or *Colony Florets*, the summer house of the orphanage in the countryside in Gocławek near Warsaw, which had existed since 1921. Korczak managed to organise a last trip there and turned to *CENTOS* (*Centralne Towarzystwo Opieki nad Sierotami/Central Society for the Care of Orphans*), an organisation that helped him plan and finance it:

It was just heaven. It was wonderful [...] just in September the last time, the last month of the camp, somehow we got the feeling of playing war. So we asked all the children to vacate the sand and were split in two groups like Germany and Poland [...] we played war [...] There was some sense or feeling but we didn't have an idea when we come home we have to start school, the bombs start coming down.<sup>39</sup>

Erwin Baum describes the time at the colony as a paradise. In the countryside, the children moved about freely, and there was still little sign of the war or its consequences. Nevertheless, he also remembers how the children played war amid the war. This is not unusual, because war games have often been part of the repertoire of children's games. After World War One, there were not only toys based on the theme of "soldier life", but outdoor war-play also became more common as a form of children's play.<sup>40</sup> Now, a generation of children who knew stories from the First World War, mostly from their grandparents' or parents' accounts, was growing up. They experienced first-hand the occupation of their country, with bombing raids on their cities and the ghettoisation of the Jews. In role-play, the children from the Jewish orphanage imitated war events in order to process what they were going through or had just experienced. They divided into two camps and fought against each other as Germans and Poles. The time in the countryside was a kind of "pedagogical province", a counter-world to everyday life in occupied Warsaw, where a child's own interests were encouraged and "space for self-regulation" was created.<sup>41</sup> When they returned to the city in September, Jews were already banned from all public parks and Jewish doctors were no longer allowed to treat so-called Aryan patients.

We will go into more detail about the occupation period in the next chapter. We consider this leap necessary because the examination of the three different sources (Erwin Baum's memories, eyewitness reports and Korczak's ghetto

---

<sup>39</sup> Erwin Baum, "USC Interview," Code 08001, 11–12.

<sup>40</sup> Ingeborg Weber Kellermann, *Die Kindheit*, 201, 222.

<sup>41</sup> Michael-Sebastian Honig, "Lebensphase Kindheit," in *Lebensphasen*, ed. Heinz Abels et al. (Wiesbaden: VS, 2008), 35.

diary) has shown that only a synopsis can contribute to the most thorough possible description. Precisely because Erwin Baum stayed not only in *Dom Sierot* but also with his mother, supplementary memories are needed to reconstruct everyday life in the orphanage during the ghetto years.

At this point, we want to record how Erwin Baum survived. One August day in 1942, when Erwin Baum went back from his mother's house to the orphanage, he met the children's procession led by Korczak heading in the direction of the *Umschlagplatz*. Before he could join the train, guards chased him away. Erwin Baum returned to his mother. The next day she hired a smuggler to take her and the children to her sister in Płońsk. The Germans arrested them in November 1942 and took them to the Auschwitz concentration camp. The mother and sisters were murdered immediately after their arrival. They selected Erwin Baum to be killed, too; however, in a moment of carelessness on the part of the guards, he was able to switch to the side of those who were classified as fit for work. His brothers David, Yiddel and Icek also were there. Erwin Baum survived Auschwitz II-Birkenau, Stutthof, Hailfingen, Dautmergen and Dachau-Allach. American soldiers liberated him on the *Todesmarsch*. From Ampfing he moved via Munich, Belgium, Luxembourg, Israel and Canada (1951) to the USA. He died on 3 December 2006 in New York.

## On Korczak's pedagogical work during the occupation

The persecuted Jewish children lost their relatives and futures during the war. They had no rights because they had no legal position, and their childlike spaces of action were curtailed or destroyed. However, the idea of specific children's rights, which is directly related to the crises and wars of the 20th century, can be found in Korczak's works. He not only demanded the liberties outlined in the *Magna Charta Libertatis*, but also respected and implemented the fundamental rights of children, including the right of the child to his or her own death, the right of the child to the present day, and the right of the child to be what he or she is in his pedagogical practice at the time of the occupation. The ghetto years of the orphanage are an example of good pedagogical practice for the protection of children. In the following, we will clarify how everyday life in the *Dom Sierot* was organised during the occupation and how the children lived or survived until the *Endlösung*. The way Korczak organised the children's lives with his continuous pedagogical work in the context of difficult wartime social conditions provides clear answers to the question of how he tried to protect these persecuted children for a certain period of time.

## Children's rights in light of the occupation period of the *Dom Sierot*

The possibility that Hitler's 'Third Reich' might declare war on Poland was one of the issues raised at the beginning of the interview with Erwin Baum. When Martha Frazer asked him, "Prior to the war breaking out, did you, or your family or the people in the orphanage have any idea that there would be a possibility of a German invasion?",<sup>42</sup> Erwin Baum answered: "No, no, we were too young, we didn't. We weren't concerned about that. [...] We didn't know about any ... any wars breaking out or any politics".<sup>43</sup> Erwin Baum attributes their lack of knowledge to their age, and we do not assume that Korczak and his staff concealed or kept information from the children. Lastly, with the outbreak of the war, Korczak continued his *radio talks* as the "old doctor". On air he not only reported news, but encouraged the worried Polish population. He addressed all Warsaw children and "taught them how to walk calmly and courageously, without panic, to the shelter during the alarm; he instructed them to practise this way, calmly, with eyes closed, quietly, without speaking".<sup>44</sup>

In *Dom Sierot*, the grey reality was kept away from the children as far as possible. This was already the case before the outbreak of the war. The adults who lived together with the children were careful to ensure that nothing changed. Asked about the living conditions in the orphanage before the war, Erwin Baum replied: "Oh, before the war it was just not an orphanage, to my opinion it was paradise. I mean we had five meals a day. [...] We had to obey the regulations, but it was just wonderful. We even had [...] our own court. A real court [...]. Every child had to do their chores."<sup>45</sup>

The Jewish children of the *Dom Sierot* were particularly vulnerable, because they came from precarious backgrounds. They grew up in poverty. They suffered hunger, lived in cramped and unclean housing conditions, experienced illness, separation and loss of family members, and sometimes even violence. The orphanage was a counter-world to their parents' homes: a place to protect, educate and raise children. Erwin Baum remembers it as *paradise*, a place of bliss and joy. In his description of the place, he outlines the basic features of Korczak's pedagogy; in the orphanage, the children were not only cared for, but they were also perceived as

---

<sup>42</sup> Erwin Baum, "USC Interview," Code 08001, 10.

<sup>43</sup> Erwin Baum, "USC Interview," Code 08001, 10–11.

<sup>44</sup> Hanna Mortkowicz-Olczakowa, "Wenn die Wälder brennen, muss man sich an Rosen erinnern," in *Janusz Korczak in der Erinnerung von Zeitzeugen*, (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1999), 486.

<sup>45</sup> Mortkowicz-Olczakowa, "Wenn die Wälder brennen, muss man sich an Rosen erinnern," 12–13.

self-determined actors who were called upon to participate in community life. By preserving the basic elements of his educational system even during wartime, Korczak granted the children in the ghetto their basic rights as well as *the right to a children's court*, in which they could judge injustices in the community themselves or be judged by their peers. The children's court met regularly as before to arbitrate in disputes between the children and to pronounce its judgments. The cramped living conditions and curfew probably harboured high potential for conflicts. In addition, the children continued to perform tasks in the home that corresponded to their ages and interests. This included table duty as well as keeping the corridors and stairs clean. In this way, the children supported the staff in ensuring order and cleanliness. An added benefit was that the services structured the daily routine, gave the children something to do and gave them confidence in their own efficiency. Furthermore, there was also still the weekly newspaper, a newspaper by and for the little residents of *Dom Sierot*, for which Korczak also wrote articles. The newspaper appeared on Saturdays and the children read it together. There was also an innovation or experiment in the form of a counselling centre set up to institutionalise *the child's right to be taken seriously* and *the child's right to respect*, in a place where the children's grief, worries and fears were taken seriously. Each child received individual counselling from an adult contact person who shared their concerns and tried to find creative solutions to their individual problems.

The most difficult years for the *Dom Sierot* began with the forced relocation to the Warsaw Ghetto.<sup>46</sup> Korczak and his staff also tried to protect the children from armed conflict, violence and terror; standing up for the *right to protection from violence* of the children in the orphanage. For example, Korczak bricked up the main entrance of the building or drew the curtains in the house to protect the children from strangers: nothing of the children was to penetrate outside through the darkened windows. Korczak also wanted to shield the children from the German occupiers, as the house was located directly on the border of the ghetto.<sup>47</sup> The children's lives were concentrated in the rooms of the former commercial school on Chłodna Street, where their daily routine was organised.<sup>48</sup> After the children woke up, they went to the toilet. Before breakfast, Korczak weighed the children and entered the values in a table. Health care, again, was important and a part of the daily routine; thus the documentation of the weight curve was to provide information about the general well-being of the children. The entries showed to

---

46 Michał Zylberberg, "In der Chłodna Straße 33", in *Janusz Korczak in der Erinnerung von Zeitzeugen* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1999), 508.

47 Zylberberg, "In der Chłodna Straße 33", 508–509.

48 Stella Eliasbergowa, "Unser Alltag während der Okkupation," 497.

what extent the children had lost weight due to the rationing of food. Korczak was convinced that the health of poor children was their capital for the future, probably even more so at a time, when many children were dying of malnutrition and related symptoms, but also suffered from epidemics that were rampant in the ghetto. Korczak sought to protect children of the *Dom Sierot* by providing preventive medical care. Then there was breakfast for everyone.<sup>49</sup> When Korczak received gifts for the orphanage such as jam, tea or even sugar, he gave the food parcels directly to the housekeeper so that all the children got some.<sup>50</sup> Because the children were not allowed to go to school, they were taught in the orphanage.<sup>51</sup> The teachers came from outside the orphanage and lived in the ghetto. But Korczak also gave lessons. The children had the *right to education*, and for this he defied German prohibitions. No details about the curricula and teaching materials or the teaching staff are known or have been handed down.

Because of a typhus outbreak in the ghetto, Korczak continued teaching in the *Dom Sierot*, even when twenty Jewish schools were set up elsewhere in the ghetto in the late summer of 1941. About 6,000 of the 50,000 ghetto children of primary school age attended these 20 schools.<sup>52</sup> Korczak himself held seminars for the school headmasters and teachers, and initiated a theatre competition. Encouraged by the authorisation to set up the schools, an official *Month of the Child* was proclaimed on 20 September 1941 by Adam Czerniakow, the chairman of the Warsaw *Judenrat*.<sup>53</sup>

Moreover, Korczak organised a series of lectures for the children in his orphanage. Jewish intellectuals – not only professors but also officials or representatives of the Jewish police and members of the *Judenrat* – spoke in the auditorium. All of the residents of the orphanage participated, and the first talk was about Izaak Lejb Percec, a Jewish writer who had modernised Yiddish literature. The lectures were intended to inform the children and show them who was responsible for organising Jewish life in the ghetto.<sup>54</sup> Even though Erwin Baum did not remember the lectures and said in the interview that the children did not know what exactly was going on, it was recalled by contemporary witnesses that politics and the war were talked about in the orphanage. From our point of view, Erwin Baum's

---

49 Sämtliche Werke, vol. 15, 326.

50 Stella Eliasbergowa, "Unser Alltag während der Okkupation," 501.

51 Yona Bocian, "Meine Erinnerungen an Janusz Korczak anlässlich des 20. Jahrestages der Zerstörung seines Waisenhauses," in *Janusz Korczak in der Erinnerung von Zeitzeugen* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1999), 220–221.

52 Betty Jean Lifton, *Der König der Kinder* (Stuttgart: Klett Cotta, 1990), 373–374.

53 Lifton, *Der König der Kinder* 374–375.

54 Michal Zylberberg, "In der Chłodna Straße 33," 512.



perception of the situation in the case of political awareness is based on his status as a child who was not integrated into the everyday life of the orphanage all the time. Therefore, this part of our analysis is more oriented towards the memories of contemporary witnesses, who were already adults during the occupation, often academically educated and actively involved in the orphanage's network of support. What we can work out at this point is: It was important to Korczak to inform the children about current events outside the orphanage. They should learn to understand why so much had changed after they left Krochmalna Street.

Until the summer of 1941, the courtyard of the orphanage on Chłodna Street was a meeting place where the children stayed after classes and socialised with the other residents of the house. In the afternoon they could learn Hebrew, in the hope that one day they would find a new home in Israel. Korczak had visited Israel twice in the 1930s and life in the kibbutzim represented an ideal model for him. He had considered emigrating to Israel but decided against it. It is not known whether the children were prepared in any other way for life in Israel after the war.

In the afternoons a sewing workshop was set up, and there were handicraft lessons, sports, music and theatre. Rehearsed puppet shows and plays were performed in the orphanage, to which the families of the orphanage children and also other children from the ghetto were invited. Klima Krymko, who ran the *Warsaw Children's Theatre* after the war, was in charge. The last play they performed in July 1942 was Rabindranath Tagore's *The Post Office*, which was on the Index, i.e. banned by the Germans.<sup>55</sup> In summary, it tells of Amal, a young boy who has been prescribed absolute bed rest by his doctor. He longs to be free and go out into the world.<sup>56</sup> For the boy, death at the end of the second act is a liberation that enables him to live the life he has dreamed of. Korczak chose this particular play because, like Amal, his orphans were not free. With the play, Korczak familiarised the children with death and prepared them for dying with dignity. However, the present danger of death for the children in *Dom Sierot* did not make him forget the other children in the ghetto. Seen in this light, this effort embodies the ideal of the *child's right to his or her own death*. If their lives could not be saved, they should at least not die alone on the street. For this reason, Korczak also approached the head of the health office in the ghetto. He asked for the establishment of death rooms where terminally ill children, who lived alone on the streets of the ghetto because they had been left there by their parents, could die in company. However, at this point the project was not possible to set up.

---

55 Sämtliche Werke vol.15, 361.

56 Rabindranath Tagore, *Das Postamt* (München: Wolff, 1921), n.d.

In order to organise, help and support each other, other residents of Chłodna Street formed the so-called *House Committee*. In this way, they also got involved with the orphanage, organising benefit concerts, for example. In addition to the children and staff, 300 invited guests from the ghetto took part in one two-hour concert. Artists and musicians performed Yiddish verses and songs.<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, in the *Dom Sierot* they celebrated services when they could no longer visit the synagogue. Religion or religious practices had a firm place in the children's everyday lives and included more than kosher dishes. The *child's right to commune with God* was expressed especially in prayers and through the observance of Jewish holidays. The last festival they probably celebrated was *Pesach*. That last *Seder* evening they spent together, on 19 March 1942, "was unusually solemn",<sup>58</sup> and the programme, recalling the story of the Jews' Exodus from Egyptian captivity, made all of the guests sad, according to the recollection of contemporary witnesses.

In the interview, Erwin Baum tells us that Korczak had done everything possible for the children in the orphanage: "Well, Doctor Korczak tried his best for the children not to suffer. He was walking around outside the Ghetto. [...] He [...] used to go [...] to various organizations. He always managed to get a little bit extra for his orphanage".<sup>59</sup> He set out with a sack over his shoulder to beg for food for the children at *Dom Sierot* every day. First he went to the post office, where he collected food parcels sent to him after having asked friends and acquaintances all over the world by letter or postcard. He also collected those on which the address was no longer readable or whose recipient no longer existed.<sup>60</sup> He had persuaded the *Judenrat* to make such packages available to institutions that cared for children. But food parcels, however, were forbidden after January 1942. In addition, Korczak regularly turned to organisations, e.g. *CENTOS* or the *American Joint Distribution Committee*, to the office of the *Judenrat*, or he asked friends or acquaintances what they could spare to support the orphanage. He went begging for the children, even though it was unpleasant for him. Erwin Baum made efforts to procure food, too. He was one of the oldest children, who also gained a little more mobility through contact with his mother. His mother lived with Erwin Baum's other siblings in an attic on the outer border of the ghetto. When Baum stayed at his mother's house, he would steal away to buy bread at a farmers' market outside the ghetto, which his mother would resell in the ghetto when he returned: "So when I jumped on the other side [...]. And [I] went to the market, bought a few loaves of bread, ran back

---

57 Michal Zylberberg, "In der Chłodna Straße 33," 515.

58 Stella Eliabergova, "Unser Alltag während der Okkupation," 499.

59 Erwin Baum, "USC Interview," Code 08001, 9.

60 Betty Jean Lifton, *Der König der Kinder*, 368.

again, threw over to my mother. My mother used to sell them. A whole day like that. So by the end of the evening the profit was a loaf of bread.”<sup>61</sup> It was dangerous to be outside the ghetto: the entrances had been closed since 16 November 1940. Thus, the famine was great. About 80 percent of all food consumed in the ghetto had been smuggled in.<sup>62</sup> One day, a Polish guard caught Erwin Baum while he was smuggling bread: “[H]e was beating me and took away all my bread. And then we had no more money so I used to go begging. [...]. And whatever I could get, I brought home a little bit for mama and I brought a little bit for ... to home.”<sup>63</sup>

The German plans to reduce the size of the ghetto meant that new premises for the *Dom Sierot* had to be found within four days. The living conditions were even more cramped after the move to Śliska Street (in October 1941). The children now had to sleep in a room cleverly divided by cupboards and screens. A play corner, a “corner of silence” and a reading room were also set up.<sup>64</sup> This also shows how Korczak tried to uphold the rights of the child; in this case, *the right of the child to respect for his or her property*. Lessons were given in shifts and meals were taken in shifts to cope with the cramped conditions. Despite the lack of space, up to 250 children lived in *Dom Sierot*. Korczak found it increasingly difficult to refuse requests for admission, even though it became more and more difficult to provide for the children. There was a lack of food and medicine in particular.<sup>65</sup> Even though Korczak and his staff tried to maintain the home’s daily routines and establish normality by organising procedures that were familiar to them, Korczak now described the orphanage as a “barracks and prison in which despondent and exhausted children roamed”.<sup>66</sup> Nevertheless, Korczak and his staff stuck to their pedagogical practice. The educators received further training and interns worked in the orphanage to look after the children. The children were taught, they studied, kept diaries, did the tasks assigned to them in the home and also played or rehearsed for theatre performances. There was still a choir, a theatre group, a sewing circle and a puppet workshop to keep the children busy in meaningful ways.

---

61 Erwin Baum, “USC Interview,” Code 08001, 20.

62 Alfons Kenkmann and Elisabeth Kohlhaas, “Überlebenswege und Identitätsbrüche jüdischer Kinder in Polen im Zweiten Weltkrieg,” in *Kinder über den Holocaust* ed. Feliks Tych et al. (Berlin: Metropol, 2008), 19.

63 Erwin Baum, “USC Interview,” Code 08001, 22.

64 Zofia Szymańska, “Den versteinerten Herzen erlag er nicht...,” in *Janusz Korczak in der Erinnerung von Zeitzeugen* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1999), 526.

65 Stella Eliabergova, “*Unser Alltag während der Okkupation*,” 498.

66 Sämtliche Werke, vol.15, 361.

When the hospital on Stawki Street near the *Umschlagplatz* was evacuated as part of the *Endlösung* on 22 July 1942, the *Dom Sierot* had to take in 60 more children. The former staff of the hospital hoped that the children would survive in Korczak's care. The need for the orphanage became greater and greater. Korczak was aware that many ghetto residents worked for extremely low wages for Warsaw companies that produced for the Wehrmacht in order to survive. Up to the last day he probably held on to the illusion of setting up a workshop for the Germans in the orphanage in order to prevent deportation.<sup>67</sup>

Even though the fate of the orphanage was unavoidable, he did not want to believe that the children would be killed. Even if he could not save them, he reiterated what he had already demanded for other children in the ghetto. They should not die alone, and they should die with dignity. One morning in August, they all had to make their way to the *Umschlagplatz*. Erwin Baum remembers:

He dressed all the children nice, get best dress, took a flag and they were marching like they would go to a parade. Didn't know. And I was chased away and then I went home to the Ghetto to mama, you know. And then ... [...] I tried to join them, but they chased me away: 'You're not Jewish, you don't look Jewish. Get lost!' [...] because I speak very clear Polish. They didn't know. [...] I didn't wear my star. I ... I looked Po..., I spoke Polish. Then I went back to ... to mama.<sup>68</sup>

Because Erwin Baum was not allowed to join the group of children, he was able to save himself. While he was returning from his mother's house, the children of the orphanage, accompanied by Korczak and his staff, arrived at the trans-shipment centre. The children waited together with Korczak and the staff members at the edge of the square until they were asked to climb a ramp into one of the cattle cars. The children held hands and Korczak was the last one from the *Dom Sierot* to get into the wagon. Behind him, the children from another orphanage in the Warsaw Ghetto were already crowding in.<sup>69</sup>

---

<sup>67</sup> *Sämtliche Werke*, vol.15, 502.

<sup>68</sup> Erwin Baum, "USC Interview," Code 08001, 23–24.

<sup>69</sup> Marek Rudniki, "Der letzte Weg Janusz Korczaks," in *Janusz Korczak in der Erinnerung von Zeitzeugen*, (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1999), 541.

## In conclusion: Reflecting on Janusz Korczak's care for Jewish orphans in the Warsaw Ghetto

Before the war, there were about one million Jewish children living in Poland. According to estimates, only about thirty to forty thousand survived.<sup>70</sup> Most of the survivors managed to escape to the Soviet Union, while others were able to hide in monasteries, with Polish families or in labour camps. Only a few escaped the concentration and extermination camps. Jewish war childhood in the Warsaw Ghetto describes a piece of childhood history in the 20th century. The murder of the orphanage's children exposes in all clarity the exceptional nature, suffering and crimes of the Holocaust.<sup>71</sup> Our contribution describes the everyday life of a small group of Jewish children who had to die in the gas chambers of Treblinka with one exception: Erwin Baum, who – despite his Jewish origin<sup>72</sup> – survived and reported in the 1990s about his childhood in the *Dom Sierot* during the German occupation.

The deportation and murder of Korczak and the children of the *Dom Sierot* marked its eightieth anniversary in 2022. Thanks to the reception of his life's work, the children are not forgotten. Not only are their suffering and the ends of their lives remembered, but so also are their struggles for near-normality during the war and ghetto years. With the establishment of the ghetto, the children of the orphanage lost their protective and safe environment in Krochmalna. But Korczak had succeeded in creating a place in the ghetto for this small group of Jewish children where they could be safe for a short time and where education was possible. He was determined to fight for the rights of the child and to maintain the organisation of the orphanage and normality in the children's everyday lives under the stresses of war. He adhered to the implementation of his model of a “new home education” and was guided by the *Magna Charta Libertatis*, so that the fundamental rights of the child determined his pedagogical thinking and actions even in the ghetto. In times of war, children are denied basic human rights such as life, liberty and security of person, but also access to education, food, healthcare and participation. In the orphanage, however, they were perceived as children who had the right to be children: even during the occupation, the orphanage was more than a care facility – it was also a place of education, upbringing and development,

---

<sup>70</sup> Monika Sznajderman, *Die Pfefferfälscher* (Berlin: Jüdischer Verlag/Suhrkamp, 2018), 229.

<sup>71</sup> Feliks Tych, “Weshalb Kinder?” in *Kinder über den Holocaust* ed. Feliks Tych et al., (Berlin: Metropol, 2008), 9.

<sup>72</sup> Wiebke Hiemisch, “Kinder und Kindheiten in nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslagern,” in *Kindheiten in der Moderne*, ed. Meike Sophia Baader et al. (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2014), 336.

where children could actually help shape the world in which they lived. Participation was considered a way of life that regulated and shaped the coexistence of young and old. Even as living conditions became increasingly difficult and disastrous, Korczak tried to establish normality in the children's everyday lives. The events of the war were not kept from them, but integrated into their lives, e.g. through age-appropriate education and the teaching of politics and current affairs.

Above, we have shown by way of example how and by what means a near-normal childhood could be preserved and enabled in brutal times of war during WWII. When it became clear that there was no way out for the children of *Dom Sierot*, Korczak prepared the children for their approaching deaths with Tagore's play. Even though he did not confront the children with the full brutality of politics and current events, he found ways to deal with the hopelessness of war through his pedagogical tact, which upheld children's rights. On the day when the orphans from Śliska Street had to gather at the *Umschlagplatz*, Korczak did not leave the children alone. He accompanied them to their deaths, from which he had been able to save them until then by respecting their rights.

## References

- Andresen, Sabine. "Wie liebt man Kinder – eine kindheitstheoretische Einordnung Janusz Korczaks." In *Wie man ein Kind lieben soll*, edited by Sabine Andresen, VII-XXVI. Göttingen: V & R, 2018.
- Baum, Erwin. "USC-Interview," Code 08001, edited by Sektion Böblingen-Herrenberg-Tübingen des Vereins Gegen Vergessen / Für Demokratie e.V. Accessed July 12, 2022. [https://www.kz-gedenkstaette-hailfingen-tailfingen.de/pdf/kzht.ar.ju.bau\\_usctrans\\_a.pdf](https://www.kz-gedenkstaette-hailfingen-tailfingen.de/pdf/kzht.ar.ju.bau_usctrans_a.pdf).
- Beiner, Friedhelm, and Silvia Ungermann. "Biographische Angaben zu den Zeitzeugen und Quellennachweise." In *Janusz Korczak in der Erinnerung von Zeitzeugen*, edited by Friedhelm Beiner and Silvia Ungermann, 554–564. Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1999.
- Beiner, Friedhelm. *Was Kindern zusteht*. Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2008.
- Bocian, Yona. "Meine Erinnerungen an Janusz Korczak anlässlich des 20. Jahrestages der Zerstörung seines Waisenhauses." In *Janusz Korczak in der Erinnerung von Zeitzeugen*, edited by Friedhelm Beiner and Silvia Ungermann, 209–227. Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1999.
- Corti, Louise, and Paul Thompson. Secondary analysis of archived data. In *Qualitative research practice*, edited by Clive Seale, Giampietro Gobo, Jaber F. Gubrium, and David Silverman, 297–313. London: Sage, 2004.
- Denzler, Alexander, Stefan Grüner, und Markus Raasch. *Kinder und Krieg*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016.
- Dwork, Deborah. *Die Kinder mit dem gelben Stern*. Munich: Beck, 1994.
- Eliasbergowa, Stella. "Unser Alltag während der Okkupation." In *Janusz Korczak in der Erinnerung von Zeitzeugen*, edited by Friedhelm Beiner and Silvia Ungermann, 496–502. Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1999.
- Eisen, George. *Spielen im Schatten des Todes*. Munich/Zurich: Piper, 1988.

- Gläser, Jochen, and Grit Laudel. "Theoriegeleitete Textanalyse? Das Potential einer variablenorientierten qualitativen Inhaltsanalyse". *WZB Discussion Paper* (1999): 99–401. Accessed November 2, 2022. <https://bibliothek.wzb.eu/pdf/1999/p99-401.pdf>.
- Hiemisch, Wiebke. "Kinder und Kindheiten in nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslagern." In *Kindheiten in der Moderne*, edited by Meike Sophia Baader, 319–359. Frankfurt a.M.: Campus, 2014.
- Honig, Michael-Sebastian. "Lebensphase Kindheit." In *Lebensphasen*, edited by Heinz Abels, Michael-Sebastian Honig, Irmhild Saake, and Ansgar Weymann, 9–76. Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2008.
- Instytut Pamięci Narodowej. "80. rocznica śmierci Janusza Korczaka." Accessed January 19, 2023. [<https://ipn.gov.pl/pl/dla-mediow/komunikaty/168646,80-rocznica-smierci-janusza-korczaka.html>].
- Kenkmann, Alfons, and Elisabeth Kohlhaas. "Überlebenswege und Identitätsbrüche jüdischer Kinder in Polen im Zweiten Weltkrieg." In *Kinder über den Holocaust*, edited by Feliks Tych, Andres Eberhardt, Alfons Kenkmann, and Elisabeth Kohlhaas, 15–66. Berlin: Metropol, 2008.
- Kirchner, Michael, Sabine Andresen, and Kristina Schierbaum. *Janusz Korczaks 'schöpferisches Nichtwissen' vom Kind*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2018.
- Kleinau, Elke, and Ingvill C. Mochmann. *Kinder des Zweiten Weltkrieges*. Frankfurt a.M.: Campus, 2016.
- Kössler, Till. "Aktuelle Tendenzen der historischen Kindheitsforschung." *Neue Politische Literatur* 64 (2019): 537–558.
- Lifton, Betty Jean. *Der König der Kinder. Das Leben von Janusz Korczak*. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1990.
- Liebel, Manfred, and Urszula Markowska-Manista. "Pädagogik der Achtung." *socialnet Lexikon*. Bonn: socialnet, 22.06.2018. Accessed November 02, 2022. <https://www.socialnet.de/lexikon/27969>.
- Löw, Andrea. "Das Warschauer Ghetto." Accessed September 6, 2022, <https://www.bpb.de/themen/nationalsozialismus-zweiter-weltkrieg/geheimsache-Ghettofilm/141785/das-warschauer-Ghetto/>.
- Margolisowa, Anna. "Im letzten Jahr." In *Janusz Korczak in der Erinnerung von Zeitzeugen*, edited by Friedhelm Beiner, and Silvia Ungermann, 531–533. Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1999.
- Moore, Niahm. "The contexts of context: Broadening perspectives in the (re)use of qualitative data." *Methodological Innovation Online* 1, no. 2 (2006): 21–32.
- Mortkowicz-Olczakowa, Hanna. "Wenn die Wälder brennen, muss man sich an die Rosen erinnern." In *Janusz Korczak in der Erinnerung von Zeitzeugen*, edited by Friedhelm Beiner and Silvia Ungermann, 486–495. Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1999.
- Rudnicki, Marek. "Der letzte Weg des Janusz Korczak." In *Janusz Korczak in der Erinnerung von Zeitzeugen*, edited by Friedhelm Beiner, and Silvia Ungermann, 536–542. Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1999.
- Sachs, Shimon. *STEFA*. Weinheim/Munich: Juventa, 1989.
- Schierbaum, Kristina. *Janusz Korczak, der Brückenbauer*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2020.
- Sengling, Dieter. "Aus dem Unglück leben. Eine Annäherung an den Pädagogen Janusz Korczak." In *Die Institutionalisierung von Lehren und Lernen. Beiträge zu einer Theorie der Schule*, edited by Achim Leschinsky, 331–345. Weinheim/Basel: Beltz, 1999.
- Sznajderman, Monika. *Die Pfefferfälscher. Geschichte einer Familie*. Berlin: Jüdischer Verlag and Suhrkamp, 2018.
- Szymańska, Zofia. "Den versteinerten Herzen erlag er nicht." In *Janusz Korczak in der Erinnerung von Zeitzeugen*, edited by Friedhelm Beiner, and Silvia Ungermann, 522–527. Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1999.
- Sämtliche Werke, Vol. 4. *Wie liebt man ein Kind. Das Recht des Kindes auf Achtung*. Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1999.

- Sämtliche Werke, Vol. 15. *Tagebuch – Erinnerungen*. Gütersloh. Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2005.
- Tagore, Rabindranath. *Das Postamt*. München: Wolff, 1921. Accessed August 12, 2022. <https://www.projekt-gutenberg.org/tagore/postamt/chap03.html>.
- Theiss, Wieslaw T. "Kindheit im Zweiten Weltkrieg." In *Zwischen Zwangsarbeit, Holocaust und Vertreibung. Polnische, jüdische und deutsche Kindheiten im besetzten Polen*, edited by Krzysztof Ruchniewicz, and Jürgen Zinnecker, 79–86. Weinheim: Beltz Juventa, 2007.
- Tych, Feliks. "Weshalb Kinder?" In *Kinder über den Holocaust*, edited by Feliks Tych, Andres Eberhardt, Alfons Kenkmann, and Elisabeth Kohlhaas, 9–14. Berlin: Metropol, 2008.
- Tych, Feliks, Andres Eberhardt, Alfons Kenkmann, and Elisabeth Kohlhaas, eds. *Kinder über den Holocaust*. Berlin: Metropol, 2008.
- Weber-Kellermann, Ingeborg. *Die Kindheit. Eine Kulturgeschichte*. Berlin: Insel, 1989.
- Weyers, Stefan. "Zwischen Schutz und Partizipation, Achtung und Eugenik. Historische Konzeptionen kindlicher Rechte bei Kate Wiggin, Ellen Key, Eglantyne Jebb und Janusz Korczak." In *zeitschrift für menschenrechte* 16, no. 1 (2022): 28–49.
- Weyers, Stefan. "Kinderrechte zwischen Paternalismus und Autonomie. Das Unbehagen an der Erziehung und die Ambivalenz der Kinderrechte." In *Kind(er) und Kindheit(en) im Blick der Forschung*, edited by Anja Schierbaum, Miriam Diederichs, and Kristina Schierbaum. Wiesbaden: VS Springer, 2023.
- Winkler, Martina. *Kindheitsgeschichte. Eine Einführung*. Göttingen: V & R, 2017.
- Yad Vashem. "Die Ermordung der polnischen Juden." Accessed February 28, 2023. [https://www.yadva-shem.org/de/holocaust/about/fate-of-jews/poland.html#narrative\\_info](https://www.yadva-shem.org/de/holocaust/about/fate-of-jews/poland.html#narrative_info).
- Zyßberg, Michael. "In der Chłodna-Straße 33." In *Janusz Korczak in der Erinnerung von Zeitzeugen*, edited by Friedhelm Beiner, and Silvia Unger mann, 508–519. Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1999.



Jakub Gałęziowski

# Researching Global Phenomena in Local Circumstances: Polish Children Born of War in the Context of CBOW Research

## Introduction

Although a lot of information about the Second World War is now available, there are still some things which have been overlooked by researchers – uncharted areas in history which require empirical study, based on basic evidence data to be collected from both archival and oral sources. Hitherto, one such remaining ‘blind spot’ has been research into children born of war (CBOW) in general and CBOW in Central Eastern Europe (CEE) in particular. CBOW are defined here as persons who were born in situations marked by war, occupation, forced labour, or captivity. They could be born also in post-conflict situations, under the auspices of international Allied peacekeeping and humanitarian missions. These are children *whose one parent*, usually the biological mother, was a member of the invaded, occupied, enslaved or somehow controlled local community, while the other, usually the biological father,<sup>1</sup> was one of the invaders (occupiers, captors) or of the peacekeepers, usually – but not always and not to all members of the community – associated with the enemy.<sup>2</sup> This chapter aims to present the research findings related to Polish<sup>3</sup> children born of war.<sup>4</sup>

---

1 In this text, when referring to mother and father, I always mean the biological parents, so as not to repeat this term every time it may be needed.

2 Kai Grieg, *The War Children of the World* (Bergen: War and Children Identity Project, 2001), 6. For more information about this transnational phenomenon see Ingvill C. Mochmann, “Children Born of War – A Decade of International and Interdisciplinary Research,” *Historical Social Research/Historische Sozialforschung* 42, no. 1 (2017): 320–346; Sabine Lee, Heide Glaesmer and Barbara Stelzl-Marx, ed., *Children Born of War Past Present and Future* (London and New York: Routledge, 2021).

3 According to the Polish law a child inherited its mother’s nationality.

4 The study has been conducted within the framework of a doctoral project at the University of Augsburg and the University of Warsaw under a co-tutelle agreement and completed in May 2021. The dissertation has been published one year later, under the title: *Niedopowiedziane biografie. Polskie dzieci urodzone z powodu wojny* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, 2022). This research was also a part of the EU-funded project “Children born of war – past, present and future” (2016–2018), which intended to fill the gap regarding Central Eastern Europe, the objective which has been only partially achieved. In Lithuania, the research was terminated before it

Polish CBOW have never been studied thoroughly, except as part of the research undertaken by Maren Röger, which explores sexual relationships between Polish women and German occupiers.<sup>5</sup> For this reason, as the existing studies on children born of the Second World War and beyond have almost exclusively related to societies of Western and Northern Europe, research strategies based on previous work could not be easily applied in Poland. Instead, it has become necessary to challenge the relevance of categories and theoretical models used by scholars, who have not yet considered empirical data from CEE. The methods based on the participatory research approach which have been successfully used in countries like Norway, Denmark and then applied for Germany and Austria were not relevant for CBOW in the Polish context.<sup>6</sup> Data gathering from both historical sour-

---

reached its end phase. In the Czech Republic the focal point of the study were children from mixed Czech-German marriages including those from pre-war period. See Michal Korhel, “Children as ‘Collateral Damage’ of Nationalisation Campaigns? The Persecution of ‘Nationally Unreliable’ Persons in Czechoslovakia after the Second World War,” in *Children Born of War Past Present and Future*, ed. Sabine Lee, Heide Glaesmer and Barbara Stelzl-Marx (London and New York: Routledge, 2021), 212–31. In Latvia the relevant research focused mainly on the relationships between Latvian women and German occupiers and to a lesser extent on Latvian CBOW. Oskars Gruziņš, “Policy vs. Reality: Intimate Contact in NS-occupied Latvia”, *Journal of Baltic Studies* 52 2 (2021): 157–177; Oskars Gruziņš, “Representations of CBOW in the Films of Soviet-Occupied Latvia and Beyond,” in *Children Born of War Past Present and Future*, 232–255. Moreover, there are still regions where research on local CBOW has not yet been undertaken at all. In the already mentioned book of Lee, Glaesmer and Stelzl-Marx, the conceptual framework applied to West- and North European CBOW was reconfirmed and reiterated. More information about the project can be found on CHIBOW website, accessed May 31, 2023, <https://www.chibow.org/>.

<sup>5</sup> See Maren Röger, “The Sexual Policies and Sexual Realities of the German Occupiers in Poland in the Second World War,” *Contemporary European History* 23, no. 1 (2014): 1–21, accessed May 31, 2023, doi:10.1017/S0960777313000490; Maren Röger, *Kriegsbeziehungen. Intimität, Gewalt und Prostitution im besetzten Polen 1939 bis 1945* (Frankfurt a.M.: S. Fischer, 2015). The book has been translated both into Polish and into English. Maren Röger, *Wojenne związki. Polki i Niemcy podczas okupacji* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Świat Książki, 2016); Maren Röger, *Wartime Relations: Intimacy, Violence, and Prostitution in Occupied Poland, 1939-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021). In this chapter I cite from the Polish edition of the book. Another three texts by Röger (one written together with Lu Seegers) focused on children fathered by German occupiers in Poland. Maren Röger, “Children of German Soldiers in Poland, 1939-1945,” in *The Children of Foreign Soldiers in Finland, Norway, Denmark, Austria, Poland and Occupied Soviet Karelia. Children of Foreign Soldiers in Finland 1940-1948*, ed. Lars Westerlund (Helsinki: Nord Print, 2011), 261–272; Maren Röger, “Besatzungskinder in Polen,” *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 65, no. 1 (2017): 26–51. Maren Röger and Lu Seegers, “Ojcowie, których zabrakło. Doświadczenia i wspomnienia polskich sierot wojennych i polsko-niemieckich ‘Children Born of War,’” *Rocznik Antropologii Historii* 6 (2016): 229–250.

<sup>6</sup> In this particular case, however, it is important to consider that these are completely different samples, for whom being a CBOW has brought distinct consequences, and it is impossible to apply

ces, as well as autobiographical narrative interviews (not to mention more extensive, quantitative surveys) proved challenging. In Poland, data on this group of children has never been systematically collected; hence there are no archival records such as those in the above-mentioned countries.<sup>7</sup> Polish CBOW have never, either in the public arena or by researchers, been identified as a separate category of people particularly affected by the war, a fact manifested in the lack of formal groups or associations deliberately involving such persons. They are also absent from all the organisations that unite Polish war victims. Therefore, it has not been possible to use the databases and contact details provided by relevant associations or institutions, as was done in earlier studies on CBOW. What is salient is that participants in this study do not regard themselves as war victims, which distinguishes them from their ‘Western’ counterparts, who, as described in the relevant literature, now have their more or less stable place in the memory culture of the Second World War and its consequences.<sup>8</sup> In the case of Polish CBOW, most probably do not even know that they were CBOW, because they are not aware of their biological origin.

My own research in Poland has yielded an extensive body of empirical evidence, comprised of both various written documents and oral sources. In the course of the project, I conducted sixteen autobiographical narrative interviews with people who were born under the auspices of the war; but I came across a much larger number of individual cases where, for various reasons, no recording

---

fully methods developed in one environment to another; critical reflection on the relevance of the tools should be of key importance here. See the example study of Marie Kaiser and Martin Miertsch, “Methodological Specifics of Participative Research on Children Born of War in the European Historical Context: an Investigation and Comparison of German, Austrian and Norwegian Children Born of World War II,” in *Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Children Born of War – from World War II to Current Conflict Settings. Conference reader*, ed. Heide Glaesmer and Sabine Lee (Hannover, 2015), 11–19, accessed May 31, 2023, <https://www.uniklinikum-leipzig.de/einrichtung/medizinische-psychologie/Freigegebene%20Dokumente/psychotraumatologie-children-born-of-war-medizinische-psychologie-uniklinikum-leipzig.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> See Ingvill C. Mochmann and Stein Ugelvik Larsen, “‘Children Born of War’: the Life Course of Children Fathered by German Soldiers in Norway and Denmark during WWII – Some Empirical Results,” *Historical Social Research/Historische Sozialforschung* 33 1 (2008): 347–363; Marie Kaiser et al., “Long-term Effects on Adult Attachment in German Occupation Children Born after World War II in Comparison with a Birth-cohort-matched Representative Sample of the German General Population,” *Aging & Mental Health* 22, no. 2 (2018): 197–207.

<sup>8</sup> See Sabine Lee and Heide Glaesmer, “Children Born of War: A Critical Appraisal of the Terminology,” in *Children Born of War Past Present and Future*, ed. Sabine Lee, Heide Glaesmer, and Barbara Stelzl-Marx (London and New York: Routledge, 2021), 21.

occurred.<sup>9</sup> The archival sources provided insight into the actions and approaches of various political and social actors (primarily the communist Polish authorities and the Catholic Church) toward the group under study. They came from state, institutional, social, church and private archives. Additionally, various cultural texts were analysed, including media, especially press, as well as fiction, movies, theatre pieces, and art.

Interviews included not only two main subgroups – children of German and Soviet occupiers<sup>10</sup> – but also unexpected research participants, conceived in different war and post-war scenarios that had previously not been considered. The exploratory nature of my research, conducted in accordance with the main postulates of grounded theory, allowed for the inclusion of new circumstances and sources.<sup>11</sup> Such outcomes called for a revisiting of both the terms and definitions used so far in this field. As a result two more groups were proposed for inclusion into the CBOW category: children fathered by prisoners of war (POW) and children born to female forced labourers and female displaced persons (DP).

This study offers a different perspective on CBOW by placing them into two interpretative frameworks. Firstly, CBOW are not considered *a priori* as a vulnerable population – which may be an imposed label – although the concept of layers of vulnerability has been applied.<sup>12</sup> Florencia Luna has demonstrated that something in one situation may constitute someone's vulnerability, while in another context it does not mean this at all. Such a standpoint is well fit for a description of Polish CBOW, and hypothetically – by extension – CBOW in general.

Secondly, the well-known 'elephant in the room' idiom, developed theoretically by Eviatar Zerubavel and employed as an analytical tool in his work on taboo with reference to Holocaust survivors, also works for Polish CBOW.<sup>13</sup> According to the American sociologist, having a specific identity shapes not merely one's personal life and affects a person's family and social relations, but is also connected with processes of denial in the public sphere. In all the countries where research has

---

9 In my dissertation I referred altogether to thirty-four such encounters, but since the book has been published, I received have dozens of emails with information on new cases.

10 The subproject on Polish CBOW had been originally entitled "Between Catholicism and Communism: Policies towards and experiences of children fathered by Soviet and German soldiers in Poland".

11 Due to the complexity of data collection in Poland, access via different sources and methodological procedures was necessary. These can be read in detail in Gałęziowski, *Niedopowiedziane biografie*, 395–417.

12 Florencia Luna, "Elucidating the Concept of Vulnerability: Layers not Labels," *International Journal of Feminist Approaches to Bioethics* 2 1 (2009): 121–139.

13 Eviatar Zerubavel, *The Elephant in the Room. Silence and Denial in Everyday Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

been carried out to date, CBOW had been shrouded in silence. In Poland, such silence is discernible across all the above-mentioned dimensions: personal, family-related, social and civil. In family stories and in the national master narrative about the Second World War and its aftermath, there was no place for CBOW or their mothers, who were perceived neither as victims nor as collaborators (both by society and the state). The shame associated with the circumstances surrounding conception, however, hardly ever turned into hostility towards these women,<sup>14</sup> but rather manifested itself in a desire to forget about their existence, setting a pattern for the fate of CBOW in post-war Poland. They proved to be the proverbial ‘elephant in the room’, known to everyone but collectively swept under the carpet and a problem which was collaboratively ignored. Furthermore, as in the research on Holocaust-survivors’ experiences, here also the issue of the second generation has been raised but still needs an additional exploration. Many informal conversations with the children and grandchildren of the Polish CBOW showed the relevance of the CBOW origin for their biographies. This topic has not so far been included in CBOW research.

This chapter discusses how the research process and empirical data have shaped relevant research outcomes, thus challenging the adequacy of the theoretical apparatus used so far in the CBOW research field (and summarised below). It provides a description of distinct sub-groups of Polish CBOW, as well as it demonstrates how they were (or rather, were not) perceived in Polish society and by the Polish state. Before that, a brief look at research in the CBOW area is necessary to understand the argument.

## Theoretical framework within the global field of research

Academic interest in CBOW dates to the late 1990s, when research on children born as a result of sexual violence in armed conflicts and post-conflict situations at the time (e.g., Bosnia), as well as on children of Wehrmacht soldiers who served in the Second World War, was being undertaken simultaneously.<sup>15</sup> In his report

---

<sup>14</sup> They were reported rather single cases not like in many western countries, see: Röger, *Wojenne związki*, 146–149; Marcin Zaremba, *Wielka trwoga. Polska 1944-1947. Ludowa reakcja na kryzys* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak, 2012) 145–146.

<sup>15</sup> See selected literature: R. Charli Carpenter, “Surfacing Children: Limitations of Genocidal Rape Discourse,” *Human Rights Quarterly* 22 2 (2000): 428–477; Kjersti Ericsson, Eva Simonsen, ed., *Children of World War II. The Hidden Enemy Legacy* (Oxford–New York: Berg, 2005).

from 2001, Kai Grieg claimed that so-called war children are a global phenomenon irrespective of time and geographical area.<sup>16</sup> He also distinguished two main circumstances of war and occupation.<sup>17</sup> Such children could be conceived: through sexual violence – motivated and perpetuated by a complex mix of individual and collective, premeditated and circumstantial reasons – or as a result of sexual relationships involving varying degrees of consent.<sup>18</sup> The circumstances of war and occupation make it difficult to define precisely the nature of individual relationships.<sup>19</sup> In the twenty-first century, studies on different groups of children born under the above-mentioned circumstances have developed dynamically, which in turn has led to the birth of a distinct research field and to the formulation of a possibly adequate and neutral term for this particular category of war-affected children. It was agreed, not without objections from some scholars, that the most appropriate term would be CBOW, a term previously applied only to children born of wartime rape.<sup>20</sup>

Since that time, the common research field has developed in a variety of directions, attention has been given to successive groups of children in various countries, and the concept itself has been extended to post-conflict situations.<sup>21</sup> Analyt-

---

16 Grieg, *War*, 9.

17 Grieg, *War*, 6.

18 ‘Sexual violence in armed conflict: understanding the motivations’, discussion paper at United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs research meeting *Use of Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict – Identifying Gaps in Research to Inform More Effective Interventions*, New York, 2008, accessed May 31, 2023, Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, [www.peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/ocha\\_svinarmedconflictmotivations\\_2009\\_0.pdf](http://www.peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/ocha_svinarmedconflictmotivations_2009_0.pdf), cited after Sabine Lee, *Children Born of War in the Twentieth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), 30.

19 Mochmann and Larsen, “Children,” 351–352.

20 Mochmann, “Children,” 324. The term was used for the first time in the context of humanitarian aid targeted to children born as a result of sexual violence. R. Charli Carpenter, “Protecting Children Born of Sexual Violence and Exploitation in Conflict Zones: Existing Practice and Knowledge Gaps,” project report, University of Pittsburgh, 2005, accessed May 31, 2023, [https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/15144/Protecting\\_Children\\_Report.pdf](https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/15144/Protecting_Children_Report.pdf). Therefore, in many research publications and NGO reports, this term has solely been employed for this category of children. See e.g.: Donna Seto, *No Place for a War Baby: the Global Politics of Children Born of Wartime Sexual Violence* (Farnham, Surrey–Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishers, 2013); Joanne Neenan, “Closing a Protection Gap for Children Born of War. Addressing stigmatisation and the intergenerational impact of sexual violence in conflict,” project report, Centre for Women, Peace and Security, London School of Economics and Political Science, London, 2017, accessed May 31, 2023, [www.lse.ac.uk/women-peace-security/assets/documents/2018/LSE-WPS-Children-Born-of-War.pdf](http://www.lse.ac.uk/women-peace-security/assets/documents/2018/LSE-WPS-Children-Born-of-War.pdf).

21 See e.g.: Ingwill C. Mochmann, Sabine Lee and Barbara Stelzl-Marx, “Children Born of War: Second World War and Beyond,” *Historical Social Research/Historische Sozialforschung* 34 3 (2009): 263–552; Sabine Lee, “A Forgotten Legacy of the Second World War: GI Children in Post-War Britain

ical tools were also developed to conceptualise the category for further study. Up until now, scholars had used the categories introduced by Ingvill C. Mochmann, which distinguish four kinds of CBOW, namely children of enemy soldiers (1); soldiers from occupational forces (2); child soldiers (3); members of a peacekeeping mission (4).<sup>22</sup> Such CBOW categorisation eliminated the differences between children conceived in different circumstances, instead of merely emphasising the common characteristics of all CBOW. This was also the assumption underlying the CHIBOW project.<sup>23</sup>

Two theoretical models have also been applied by researchers. Mochmann's model points out contexts (historical, geographical, religious, cultural and military) and thematically organised factors (biomedical, psychological, social and economic, legal and political), within which and through which the lives and development of CBOW could be experienced negatively.<sup>24</sup> The second model, introduced by psychologists from Leipzig and Greifswald, emphasises the impact of diverse factors on psychological stress related to being CBOW, including stigma and discrimination, child abuse, as well as identity development.<sup>25</sup> Both models, compared in the book by Sabine Lee, demonstrate two different approaches to the same topic while seeking to establish one interpretative framework applicable to all CBOW.<sup>26</sup> In their most recent publication on CBOW, Lee, together with Heide Glaesmer, pointed out the necessity of continuing the discussion on the terms used within the changing reality (with more frequent civil wars) while confirming the adequacy of the theoretical apparatus in use in this field of study.<sup>27</sup> This process can be considered to be open and developing. Mochmann writes: "[...] due to changing patterns of warfare and violence such as the abduction and sexual as-

---

and Germany," *Contemporary European History* 20 2 (2011): 157–181; Barbara Stelzl-Marx and Silke Satjukow, ed., *Besatzungskinder. Die Nachkommen alliierter Soldaten in Österreich und Deutschland* (Wien–Köln–Weimar: Böhlau, 2015); Sabine Lee and Susan Bartels, "They Put a Few Coins in Your Hand to Drop a Baby in You": A Study of Peacekeeper-fathered Children in Haiti," *International Peacekeeping* 27 2 (2020): 177–209.

22 Mochmann and Larsen, "Children," 350–351.

23 Lee and Glaesmer, "Children," 24. See also the critical review of given book chapter; Elke Kleinau, review of *Children Born of War Past Present and Future*, ed. by Sabine Lee, Heide Glaesmer, and Barbara Stelzl-Marx, *Erziehungswissenschaftliche Revue* 21, no. 4 (2022), accessed May 31, 2023, <http://www.klinkhardt.de/ewr/978036719013.html>.

24 Ingvill C. Mochmann and Dorien DeTombe, "The COMPRAM Methodology and Complex Societal Problems – an Analysis of the Case of Children Born of War," *Organizacija* 43 3 (2010): 113–124.

25 Heide Glaesmer et al., "Die Kinder des Zweiten Krieges in Deutschland – Ein Rahmenmodell für die psychosoziale Forschung," *Trauma und Gewalt: Forschung und Praxisfelder* 6 4 (2012): 318–328.

26 Lee, *Children*, 69.

27 Lee and Glaesmer, "Children," 27–28.



sault of Nigerian school girls by Boko Haram, the IS terror, kidnapping, rape and slavery of – amongst others – Yazidi women and girls and the continuous war in Syria with the migration of millions of refugees to Europe, further groups of children born of war need to be included in future research.”<sup>28</sup> The war in Ukraine raises further questions, such as the status of children born as a result of rape of Ukrainian women (including Russian-speaking women) by pro-Russian Ukrainian separatists or Russian soldiers.<sup>29</sup>

## Polish CBOW – research findings

### Mismatched life stories

As already mentioned, initially my doctoral project was to focus on two subgroups of Polish CBOW – children fathered by German and Soviet occupiers. Encounters with persons who responded to the call for participants and told me their life stories made me abandon the usual patterns: on the one hand, children born to local mothers through their contacts with German soldiers (mainly consensual relations), and on the other children of Soviet soldiers, conceived as a result of rape.

For example, two female interviewees were born in the ‘Third Reich’ not too long before the war ended. Their mothers were Poles, forced labourers, even though in both cases it can be presumed that they went to Germany, encouraged by the fathers of their children – Wehrmacht soldiers. After delivery, both babies were left in Germany by their mothers and from mid-1945 on lived in orphanages in Bavaria, under American occupation. Then the two girls were forcibly brought to Poland by the Polish communist authorities and the Polish Red Cross (*Polski Czerwony Krzyż*, PCK).<sup>30</sup> In one of the two cases, the mother took her daughter

---

<sup>28</sup> Mochmann, “Children,” 325.

<sup>29</sup> Lina Stolz, Ingvill Constanze Ødegaard, “The Emergency of Rape Survivors and their ‘Children Born of War,’” accessed May 31, 2023, EuroWARCHILD, <https://www.eurowarchild.org/publications/the-emergency-of-rape-survivors-and-their-children-born-of-war>.

<sup>30</sup> The aim of the systematically organised action was to find as many Polish children living in the former ‘Third Reich’ as possible and relocate them to Poland. The search for babies and children took place from 1946 to 1951. Originally, it was supposed to retrieve mainly those minors who had been transported by the National socialists from German-occupied Poland and other Polish incorporated territories to the ‘Third Reich’ to be germanised. With time, however, the repatriation programme also included babies left behind by female forced labourers and displaced persons. Data collected for the purposes of this study indicate that many ‘repatriated children’ had foreign fathers. Some aspects of that multidimensional issue had already been discussed by German and



back under her care,<sup>31</sup> while the other girl, after a brief stay in a transitory care facility managed by the PCK, was adopted by a Polish couple.<sup>32</sup> Both of these participants experienced their specific war legacy in dramatic, although different, ways. Iwona Toruńska was troubled by the fact that she was an illegitimate child and by her mother's emotional coldness, whereas Renata Juras struggled with the feeling of emptiness after the loss of her mother, and throughout her adult life asked herself why her mother had never tried to find her. In both cases, the mothers appeared to be the foregrounded figures, while the German fathers were basically ignored. The only explicitly expressed feeling about them was the fear that they might have been National socialists.

In two other cases from the study, German fathers were not Wehrmacht soldiers, but civilians: one had been an administrator of an estate in the Polish land incorporated by German occupiers to the 'Third Reich' (Reichsgau Wartheland, so-called Warthegau),<sup>33</sup> the other a criminal prisoner of a concentration camp who became a Kapo and then a camp guard.<sup>34</sup> None of them were soldiers, but it may be guessed that they at least to some degree were affiliated with the occupation apparatus, and certainly represented the nation of the invaders. The father of Waldemar Poznański, a German clerk, replaced the Polish owner, who was deprived of his property when the whole territory of former Western Poland

---

Austrian researchers. See Isabel Heinemann, *'Rasse, Siedlung, deutsches Blut': das Rasse- und Siedlungshauptamt der SS und die rassenpolitische Neuordnung Europas* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2003); Ines Hopfer, *Geraubte Identität, Die gewaltsame 'Eindeutschung' von polnischen Kindern in der NS-Zeit* (Wien-Köln-Weimar: Böhlau, 2010); Iris Helbing, "Polens verlorene Kinder. Die Suche und Repatriierung verschleppter polnischer Kinder nach 1945" (PhD diss., Europa-Universität Viadrina, 2015). In Poland, this topic was explored by Roman Hrabar, a prominent figure who had participated in these activities and then discussed it in his numerous publications. Among others, see Roman Hrabar, *Hitlerowski rabunek dzieci polskich: uprowadzanie i germanizowanie dzieci polskich w latach 1939-1945* (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Śląsk, 1960). No further thorough studies followed due to dispersed historical sources. The documents found during research on Polish CBOW shed new light on the whole action, which from the beginning has been highly ideologised, as reflected in the terminology used to this day, e.g. 'repatriation', 'stolen children', etc. Non-fiction books on 'stolen children' have also been published recently. Anna Malinowska, *Brunatna kołysanka. Historie uprowadzonych dzieci* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Agora, 2017); Ewelina Karpińska-Morek et al., eds., *Teraz jesteście Niemcami. Wstrząsające losy zrabowanych polskich dzieci* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo M, 2018).

31 Interview with Iwona Toruńska (pseudonym), conducted in Berlin (Germany) on October 24, 2018. Personal names of research participants have been exchanged with pseudonyms with two exceptions – Renata Juras and Janusz Majewski – who wished not to be anonymous.

32 Interview with Renata Juras, conducted in Katowice (Poland) on April 6 and August 14, 2017.

33 Interview with Waldemar Poznański, conducted in Kołobrzeg (Poland) on February 26, 2018.

34 Interview with Lucyna Bach, conducted in Żory (Poland) on November 6, 2017.

was incorporated into the ‘Third Reich’. Poznański’s mother, a forced labourer, worked there as a maid. In the second case, the high position of Lucyna Bach’s father in the hierarchy of the concentration camp prisoners made him a highly privileged person, a representative of the camp elite, who executed the orders of the SS and was thus identified with the enemy. Her mother worked in the camp canteen for the SS, but she was not a camp prisoner, but rather an external labourer.

The study also confirmed that Soviet fathers were not only rapists.<sup>35</sup> One interviewee’s father, a Red Army soldier, after his escape from a German prisoner-of-war camp located in an area now a part of northern Poland, was hiding in the woods for almost four years and survived due to the assistance of several families from the nearby villages, including a widow with three children.<sup>36</sup> A love relationship between her and the Soviet escapee was initially not accepted by the local community. Their daughter, Bożena Sroka, born in 1947, was called a ‘Soviet brat’ (like children born of wartime rapes), even though her parents lived together, loved each other, and finally married after several years and with the support from the local parish priest. Much time had to pass before this bi-national family was fully accepted by their neighbours. It turned out, surprisingly, that among three interviewees conceived by Soviet soldiers, the one whose parents lived in a loving relationship was one who experienced stigmatisation. Two others, born of war rapes due to a “conspiracy of silence”, were not recognised as “Soviet bastards”, but only as children raised without fathers, as many minors at that time.<sup>37</sup> They were part of a so-called fatherless generation.<sup>38</sup> Nobody investigated who their biological fathers were, especially when their mothers moved to other regions of Poland and became anonymous.

Among my interviewees there was also Janusz Majewski, a man born to a former Polish female forced labourer and whose father was a black American soldier.<sup>39</sup> In 1949, as a three-year-old boy, he was relocated from the British occupation zone in Germany to Szczecin (North-West Poland) and then placed in a provincial

---

35 Similarly in Germany and Austria. See Miriam Gebhardt, *Als die Soldaten kamen. Die Vergewaltigung deutscher Frauen am Ende des Zweiten Weltkriegs* (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 2015); Barbara Stelzl-Marx, “Ivan’s Children, The Consequences of Sexual Relations between Red Army Soldiers and Austrian Women,” in *The Red Army in Austria. Aspects of Soviet Occupation 1945–1955* ed. Stefan Karner and Barbara Stelzl-Marx (Lanham–Boulder–New York–Toronto–Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2020), 193–214.

36 Interview with Bożena Sroka, conducted in Piaseczno (Poland), on November 15, 2017.

37 See e.g.: Lu Seegers, ‘Vati blieb im Krieg’. *Vaterlosigkeit als generationelle Erfahrung im 20. Jahrhundert – Deutschland und Polen* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2013)

38 Lee, *Children*, 92.

39 Interview with Janusz Majewski, conducted via Skype (Warszawa/Chicago) on November 26, 2018.

orphanage, where he stayed until he came of age. While there, he was stigmatised but not subject to systemic discrimination. His experiences from childhood remained ambivalent. On various occasions he was forced to play the role of a ‘mascot’; he was the one who stood out from the crowd. In his individual perception, he attracted the attention of the adults and because of this was routinely accused of a variety of offenses. Years later, when he was already an adult, it became apparent from conversations with his fellow orphanage residents that his classmates had envied the caregiver’s attention to him. In their view, it was he who, precisely because he differed, was more appreciated. Nowadays, he lives in the United States, where he feels that his bi-racial parentage does not make him so conspicuous. It should be noted that this example is quite extraordinary, because there were only a very few children in Poland fathered by black American soldiers. Due to being dispersed throughout the country, they were never recognised as a separate group of Polish war-affected children.<sup>40</sup>

Each of the research participants presented above was ‘born of war’ and thus considered by me a CBOW. Archival documents confirmed numerous similar cases, especially from the group of babies born in Germany and then ‘repatriated’, many can be defined as CBOWs. Based on data stored in the Archive of the PCK Information and Research Office in Warsaw (*Archiwum Biura Informacji i Poszukiwań PCK*; ABINF PCK), it can be stated that in the years between 1946 and 1948 at

---

<sup>40</sup> In my research, I described the fate of three ‘brown babies’ who were resettled in Poland, and I also know of several who were born in Poland; their mothers, former forced labourers, returned to Poland already pregnant. The issue of children born to European mothers and black American soldiers was much more visible in countries where the G.I. was stationed, either as Allies, such as in Great Britain, or as occupation troops, such as in Germany, Austria or Italy. In the latter countries, the race factor played a significant role. Here are only a few select publications on this: Lucy Bland, *Britain’s ‘brown babies’: The stories of children born to black GIs and white women in the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019); Yara-Colette Lemke Muniz de Faria, *Zwischen Fürsorge und Ausgrenzung. Afrodeutsche ‘Besatzungskinder’ im Nachkriegsdeutschland* (Berlin: Metropol, 2002); Heide Fehrenbach, *Race after Hitler. Black occupation children in postwar Germany and America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Tal Adler, Philipp Rohrbach and Niko Wahl, *SchwarzÖsterreich: Die Kinder afro-amerikanischer Besatzungssoldaten* (Wien: Löcker, 2016); Silvana Patriarca, ‘Brown babies’ in postwar Europe: the Italian case, EUI MWP LS, 2016/03 Cadmus, EUI Research Repository, accessed May 31, 2023, <http://hdl.handle.net/1814/41165>; Silvana Patriarca, *Race in Post-Fascist Italy: ‘War Children’ and the Color of the Nation*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022); Elke Kleinau, “Einschluss- und Ausschlussprozesse – Schwarze deutsche ‘Besatzungskinder’ in der deutschen Nachkriegsgesellschaft,” in *Inklusion als Chiffre? Bildungshistorische Analysen und Reflexionen*, ed. Michaela Vogt, Mai-Anh Boger and Patrick Bühler (Bad Heilbrunn: Klinkhardt, 2021), 218–227. The newest publication on European brown babies is Ingrid Bauer and Philipp Rohrbach, ed., *Black GI Children in Post-World War II Europe* (Vienna: V&R Unipress, 2021).

least ca. 2,650 Polish children came to Poland from occupied Germany and Austria.<sup>41</sup> Later, transports up to 1951 were not documented in such detail, but I estimate the total number of children brought to Poland at no more than 7,000. Of these, about 15% to 20% were children born to Polish forced labourers and displaced persons.<sup>42</sup> Some of these children had foreign fathers, either German or Allied soldiers, but we do not know the exact figures. Only in a small number of cases the father has been identified. In most situations, the documents retain their blank spaces or are annotated with ‘father unknown’. The group in question has so far been overlooked by academics, as they are put under the same banner as ‘stolen children’. The Polish authorities did not expose the circumstances of the birth of these children, because this was contrary to the accepted propaganda line about the Polish state recovering children kidnapped by the National socialists. As a result of such practices, they have become completely invisible.

## Results on Polish CBOW call for expanding the CBOW research field

Widening the CBOW research field to include previously unexplored regions and societies, with specific new experiences and narratives, naturally raises new questions. The situation and living conditions in CEE during the war and occupation of two aggressors produced different scenarios than in other German-occupied countries for intimate relationships between the occupiers and the occupied, as well as previously unknown circumstances enabling the conception of CBOW. Ebba Drolshagen has already noted that the German occupation structure was much more extensive and diverse in this territory.<sup>43</sup> Regina Mühlhäuser and Maren Röger have both highlighted the disproportionately larger presence of various Nationalist socialist paramilitary and police formations (of various nationalities), as well as

---

41 In this collection each individual child has been assigned a specific file – an envelope with documents. Apart from the PCK questionnaire, it includes all child’s documents brought from Germany or Austria. Envelopes of Children, ABINF PCK.

42 Gałęziowski, *Niedopowiedziane biografie*, 257–258. The estimate was made on the basis of various sources found in Polish archives, primarily the holdings of the Polish Red Cross archives. Among them are the above-mentioned individual envelopes, shipping lists, etc.

43 Ebba D. Drolshagen, “Besatzungskinder and Wermachtskinder: Germany’s War Children,” in *Children of World War II. The Hidden Enemy Legacy*, ed. Kjersti Ericsson and Eva Simonsen (Oxford–New York: Berg, 2005), 235.

the existence of a sizeable civilian administrative apparatus.<sup>44</sup> The latter provided the basis for including the context of forced labour and the role of civilian occupiers in the definition of CBOW.<sup>45</sup> Previously, these factors had been overlooked by scholars. This study confirmed the observations made by Mühlhäuser and Röger, and identified four different groups of Polish CBOW born during Second World War or in the first years after the end of the war:

- 1) children born to Polish female citizens and fathered by representatives of German occupation forces, both military and civilian;
- 2) children born to Polish female citizens and fathered by Red Army soldiers and members of Soviet paramilitary formations;
- 3) children born to Polish female citizens and fathered by POWs of various nationalities;
- 4) children born to Polish female forced labourers, female concentration camp inmates and female DPs, fathered both by German citizens (soldiers, officials, camp guards and employers) and Allied soldiers.<sup>46</sup>

Such an understanding of CBOW paternity in Poland challenges the prevalent assumption that the condition for identifying someone as a CBOW was having a ‘foreign soldier father’.<sup>47</sup> This new approach stems from the changing conditions of twentieth-century war operations. Warfare, the domain of the military, was accompanied by occupation activities in the conquered areas, introducing a complex administrative apparatus of the occupiers, represented mainly by paramilitary forces, police and civilian operatives who arrived in the areas under occupation in order to implement the aggressor’s policy among the invaded population. One of the tools of the National socialist policy of terror was forced labour, supervised by officials as well as ordinary civilians (e.g., German and Austrian farmers). The local population was forced to work for the occupiers in the captive territories, but also many people were deported by the enemy deeper into the Reich due to labour shortages within the aggressor’s industrial and farming complexes. Both groups of forced labourers became victims of the NS regime. Power relations between the occupied and occupiers in exile were the same as in the invaded lands. Similar

---

44 Regina Mühlhäuser, “Between Extermination and Germanization: Children of German Men in the ‘Occupied Eastern Territories’ 1942–1945,” in *Children of World War II. The Hidden Enemy Legacy*, ed. Kjersti Ericsson and Eva Simonsen (Oxford–New York: Berg, 2005), 167; Röger, “Sexual,” 10.

45 Röger, “Besatzungskinder,” 25.

46 Three groups of Polish CBOW were classified according to the origin and ‘status’ of their fathers, in the fourth one, children of Polish female forced labourers and DPs, the categorising element was that of mothers having been impregnated by men of various nationalities.

47 Lee and Glaesmer, “Children,” 24–25.

kinds of dependency occurred between female prisoners of concentration camps (which were located mostly in the Reich and in occupied Poland) and their guards, often members of paramilitary NS formations and officials.

The records of court proceedings retrieved by Maren Röger relating to the judicial establishment of fatherhood and alimonies demonstrate that within the area of occupied Poland, all the above-mentioned paternity scenarios were actually taking place, and that despite formal obstacles, in many cases German men – military, paramilitary and civilian – were obliged to pay alimony, at least in the *General Gouvernement*.<sup>48</sup> In other territories the situation varied. On Polish lands incorporated into the ‘Third Reich’, the situation of children born to Polish mothers was particularly difficult, as they were automatically separated from their mothers and sent to be germanised if the fact that they were fathered by a German was confirmed. A similar pattern operated in the so-called ‘old’ ‘Third Reich’ for the children of Polish forced labourers. The key factor in the case of paternity was the fathers’ national origin rather than his profession, position or social status.

In the available sources there is no evidence of either stigmatisation or discrimination after the war affecting Polish children fathered by German occupiers. However, the father’s function in the occupation apparatus, as well as his membership (or lack of it) in the NSDAP, did play a role in the personal accounts of Polish CBOW. The fear of having a National socialist father appeared in almost all my interviews with people fathered by Germans. It was especially difficult for the children of SS-men to accept their fathers, since they could not be subjected to idealisation as ordinary Wehrmacht soldiers (mostly perceived as people who were forcibly recruited into the army). The civil occupiers, on the other hand, seemed to be the most acceptable both for the children and for the rest of Polish society.

## Peculiarities of Polish CBOW

Bearing in mind all that I have written so far, we can define Polish CBOW as persons born to Polish mothers or so-called autochthons (native women belonging to one of many ethnic and national minorities) and raised in post-war Poland.<sup>49</sup> They could be born on Polish territory within the interwar borders, in the lands incorporated into the Polish state after the Second World War or outside Poland (e.g. in

---

<sup>48</sup> Röger, “Besatzungskinder,” 35–41.

<sup>49</sup> By Polish mothers here I mean all those women who defined themselves as Polish (and as such were perceived by the occupiers or, later, Allies), as well as those who were or who became Polish citizens after 1945. Due to limited space in the article, I do not explore the fates of women with Jewish, Ukrainian or Belarusian origins.

contemporary Germany or Austria). Their fathers could be members of the German military forces (Wehrmacht soldiers) and civil occupiers, members of the NS paramilitary formations and police, German guards of concentration camps, the staff of German industrial companies or private landowners who employed forced labourers. Fathers could also be Western Allies who had been fighting on the territory of the 'Third Reich' and stayed in the occupation zones after the ceasefire (American, British and French soldiers, including soldiers from the British and French colonies); and finally, soldiers of the Red Army and other Soviet paramilitary formations. It is also noteworthy that most military and paramilitary formations, but principally the Wehrmacht and the Red Army, included many nationalities and ethnic backgrounds.<sup>50</sup> Also the POWs, who until now have been included in the category of the enemies (children of enemy soldiers), are distinguished in my research as a separate group of fathers, because especially in Central and Eastern Europe, but also in occupied Germany and Austria, they represented different nations and thus their perception by local communities varied. It should also be remembered that at different times some of them became forced labourers, which further complicates the picture. The above-mentioned configurations of intimate relationships clearly demonstrate that Polish CBOW could have a much more complex identity background than the one usually described in the available literature on CBOW in other European countries.

Having said this, a few remarks regarding the terminology need to be made. Instead of the often-used term 'Wehrmacht children' (*Wehrmachtskinder*), I have employed the notion of 'children of German occupiers', which is much more adequate due to the complex structure of the National socialist occupation apparatus in Polish territory; to avoid confusion, the term also encompasses children of Wehrmacht soldiers. The name 'occupation children' [*Besatzungskinder*],<sup>51</sup> usually referring to children born to German and Austrian women and fathered by Allied soldiers, who were perceived as occupiers, I do not use at all – either for children born in occupied Poland or for children born in occupation zones to Polish DPs and fathered by Allied soldiers. I refer to the latter as children of Allied soldiers: foreign soldiers who interacted with the local population, which also included women of other nationalities temporarily residing in the studied area – those

---

<sup>50</sup> Polish citizens, originating from varied national and ethnic minorities in pre-war Poland, who were forcibly conscripted into the German army, are not considered here, nor are Polish citizens who served in the Polish units under the orders of the Red Army. Ryszard Kaczmarek, *Polacy w Wehrmachcie* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2010).

<sup>51</sup> See for example Stelzl-Marx and Satjukow, *Besatzungskinder*.



were officially qualified as displaced persons, as well those who remained outside the DP camps.<sup>52</sup>

Besides the already mentioned ethnic, social and cultural differences with regard to both mothers and fathers (and consequently children), other peculiarities of Polish CBOW can be divided into two categories. The first category includes geopolitical factors that are somehow external and independent of the participants of the Polish occupation scene, while the second involves factors connected with the Polish state and society, both during and after the war.

The external circumstances encompassed the development of the German occupation in Poland, including the racial and germanisation policy adopted towards Polish citizens, as well as the Soviet Union's approach to the Polish state and its inhabitants during the war. Both determined conditions for conception of CBOW. The situation of children born to forced female labourers and DPs was also affected by geopolitics – warfare and political decisions that acted over their heads. Multiple changes of the borders both during and after the conflict, the post-war chaos resulting from compulsory migrations, and the inclusion of Polish areas within the Soviet sphere of influence as the aftermath of the Second World War were critical. The specific status of the Red Army in the CEE should also be emphasised. Ambivalent feelings towards Soviet soldiers, who were both liberators and abusers, led to divergent personal experiences. Additionally, the official Polish state (communist) propaganda was yet another factor, enabling the silence that shrouded Soviet crimes and their consequences in the post-war history of Poland.

As far as internal factors are concerned, the attitude or, more specifically, the disregard of the Polish state (both the Underground State administration during the war and the official authorities after the war) towards mothers of the CBOW was very significant. Societal responses reflected those of the government, and the Catholic Church was almost entirely silent on the issue. Situations of intimate interactions and the circumstances of conception resulted in both women and children being condemned to non-existence. Moreover, in communist Poland, having sexual relations with the occupier during the war was not officially considered a crime. Society had to deal with more pressing matters stemming from war that directly affected people's daily lives. Polish authorities, as Röger pointed

---

52 Tara Zahra, based on IRO statistics from 1948, indicates that approximately 25% of the total number of male and female former forced labourers and prisoners in the German territories and up to 50% in the Austrian lands were not registered. Tara Zahra, *The Lost Children: Reconstructing Europe's Families after World War II* (Cambridge (MA) – London: Harvard University Press, 2011), 12. In addition, thousands of women, and children from the Soviet zone and those who worked for the Germans in the territories incorporated into Poland in 1945, remained outside the DP category.



out, perceived as enemies other social and political groups: e.g. people who signed the German People's List [*Deutsche Volksliste DVL*] and the Home Army soldiers, who were deemed 'internal enemies' and subjected to elimination.<sup>53</sup> This resulted in a different course of post-war repercussions, both legal and extrajudicial, faced by persons who had collaborated with the National socialist occupiers, when compared with those in western and northern Europe. There was neither a widespread witch-hunt targeting 'horizontal collaboration', nor were there any issues related to eugenics raised in relation to children born of such liaisons.<sup>54</sup> For this reason, both these women and their offspring never came to be classed as social or national enemies. Accordingly, in Poland there were no such 'children of the enemy', which raised strong emotions within the post-war public debate in Norway, Denmark, Belgium, the Netherlands and France.<sup>55</sup> The fact that CBOW were seen neither as enemies nor as victims – labels that apparently functioned as informal requirements for inclusion in Polish war-related discourse – became the reason for the collective amnesia with regard to both women and their children. Their lives did not qualify as particularly worth remembering and thus have been erased from the Polish collective memory. Although there were positive aspects to this sentencing to "non-existence" – since CBOW did not officially exist, no one persecuted or discriminated against them – the shifting of specific people and their stories to the taboo sphere also had deeper negative consequences both on an individual (psychological) and social level. It began to operate as the aforementioned elephant in the room.

At the same time, the post-war demographic losses led to the adoption of an inclusive approach towards all children and minors, who could be raised to become proper citizens regardless of their origin.<sup>56</sup> Neither racial nor genetic issues

---

53 Röger, *Wojenne związki*, 151. The Home Army (*Armia Krajowa*) was a military arm of the underground Polish Secret State and the largest resistance movement in occupied Europe during the Second World War.

54 These issues were most intensely discussed in Norway. See Kåre Olsen, "Under the Care of Lebensborn: Norwegian War Children and Their Mothers," in *Children of World War II. The Hidden Enemy Legacy*, ed. Kjersti Ericsson and Eva Simonsen (Oxford–New York: Berg, 2005), 15–34. For punishments to which women were subjected see Fabrice Virgili, *La France 'virile': des femmes tondues à la Libération* (Paris: Payot, 2000). In Poland, the concept of such punishment did not appear at all at that time. Tomasz Szarota, *Karuzela na placu Krasieńskich. Studia i szkice z lat wojny i okupacji* (Warszawa: Oficyna Wydawnicza Rytm, Fundacja Historia i Kultura, 2007), 107–109.

55 Ericsson and Simonsen, *Children*.

56 For further discussion on the demographic losses and reproduction policies after the Second World War see Barbara Klich-Kluczewska, "Making up for the Losses of War: Reproduction Politics in Postwar Poland," in *Women and Men at War: a Gender Perspective on World War II and its After-*

played a major role in Polish society in this time when it perceived the need to make up for the population shortfall as quickly as possible. Thus, the governmental decision to limit access to abortion on the grounds of Soviet rapes can also be considered significant and distinguishes Poland from other countries that also struggled with the consequences of wartime sexual violence.<sup>57</sup>

It is important to note that at various points several relevant factors intersect and/or intertwine. For example the fact that CBOW mothers in post-war Poland had many opportunities to hide from potential negative official restrictions, but also to escape from social ostracism by family or neighbours. Those opportunities resulted both from external circumstances like the annexation of the part of former German territories to Poland<sup>58</sup> as well as post-war chaos and was internally conditioned by, among other things, the integrative policy adopted by the authorities towards single mothers and illegitimate children and document reconstruction procedures creating the possibility to change one's identity.<sup>59</sup> When drawing a pattern for the post-war fate of Polish CBOW and their mothers, it is worth remembering that many Polish settlers came to start their lives anew in the so-called recovered territories. This could mean that the reason for such emigration was not necessarily the mother's desire to hide, but just an opportunity to find gainful employment and accommodation. The decision to move was also supported by the propaganda of the communist authorities, who wanted Poles to inhabit the newly incorporated territories. On a more negative note, the taboo related to CBOW was based on both external factors (e.g., due to the Soviets' status in Poland), and internal ones, enforced by the attitude of Polish society, strongly influenced by Catholicism, toward sexual violence, extramarital motherhood and abortion.

All of the factors mentioned above indicate that not only did Polish CBOW life courses vary significantly, but also the whole phenomenon in Poland followed a very different trajectory than elsewhere in post-war Europe.

---

*math in Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. Ruth Leiserowitz and Maren Röger (Osnabrück: Fibre, 2012), 307–328.

57 For more on postwar abortions see Jakub Gałęziowski, "The Sense of Justice and the Need for Eugenics Require Instant and Effective Intervention.' Terminating Pregnancies Resulting from Wartime Rapes in Poland in 1945", *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung/Journal of East Central European Studies* 71 2 (2022): 235–259.

58 This former German eastern borderland, which after the war belonged to Poland, was referred to by the Polish communist government as 'recovered territories'.

59 Due to the partial destruction of personal documents, it was sometimes necessary to restore them through personal testimony, confirmed by a witness. This situation created room for fraud.

## Conclusions

Although this chapter addresses only certain aspects of the phenomenon of Polish children born of war, my aim has been to show its specificity on two distinct levels: as a new topic in Polish and in Central and Eastern European historiography, and also as a topic with the potential to make a significant contribution to the international field of CBOW research. Based on the available archival sources, as well as on autobiographical narrative interviews conducted so far, it can be concluded that any suffering experienced by Polish CBOW remained mostly invisible to the state and to society at large. These children rarely experienced stigmatisation, but if it did occur, it was only in the private space, in biological or foster/adoptive families. There is no evidence of systemic discrimination, such as administrative discrimination or discrimination involving access to healthcare or education. It can therefore be hypothesised that neither the politics of the post-war era nor other external factors had a particular impact on CBOW lives, which in turn made their life stories essentially no different from those of other Polish children affected by the Second World War.

CBOW have never constituted a separate category in Poland, and they have never been treated in a particular or distinct way because of their peculiar background. The collected source material indicates that, due to a variety of legal procedures, their specific origin had a chance to be concealed from the state and society due in part to the equal status of children born to married couples and illegitimate children. That has been an unquestionable success of the inclusive policy adopted by the Polish communist authorities, which did not differentiate between children based on parentage. All children, regardless of their fathers, and sometimes mothers, became included in the national community, with the intention of bringing them up as Polish citizens. With this open, non-exclusive approach, the authorities attempted to deal with post-war demographic shortages while at the same time emphasising the state's care for all children without exception, including the children of the *Volksdeutsche* (*dzieci po folksdojczach*, Poles of German descent)<sup>60</sup> and those conceived as a result of Soviet rapes, as well as the children of former female forced labourers, prisoners of concentration camps and DPs. The issue of national origin became secondary after Minister of Health,

---

<sup>60</sup> Communist authorities in Poland strove to take over legal guardianship of this group of children in order to ensure their thorough 'Polonisation', while their biological parents were incarcerated in communist prisons and special camps, Gałęziowski, *Niedopowiedziane biografie*, 169–172. For more on so called Polish post-war camps see Marek Łuszczyna, *Mała zbrodnia. Polskie obozy koncentracyjne* (Kraków: Znak Horyzont, 2017).

Franciszek Litwin, declared that all children were important for the Polish nation, State and society.<sup>61</sup> The adoption of such an approach demonstrates how, in times of political breakthroughs and transformations, the Polish authorities engaged in biopolitics – focusing above all on children, who, like *tabulae rasae*, could be filled with new content to create ‘new communist people’. All these formal procedures, as well as the aforementioned factors from the social and private spheres, resulted in the integration of CBOW into Polish society. As long as they did not know their biological origin, their lives did not differ from those of other Poles born during or just after the war. The problems only occurred when, for some reason, knowledge of their biological origins came out and had to be confronted. For most of the interviewees, such knowledge affected their perception not only of themselves, but also their families, who had hidden their father’s national origin. Identity issues were also raised by the children and grandchildren of CBOW, as the significant family legacy that they face – exploration of this intergenerational dimension of CBOW should be considered as a next step in researching the CBOW phenomenon.

## References

### Sources

- Interview with Lucyna Bach, conducted in Żory (Poland) on November 6, 2017.  
 Interview with Renata Juras, conducted in Katowice (Poland) on April 6 and August 14, 2017.  
 Interview with Janusz Majewski, conducted via Skype (Warszawa/ Chicago) on November 26, 2018.  
 Interview with Waldemar Poznański, conducted in Kołobrzeg (Poland) on February 26, 2018.  
 Interview with Bożena Sroka, conducted in Piaseczno (Poland), on November 15, 2017.  
 Interview with Iwona Toruńska, conducted in Berlin (Germany) on October 24, 2018.  
 Envelopes of Children, Archive of the PCK Information and Research Office in Warsaw.  
*Dziennik Zdrowia* (1945).

### Literature

- Adler, Tal, Philipp Rohrbach, and Niko Wahl. *SchwarzÖsterreich: Die Kinder afro-amerikanischer Besatzungssoldaten*. Vienna: Löcker, 2016.  
 Bauer, Ingrid, and Philipp Rohrbach ed. *Black GI Children in Post-World War II Europe*. Vienna: V&R Unipress, 2021.

---

<sup>61</sup> Circular letter of the Ministry of Health dated 18 June 1945, on the organisation of maternal and child health care, reprinted in *Dziennik Zdrowia*, 1, 1945, 9–10.

- Bland, Lucy. *Britain's 'brown babies': The stories of children born to black GIs and white women in the Second World War*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019.
- Carpenter, R. Charli. "Surfacing Children: Limitations of Genocidal Rape Discourse." *Human Rights Quarterly* 22, no. 2 (2000): 428–477.
- Carpenter, R. Charli. "Protecting Children Born of Sexual Violence and Exploitation in Conflict Zones: Existing Practice and Knowledge Gaps." Project report, University of Pittsburgh, 2005. Accessed May 31, 2023. [https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/15144/Protecting\\_Children\\_Report.pdf](https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/15144/Protecting_Children_Report.pdf).
- Drolshagen, Ebba D. "Besatzungskinder und Wermachtskinder. Germany's War Children." In *Children of World War II. The Hidden Enemy Legacy*, edited by Kjersti Ericsson, and Eva Simonsen, 229–248. Oxford/New York: Berg, 2005.
- Ericsson, Kjersti, and Eva Simonsen, ed. *Children of World War II. The Hidden Enemy Legacy*. Oxford/New York: Berg, 2005.
- Fehrenbach, Heide. *Race after Hitler. Black occupation children in postwar Germany and America*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.
- Gałęziowski, Jakub. "'The Sense of Justice and the Need for Eugenics Require Instant and Effective Intervention.' Terminating Pregnancies Resulting from Wartime Rapes in Poland in 1945." *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung/Journal of East Central European Studies* 71, no. 2 (2022): 235–259.
- Gałęziowski, Jakub. *Niedopowiedziane biografie. Polskie dzieci urodzone z powodu wojny*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, 2022.
- Gebhardt, Miriam. *Als die Soldaten kamen. Die Vergewaltigung deutscher Frauen am Ende des Zweiten Weltkriegs*. Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 2015.
- Gebhardt, Miriam. *Crimes Unspoken: The Rape of German Women at the End of the Second World War*. Translated by Nick Somers. Cambridge: Polity, 2016.
- Glaesmer, Heide, Marie Kaiser, Harald J. Freyberger, Elmar Braehler, and Philipp Kuwert. "Die Kinder des Zweiten Krieges in Deutschland – Ein Rahmenmodell für die psychosoziale Forschung." *Trauma und Gewalt: Forschung und Praxisfelder* 6, no. 4 (2012): 318–328.
- Grieg, Kai. *The War Children of the World*. Bergen: War and Children Identity Project, 2001.
- Gruziņš, Oskars. "Policy vs. Reality: Intimate Contact in NS-occupied Latvia." *Journal of Baltic Studies* 52, no. 2 (2021): 157–177.
- Gruziņš, Oskars. "Representations of CBOW in the Films of Soviet-Occupied Latvia and Beyond." In *Children Born of War Past Present and Future*, edited by Sabine Lee, Heide Glaesmer, and Barbara Stelzl-Marx, 232–255. London/New York: Routledge, 2021.
- Heinemann, Isabel. *'Rasse, Siedlung, deutsches Blut': das Rasse- und Siedlungshauptamt der SS und die rassenpolitische Neuordnung Europas*. Göttingen: Wallstein, 2003.
- Helbing, Iris. "Polens verlorene Kinder. Die Suche und Repatriierung verschleppter polnischer Kinder nach 1945." PhD diss. Europa-Universität Viadrina, 2015.
- Hopfer, Ines. *Geraubte Identität, Die gewaltsame 'Eindeutschung' von polnischen Kindern in der NS-Zeit*. Vienna/Cologne/Weimar: Böhlau, 2010.
- Hrabar, Roman. *Hitlerowski rabunek dzieci polskich: uprowadzanie i germanizowanie dzieci polskich w latach 1939–1945*. Katowice: Wydawnictwo Śląsk, 1960.
- Kaczmarek, Ryszard. *Polacy w Wehrmachcie*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2010.
- Kaiser, Marie, and Martin Miertsch. "Methodological Specifics of Participative Research on Children Born of War in the European Historical Context: an Investigation and Comparison of German, Austrian and Norwegian Children Born of World War II." In *Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Children Born of War – from World War II to Current Conflict Settings. Conference reader*, edited by

- Heide Glaesmer, and Sabine Lee, 11–19. Hannover, 2015. Accessed May 31, 2023. <https://www.uniklinikum-leipzig.de/einrichtungen/medizinische-psychologie/Freigegebene%20Dokumente/psychotraumatologie-children-born-of-war-medizinische-psychologie-uniklinikum-leipzig.pdf>.
- Kaiser, Marie, Philipp Kuwert, Elmar Braehler, and Heide Glaesmer. “Long-term Effects on Adult Attachment in German Occupation Children Born after World War II in Comparison with a Birth-cohort-matched Representative Sample of the German General Population.” *Aging & Mental Health* 22, no. 2 (2018): 197–207.
- Karpińska-Morek, Ewelina, Agnieszka Was-Turecka, Monika Sieradzka, Artur Wróblewski, Majta, Tomasz, and Micha Drzonek, ed. *Teraz jesteście Niemcami. Wstrząsające losy zrabowanych polskich dzieci*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo M, 2018.
- Kleinau, Elke. “Einschluss- und Ausschlussprozesse – Schwarze deutsche ‘Besatzungskinder’ in der deutschen Nachkriegsgesellschaft.” In *Inklusion als Chiffre? Bildungshistorische Analysen und Reflexionen*, edited by Michaela Vogt, Mai-Anh Boger, and Patrick Bühler, 218–227. Bad Heilbrunn: Klinkhardt, 2021.
- Kleinau, Elke. Review of *Children Born of War Past Present and Future*, edited by Sabine Lee, Heide Glaesmer, and Barbara Stelzl-Marx. In *Erziehungswissenschaftliche Revue* 21, no. 4 (2022). Accessed May 31, 2023. <http://www.klinkhardt.de/ewr/978036719013.html>.
- Klich-Kluczewska, Barbara. “Making up for the Losses of War: Reproduction Politics in Postwar Poland.” In *Women and Men at War: a Gender Perspective on World War II and its Aftermath in Central and Eastern Europe*, edited by Ruth Leiserowitz and Maren Röger, 307–328. Osnabrück: Fibre, 2012.
- Korhel, Michal. “Children as ‘Collateral Damage’ of Nationalisation Campaigns? The Persecution of ‘Nationally Unreliable’ Persons in Czechoslovakia after the Second World War.” In *Children Born of War Past Present and Future*, edited by Sabine Lee, Heide Glaesmer, and Barbara Stelzl-Marx, 212–231. London/New York: Routledge, 2021.
- Lee, Sabine. “A Forgotten Legacy of the Second World War: GI Children in Post-War Britain and Germany.” *Contemporary European History* 20, no. 2 (2011): 157–181.
- Lee, Sabine. *Children Born of War in the Twentieth Century*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017.
- Lee, Sabine, and Susan Bartels. “‘They Put a Few Coins in Your Hand to Drop a Baby in You’: A Study of Peacekeeper-fathered Children in Haiti.” *International Peacekeeping* 27, no. 2 (2020): 177–209.
- Lee, Sabine, Heide Glaesmer, and Barbara Stelzl-Marx, ed. *Children Born of War Past Present and Future*. London and New York: Routledge, 2021.
- Lee, Sabine, and Heide Glaesmer. “Children Born of War: A Critical Appraisal of the Terminology.” In *Children Born of War Past Present and Future*, edited by Sabine Lee, Heide Glaesmer, and Barbara Stelzl-Marx, 12–34. London/New York: Routledge, 2021.
- Lemke Muniz de Faria, Yara-Colette. *Zwischen Fürsorge und Ausgrenzung. Afrodeutsche ‘Besatzungskinder’ im Nachkriegsdeutschland*. Berlin: Metropol, 2002.
- Luna, Florencia. “Elucidating the Concept of Vulnerability: Layers not Labels.” *International Journal of Feminist Approaches to Bioethics* 2, no. 1 (2009): 121–139.
- Marek Łuszczyna, *Mała zbrodnia. Polskie obozy koncentracyjne*. Kraków: Znak Horyzont, 2017.
- Malinowska, Anna. *Brunatna kołysanka. Historie uprowadzonych dzieci*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Agora, 2017.

- Mochmann, Ingvill C., and Stein Ugelvik Larsen. “Children Born of War”: the Life Course of Children Fathered by German Soldiers in Norway and Denmark during WWII – Some Empirical Results.” *Historical Social Research/Historische Sozialforschung* 33, no. 1 (2008): 347–363.
- Mochmann, Ingvill C., Sabine Lee, and Barbara Stelzl-Marx, ed. “Children Born of War: Second World War and Beyond.” *Historical Social Research/Historische Sozialforschung* 34, no. 3 (2009): 263–552.
- Mochmann, Ingvill C., and Dorien DeTombe. “The COMPRAM Methodology and Complex Societal Problems – an Analysis of the Case of Children Born of War.” *Organizacija* 43, no. 3 (2010): 113–124.
- Mochmann, Ingvill C. “Children Born of War – A Decade of International and Interdisciplinary Research.” *Historical Social Research / Historische Sozialforschung* 42, no. 1 (2017): 320–346
- Mühlhäuser, Regina. “Between Extermination and Germanization: Children of German Men in the ‘Occupied Eastern Territories’ 1942–1945.” In *Children of World War II. The Hidden Enemy Legacy*, edited by Kjersti Ericsson and Eva Simonsen, 167–189. Oxford/New York: Berg, 2005.
- Neehan, Joanne. “Closing a Protection Gap for Children Born of War. Addressing stigmatisation and the intergenerational impact of sexual violence in conflict.” Project report, Centre for Women, Peace and Security, London School of Economics and Political Science, London, 2017. Accessed May 31, 2023. [www.lse.ac.uk/women-peace-security/assets/documents/2018/LSE-WPS-Children-Born-of-War.pdf](http://www.lse.ac.uk/women-peace-security/assets/documents/2018/LSE-WPS-Children-Born-of-War.pdf).
- Olsen, Kåre. “Under the Care of Lebensborn: Norwegian War Children and Their Mothers.” In *Children of World War II. The Hidden Enemy Legacy*, edited by Kjersti Ericsson, and Eva Simonsen, 15–34. Oxford/New York: Berg, 2005.
- Patriarca, Silvana. *‘Brown babies’ in postwar Europe: the Italian case*, EUI MWP LS, 2016/03 Cadmus, EUI Research Repository. Accessed May 31, 2023. <http://hdl.handle.net/1814/41165>.
- Patriarca, Silvana. *Race in Post-Fascist Italy: ‘War Children’ and the Color of the Nation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022.
- Röger, Maren. “Children of German Soldiers in Poland, 1939-1945.” In *The Children of Foreign Soldiers in Finland, Norway, Denmark, Austria, Poland and Occupied Soviet Karelia. Children of Foreign Soldiers in Finland 1940–1948*, 2. Vol., edited by Lars Westerlund, 261–272. Helsinki: Nord Print, 2011.
- Röger, Maren. “The Sexual Policies and Sexual Realities of the German Occupiers in Poland in the Second World War.” *Contemporary European History* 23, no. 1 (2014): 1–21. Accessed May 31, 2023. doi:10.1017/S0960777313000490.
- Röger, Maren, and Lu Seegers, “Ojcowie, których zabrakło. Doświadczenia i wspomnienia polskich sierot wojennych i polsko-niemieckich ‘Children Born of War.’” *Rocznik Antropologii Historii* 6 (2016): 229–250.
- Röger, Maren. “Besatzungskinder in Polen.” *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 65, no. 1 (2017): 26–51.
- Röger, Maren. *Kriegsbeziehungen. Intimität, Gewalt und Prostitution im besetzten Polen 1939 bis 1945*. Frankfurt a.M.: S. Fischer, 2015. The book has been translated both into Polish and into English.
- Röger, Maren. *Wojenne związki. Polki i Niemcy podczas okupacji*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Świat Książki, 2016; Röger, Maren. *Wartime Relations: Intimacy, Violence, and Prostitution in Occupied Poland, 1939–1945*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021.
- Seegers, Lu. *‘Vati blieb im Krieg’: Vaterlosigkeit als generationelle Erfahrung im 20. Jahrhundert – Deutschland und Polen*. Göttingen: Wallstein, 2013.
- Seto, Donna. *No Place for a War Baby: the Global Politics of Children Born of Wartime Sexual Violence*. Farnham, Surrey/Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishers, 2013.

- 'Sexual violence in armed conflict: understanding the motivations', discussion paper at United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs research meeting *Use of Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict – Identifying Gaps in Research to Inform More Effective Interventions*, New York, 2008. Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Accessed May 31, 2023. [www.peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/ocha\\_svinarmedconflictmotivations\\_2009\\_0.pdf](http://www.peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/ocha_svinarmedconflictmotivations_2009_0.pdf)
- Stelzl-Marx, Barbara, and Silke Satjukow, ed. *Besatzungskinder. Die Nachkommen alliierter Soldaten in Österreich und Deutschland*. Vienna/Cologne/Weimar: Böhlau, 2015.
- Stelzl-Marx, Barbara. "Ivan's Children, The Consequences of Sexual Relations between Red Army Soldiers and Austrian Women." In *The Red Army in Austria. Aspects of Soviet Occupation 1945–1955*, edited by Stefan Karner, and Barbara Stelzl-Marx, 193–214. Lanham/Boulder/New York/Toronto/Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2020.
- Stotz, Lina, and Ingvill Constanze Ødegaard. "The Emergency of Rape Survivors and their 'Children Born of War'." EuroWARCHILD. Accessed May 31, 2023. <https://www.eurowarchild.org/publications/the-emergency-of-rape-survivors-and-their-children-born-of-war>
- Szarota, Tomasz. *Karuzela na placu Kasińskich. Studia i szkice z lat wojny i okupacji*. Warszawa: Oficyna Wydawnicza Rytm, Fundacja Historia i Kultura, 2007.
- Virgili, Fabrice. *La France 'virile': des femmes tondues à la Libération*. Paris: Payot, 2000.
- Zahra, Tara. *The Lost Children: Reconstructing Europe's Families after World War II*. Cambridge (MA) – London: Harvard University Press, 2011.
- Zaremba, Marcin. *Wielka trwoga. Polska 1944–1947. Ludowa reakcja na kryzys*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak, 2012. Zaremba, Marcin. *Entangled in Fear. Everyday Terror in Poland 1944–1947*. Translated by Maya Latynski. Bloomington (IN): Indiana University Press, 2022.
- Zerubavel, Eviatar. *The Elephant in the Room. Silence and Denial in Everyday Life*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.



Anne Klein

## Surviving the Holocaust: Children of Jewish Deportees in Post-war France (1940–1980)

The *Sons and Daughters of Jewish Deportees from France (Fils et Filles de Déportés Juifs de France – FFDJF)* is a French association of descendants of Jewish families who survived the Holocaust in Vichy-France (22 June 1940–25 August 1944). The organisation was founded in the run-up to the Lischka trial in Cologne (23 October 1979–11 February 1980), in which three former SS-functionaries – Kurt Lischka, Herbert Hagen, Ernst Heinrichsohn – were accused of having organised the deportations from France to the National Socialist annihilation camps. Eight years before, in 1971, Serge and Beate Klarsfeld, together with a group of Jewish friends and political activists, had started to expose the bourgeois lifestyle of the former National Socialists in West Germany. The French-Jewish group first appeared in public under the name *Militants de la Mémoire* and changed its designation in 1978 into FFDJF in order to underline the members' common Jewish heritage. Whereas nowadays Serge and Beate Klarsfeld are well-known as “Nazi-hunters”, the history of the *Militants des la Mémoire/FFDJF*, who gathered during the 1970s to call former German SS-men to juridical account in West-Germany, is still a *desideratum* of historical research.

Focusing on the *Militants de la Mémoire/FFDJF*, the aim of this chapter is to present an exemplary insight into the conditions of the lives of Jewish children and youth who survived the deportations from France, mostly by hiding, grew up in the dynamic political culture of French after-war democracy and as adults engaged themselves for retroactive justice. The idea is to follow the life-course of French Jews, who had been victimised during the Holocaust, grew up in post-war France, and became politically active during the 1970s. The chosen time frame starts with the Vichy-Regime in 1940/1942 and ends with the so-called Lischka trial in Cologne in 1979/1980.<sup>1</sup> Questions to answer are: What was the specific experience of Jewish children and youth during the Vichy period? How did those who survived by hiding get into contact with their Jewish identity and develop political agency? What did it mean to engage in public action during the 1970s in West-Germany, in a society that had started to talk about the past but still sheltered

---

<sup>1</sup> See Anne Klein, ed., *Der Lischka Prozess: eine jüdisch-französisch-deutsche Erinnerungsgeschichte. Ein BilderleseBuch* (Berlin: Metropol, 2013); Theresa Angenlahr, *Der Kölner Lischka Prozess. NS-Verbrechen und Erinnerungskultur in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und in Frankreich* (Frankfurt a. M.: Peter Lang, 2021).

former leading SS-men in its midst? What kind of resilience did they need in order to fight for recognition? And what did “justice” mean for those who had lost their loved ones in the Holocaust?

My thesis is that the political voice of those who had survived as children and youths developed in a threefold way: on the micro-level (personal empowerment), on the meso-level (social group support) and on the macro-level (justice and political recognition).<sup>2</sup> In this chapter, I bind different research fields together; the methodology is based on frame analyses<sup>3</sup> and the “situated knowledge”-approach.<sup>4</sup> Historical research on the *hidden children* in France was always framed by a public memory discourse and linked to the witnesses themselves as a kind of respect and recognition for those who were concerned.<sup>5</sup> After some discussions during the 1950s, the topic of the *hidden children* reached the French public again during the 1970s, on one hand by cultural productions like the memoirs of Saul Friedländer, who himself survived as a twelve-year-old boy the deportations from Bordeaux in 1944,<sup>6</sup> and the film of Louis Malle *Au revoir, les enfants*.<sup>7</sup> Raphaël Delpard, also a child survivor, published a semi-fictional documentary later during the 1990s.<sup>8</sup> On the other hand, during the 1970s, the militant actions of the *FFDJF* demanded new public standards for how to cope with the National Socialist past and Vichy

---

2 These three levels correspond – more or less – to the “structure of relations of recognition” as outlined by Axel Honneth. See Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for recognition. The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, trans. Joel Anderson (Cambridge/Oxford/Boston: Polity Press, 1995), 129.

3 See Giandomenico Toniolo, *Introduction to Frame Analysis: First and Second Order Theories* (Basel: Springer Int. Pub. 2019). These approaches provide tools for the analyses of macro-structured behavior, action, thinking and subjectivation.

4 This epistemic approach is used in the feminist science debate, postcolonial studies and other critical discourse. See Peta Hinton, “‘Situated Knowledges’ and New Materialism(s): Rethinking a Politics of Location,” *Women. A Cultural Review* 25 (2014): 1, accessed March 23, 2023, doi:10.1080/09574042.2014.901104. “Minority” here is used as a sociological term, not for numerical meaning.

5 See for example the reconstructive research of Walter W. Reed, *The children of La Hille. Eluding Nazi Capture during World War II* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1992). See concerning the actual discourse: Nathalie Zajde and Jacques Fredj, introduction to *Qui sont les enfants cachés? Penser avec les grands témoins*, ed. Nathalie Zajde (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2014), 9–11; “Le Child Survivor Fund où “Fonds pour les enfants survivants de la Shoah” est actif dès à present,” Claims Conference, accessed June 19, 2023, <http://www.claimscon.de/unsere-taetigkeit/informations-en-francais/child-survivor-fund-informations-en-francais.html>.

6 See Saul Friedländer, *Wenn die Erinnerung kommt. Autobiographie*, trans. Helgard Oestreich (Munich: DVA, 1979).

7 The movie of 1987 was based on a true story.

8 See Raphaël Delpard, *Überleben im Versteck: jüdische Kinder, 1940–1944*, trans. Bettina Schäfer (Bonn: Dietz, 1994).

collaboration.<sup>9</sup> As many former *hidden children* after 1945 emigrated to Israel, the United States, and Canada, the French group became part of an international network.<sup>10</sup>

For France, the year 1995 was decisive. It was then that president Jacques Chirac admitted France's responsibility for the Holocaust in his public speech at the anniversary of the *Vel' d'Hiv' Roundup* (*Rafle du Vélodrome d'Hiver*).<sup>11</sup> This kick-off event made restitution procedures for the *hidden children* possible, and also paved the way for a new research offensive. In his latest study, the French historian Jacques Sémelin reviews historical studies on the survival of Jews in France, pointing to the supportive role of the Catholic Church, as highlighted also in the study of Susan Zuccotti.<sup>12</sup> Other researchers underline the role of Jewish organisations, and especially of Jewish women, in organising rescue and resistance.<sup>13</sup> Katy Hazan, archivist of the *Society for Rescuing Children* (*Oeuvre de secours aux enfants*, OSE),<sup>14</sup> has published several studies on the rescue of Jewish children.<sup>15</sup> Other researchers like Danielle Bailly, herself a child survivor, added oral histories

---

9 Unlike in English, the French noun *militant* can mean any activist or supporter and does not connote an aggressive approach.

10 See Rakefet Zalashik, "Differenziertes Trauma – Die (Wieder)Entdeckung der 'Child Survivor'-Kategorie," in *Holocaust und Trauma. Kritische Perspektiven zur Entstehung und Wirkung eines Paradigmas*, ed. José Brunner et al. (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2011), 125.

11 More than 13,000 Jews arrested during these raids on 16 and 17 July 1942 were interned in the *Vélodrome d'Hiver* in Paris and later deported from there to the National Socialist annihilation camps.

12 See Jacques Sémelin, introduction to *The Survival of Jews in France, 1940–44*, ed. Jacques Sémelin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 1–6; Susan Zuccotti, *The Holocaust, the French, and the Jews* (New York: Basic Books, 1994).

13 See Jean Braumann, Georges Loinger and Frida Watterberg, *Organisation juive de Combat. Résistance/Sauvetage. France 1940–1945* (Paris: Éditions Autrement, 2002); Lucien Lazare, *Rescue as Resistance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

14 OSE was founded in 1912 by doctors in Saint Petersburg, Russia, as *Obshchetsvo Zdravookhraneniya Yevreyev* ("Organization for the health protection of Jews"; OZE), to help needy members of the Jewish population. In 1923 the organisation relocated to Berlin, under the symbolic presidency of Albert Einstein. In 1933, fleeing Nazism, it relocated again, this time to France where it became the *Oeuvre de secours aux enfants* (Society for Rescuing Children), retaining a similar acronym. In France, the OSE ran Children's Homes for Jewish children of various ages, including infants, whose parents were either in National socialist concentration camps or had been killed. In March 1939, several transports brought German Jewish children to France. Other children arrived either on their own or were brought by relatives. By May 1939, the OSE Children's Homes held more than 200 refugee children.

15 See Katy Hazan, *Les Orphelins de la Shoah. Les maisons de l'espoir* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2000); Katy Hazan, *Rire le jour; pleurer la nuit* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 2013).

that show the impact of survival on the later life-cycle.<sup>16</sup> Psychologist Nathalie Zajde, who had already organised groups for Holocaust survivors and members of the second generation, also directed her research towards the former hidden children, giving special attention to their expert status.<sup>17</sup> Serge Klarsfeld<sup>18</sup> and neuropsychiatrist Boris Cyrulnik<sup>19</sup> are key persons of the current chapter. Further sources like the memoirs of Serge and Beate Klarsfeld<sup>20</sup> and the transcripts of the Lischka trial in Cologne are important for the adequate representation of the French-Jewish activists' engagement for juridical justice.<sup>21</sup>

Based on Axel Honneth's concept of "struggle for recognition",<sup>22</sup> this chapter roughly follows a chronological line of three time periods, each linked to a thematic focus. The *first* part describes the social history of what happened to Jewish children and youth under the Vichy-regime and how it was possible to evade deportations. The *second* part illustrates central aspects of identity building and consciousness raising of young French Jews during the 1950s and 1960s. The *third* part examines the necessary development of resilience, with reference to the biographical analyses of French neuropsychiatrist Boris Cyrulnik (born 26 July 1937 in Bordeaux). The *conclusion* reflects the integration of the personal, social and political dimensions and underlines the importance of litigation and jurisdiction for a critical remembrance culture.

---

16 See Danielle Bailly, *Hidden Children of France, 1940–1945*, trans. Betty Becker-Theve (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010); Alain Corbin et al., *Enfants cachés: analyses et débats* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2006).

17 See Nathalie Zajde, ed., *Qui sont les enfants cachés? Penser avec les grands témoins* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2014).

18 See Serge Klarsfeld, "Orphelins de la Shoah et enfants cachés," in *Qui sont les enfants cachés? Penser avec les grands témoins*, ed. Nathalie Zajde (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2014).

19 See Boris Cyrulnik, "Une Crypte dans l'âme," in *Qui sont les enfants cachés?*

20 See Beate und Serge Klarsfeld, *Erinnerungen*, trans. Andrea Stephani et al. (München: Piper, 2015).

21 Anne Klein, "'Militants de la Mémoire'. Repräsentationen jüdischen Engagements in den 1970er Jahren," in *Opfer als Akteure. Jahrbuch zur Geschichte und Wirkung des Holocaust 12*, ed. Fritz Bauer Institut et al. (Frankfurt a.M.: Fritz Bauer Institut, 2008); Anne Klein and Birte Klarzyk, "The Fils et Filles des Déportés Juifs de France and the Lischka trial in Cologne, 1971–1980," in *Seeking accountability for Nazi and war crimes in East and Central Europe: a people's justice?*, ed. Eric Le Bourhis et al. (Rochester/New York: Boydell & Brewer Inc., 2022); Anne Klein, "Historical justice through democratic action: French Holocaust survivors and the Lischka trial in Cologne (1971–1980)," in *Making Justice Visible. War Crime Trials, Media and Memory after World War II*, ed. Ruth Leiserowitz et al. (Warschau: Deutsches Historisches Institut, 2022).

22 See Honneth, *Struggle for recognition*.

## Surviving the Holocaust in Vichy-France

The situation in Vichy-France during the National Socialist period is marked by specific characteristics. *First*, by its divided political landscape with the French resistance (*La Résistance*) on one side, and the Vichy collaboration on the other; *second*, by the huge and diverse Jewish community and the welcoming of Jewish refugees, and *third*, by the geographic location of France, with potential rescue routes towards Switzerland and solidarity networks in Belgium, where also many Jewish children and youth survived by means of organised hiding.<sup>23</sup> Until the German occupation of the Northern part of the country, France had been a refuge for *exilés* from all over Europe. Of about 320,000 Jews living in France in 1940, more than a third, around 135,400, were non-naturalised immigrants. Whereas the children born in France were citizens by birth (*jus solis*), the refugees mostly lived in unregulated status. Two thirds of the around 76,000 Jews, deported from France to the National Socialist annihilation camps, did not possess French citizenship. Half of the foreign Jewish population perished in the Holocaust, but only 25% of the French Jews.<sup>24</sup> Around 2,500 of those who were deported survived the camps and returned to France after the war,<sup>25</sup> but the 11,000 deported Jewish children under 16 were all gassed directly after their arrival in Auschwitz-Birkenau.<sup>26</sup>

The antisemitic pressure increased during the four years of Vichy collaboration. The first and second *Statut des juifs*, implemented by the Vichy regime in October 1940 and June 1941, aggravated the living conditions of Jews. With the German occupation of the “free zone” on 11 November 1942, Vichy representatives started an even closer cooperation with the Nationalist Socialists.<sup>27</sup> In order to fulfill the German deportation quotas, children and youth also became a target group of anti-Jewish politics. The deportations to the annihilation camps had already

---

<sup>23</sup> See Lucien Steinberg, *Le Comité de défense des juifs en Belgique, 1942–1944* (Brussels: Éditions de l’Université de Bruxelles, 1973).

<sup>24</sup> See Sémelin, introduction, 1. Around 37,000 political deportees returned after the war to France, but only around 2,500 (3%) of the Jewish deportees survived.

<sup>25</sup> It is not possible to give the exact numbers.

<sup>26</sup> The transit camp Drancy near Paris was not the only, but the main starting point of most transports. 64,759 Jews were deported from there to the annihilation camps in 64 transports. Approximately 61,000 of these Jews were sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau and 3,753 were sent to Sobibor.

<sup>27</sup> For an overview on the historiography on Vichy, see Claudia Prinz, “Vor und nach Paxton. Der Paradigmenwechsel in der Deutung des Vichy-Regimes,” *Zeithistorische Forschungen/Studies in Contemporary History* 4, no. 1–2 (2007), accessed August 25, 2022, doi:10.14765/zzf.dok-1905; Robert O. Paxton, “Confronting the Histories of Vichy and European Fascism: An Interview,” December 20, 2021, The National World War II Museum, New Orleans, accessed August 23, 2022, <https://www.nationalww2museum.org/war/articles/robert-paxton-vichy-france>.

started on 26 March 1942 and they lasted until 17 August 1944.<sup>28</sup> So-called camps of transit were installed after the first big raid in Paris in March 1941 (*Rafle du Billet Vert*), mainly for adult male Jews refugees.<sup>29</sup> The *Grande Rafle de Vel d'Hiv* on 16 and 17 July 1942 was again directed against the migrant community, but this time around 10,000 men were able to go underground previously because of early warnings by French policemen. Only 13,152 Jews could be arrested, some of them deported at once and 8,160 (4,115 children, 2,916 women und 1,129 men) temporarily interned in the Bicycle Race Winter Palace (*Vélodrome d'Hiver*) near the Eifel Tower.<sup>30</sup>

The arrest of Jewish youth and children under 16 during this raid was a new phenomenon.<sup>31</sup> After five days, all interned were transferred to the transit camps Drancy, Beaune-la-Rolande und Pithiviers (*Département Loiret*), where the children and youth were separated from their parents. The adults were transported in cattle wagons to Auschwitz-Birkenau on 19 July 1942. Only one month later, on 17 August 1942, youth and children under 16 were also deported, based on the agreement between SS-commander Carl Oberg and the Secretary General of the French police René Bousquet.<sup>32</sup> An intense police search for Jewish youth between 14 and 16 years without French citizenship began, and those who were found in the camp Rivesaltes near the Spanish border were now also deported under the cynical pretense of family reunification (*regroupement familial*).<sup>33</sup> But many of those who lived outside the camps were able to evade deportation, because they had either been given clandestine hiding-places beforehand or decided to join Resistance

---

28 Several other groups were also deported, for example *Spanish republicans*, resistance fighters, those who had been recruited for forced labour in Germany or those who had refused forced labour (*Service travail obligatoire*, STO) in France. Roma and Sinti had been interned, but only one transport with around 350 people was sent from Northern France to Auschwitz.

29 3,747 Jewish men were arrested on 14 May 1941, after 6,694 foreign Jews living in France had received a summons in the mail (delivered on a green ticket) to a status review. The summons was a trap: those who honored their summons were arrested and taken by bus the same day to the Gare d'Austerlitz, then shipped in four special trains to two camps at Pithiviers and Beaune-La-Rolande in the Loiret department.

30 The roundup was directed against Jews from Germany, Austria, Poland, Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union and the stateless Jews (*apatrides*), aged from 16 to 50. There were exceptions for women in advanced states of pregnancy or who were breast-feeding. See Maurice Rajsfus, *La Police de Vichy – Les forces de l'ordre au service de la Gestapo, 1940/1944* (Paris: Le Cherche Midi, 1995), 118.

31 See Paris City Hall, "Sie waren noch Kinder. Deportation und Rettung jüdischer Kinder in Paris" 1940–1942, accessed August 22, 2022, <https://artsandculture.google.com/story/KwURxv3TVhUA8A>.

32 See Wolfgang Seibel, *Persecution and Rescue: The Politics of the "Final Solution" in France, 1940–1944*, trans. Ciaran Cronin (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2016), 82–146.

33 See Katy Hazan, *Le sauvetage des enfants juifs pendant l'Occupation: une forme de résistance civile* (Paris: Éditions du Cercle d'étude de la déportation et de la Shoah, 2020), 20.

groups.<sup>34</sup> Escape aid organisations used clandestine routes over the Pyrenees and through Spain in order to enable threatened populations to reach ships in Lisbon in Portugal,<sup>35</sup> and humanitarian agencies took care of those who were interned in the camps Le Vernet and Gurs near the Pyrenees or in Les Milles near Marseille. Child aid organisations and clerics of the Catholic Church looked for clandestine hiding-places, later also smuggling Jewish children and youth to Switzerland.<sup>36</sup> Studies confirm for some regions or cities a virulent Antisemitism, especially towards the foreign-born Jewish population,<sup>37</sup> but in other regions, like in the protestant city of Chambon-sur-Lignon dans les Cévennes, many engaged in rescue activities. Researchers like Jacques Sémelin underline the decisive role of local networks for clandestine help and solidarity.<sup>38</sup> Innumerable acts of “civil resistance” created a “supportive web of social relationships”, and children from Jewish migrant families profited most. Because big parts of “French society acted as a safeguard”, at least 80 % of the children under 16 (between 7,000 and 10,000) were able to survive the Holocaust in France.<sup>39</sup> Solidarity – one of the central values of the French Republic – might be the adequate keyword to describe the motivation of non-Jewish supporters, who wanted to demonstrate by their silent re-

---

34 For July 1942, there are documented seven training camps of the *French Jewish Scouting movement (Eclaireurs Israélites de France, EIF)* in Southern France with 124 members. See Lazare, *Rescue as Resistance*, 60; Ronald C. Rosbottom, *Sudden Courage. Youth in France confront the Germans, 1940–1945* (New York: Custom House, 2019), 187–195. Fifty-nine contemporary witnesses were interviewed in the 1990s who during the Vichy-period between the ages of 11 and 23 had become active members of resistance networks. See Phillippe A. Boiry, *Les Jeunes dans la Résistance* (Périgueux: Pilote 24, 1996). See also the biography of Bernhard Musmand, Jewish Partisan Educational Fund, accessed January 4, 2023, <https://www.jewishpartisans.org/partisans/bernard-musmand>.

35 See Anne Klein, *Flüchtlingspolitik und Flüchtlingshilfe 1940–1942. Varian Fry und die Komitees zur Rettung politisch Verfolgter in New York und Marseille* (Berlin: Metropol, 2007).

36 The *Committee for Refugee Aid (Comité d'Assistance aux Réfugiés, CAR)* had been founded in 1936 as the follow-up organisation of the *French National Committee for the Support of Victims of Antisemitism (Comité National Français de Secours aux Victimes de l'Antisémitisme)*. The *Nîmes-Committee (Comité de Nîmes)*, founded in the winter 1940/41 and named after the city, where the meeting took place, coordinated the work of 30 non-Jewish and Jewish Aid Organisations in the Southern Zone. Some of these organisations started a political campaign for abolishing the camps; others provided help and assistance in the camps.

37 See Shannon L. Fogg, *The Politics of Everyday Life in Vichy France: Foreigners, Undesirables, and Strangers* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009). The study focuses on the central French region of the Limousin (Haute-Vienne, Creuse, and Corrèze) and the small city of Limoges.

38 See Sémelin, introduction, 4.

39 Katelyn Berman, “*Hidden Children in France during the Holocaust*,” Yad Vashem, accessed August 22, 2022, <https://www.yadvashem.org/articles/general/hidden-children.html>.



sistance that they did not agree with state politics and the segregation of the population in accordance with antisemitic criteria.

The clandestine rescue work was especially supported by families, who integrated the *hidden children* into their social networks. As already pointed out, 75% of the Jews living in France, survived the deportations, but for children and youth the survival rate was around 87%.<sup>40</sup> Especially Southern France with its rural landscape offered a network of hiding possibilities. The three main French-Jewish organisations for children and youth all cooperated closely with the resistance: the *French Jewish Scouting Movement (Éclaireurs Israélites de France, EIF)*, the *Oeuvre de Secours aux Enfants (OSE)* and the *Organisation for Rehabilitation through Training (ORT)*.<sup>41</sup> OSE supported around 5,000 children, 2,500 of them in their own childrens' homes, while the other 2,500 were accommodated in host families. Four houses offered a shelter for those Jewish children who had arrived in France as unaccompanied minors from Austria or Germany.<sup>42</sup> Ernst Papanek, a socialist from Austria, had supervised the pedagogical work for OSE until his emigration to the United States directly after the German occupation.<sup>43</sup>

OSE also liberated Jewish children from the internment camps in Southern France and organised their emigration to the United States<sup>44</sup> and their clandestine flight to Switzerland<sup>45</sup> as well as the *Suisse Red Cross*, which maintained its own

---

40 See Sémelin, introduction, 4; Catherine Poujol, *Église de France et les enfants juifs* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2013), 137.

41 ORT and OSE were administered mainly by and for East European Jews living in France, and the EIF had been founded in 1924 as a special branch of the French scouting movement for children and youth between 9 and 16. The *Zionist Youth Movement (Mouvement de la Jeunesse Sioniste – MUS)* prepared young people for the emigration to Palestine. For background see Asher Cohen, *Persécutions et sauvetages: Juifs et Français sous l'Occupation et sous Vichy* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1993).

42 See Katy Hazan and Georges Weill, "L'OSE et le sauvetage des enfants juifs de l'avant-guerre à l'après-guerre," in *La résistance aux génocides: de la pluralité des actes de sauvetage*, ed. Jacques Sémelin et al. (Paris: Les Presses de Sciences Po, 2008).

43 See Frank Jacob, *Ernst Papanek and Jewish Refugee Children. Genocide and Displacement* (Berlin: De Gruyter/Oldenbourg, 2021); Inge Hansen-Schaberg, Hanna Papanek and Gabriele Rühl-Nawabi, *Ernst Papanek: Pädagogische und therapeutische Arbeit. Kinder mit Verfolgungs-, Flucht- und Exilerfahrungen während der NS-Zeit* (Wien/Köln/Weimar: Böhlau, 2015).

44 See Judith Tydor Baumel-Schwartz, "Jewish Refugee Children in the USA (1934–1945): Flight, Resettlement, Absorption," in *The young Victims of the Nazi regime. Migration, the Holocaust and Postwar Displacement*, ed. Simone Gigliotti and Monica Tempian (London/Oxford et al.: Bloomsbury, 2016), 19.

45 See Hazan, "Le sauvetage des enfants juifs," 17.



children's home near Toulouse.<sup>46</sup> The social workers of the *American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee* (Joint), the *American Friends Service Committee* (AFSC) and the *Unitarian Service Committee* (USC) were also involved in child aid and clandestine hiding. Due to closed borders, most of the children and youth had to find a safe shelter in France. Immense efforts were made by the social workers of OSE that officially belonged to the *General Union of French Jews* (*Union Générale des Israélites de France*, UGIF),<sup>47</sup> the official Jewish representation at Vichy, which later had to deal with the stigma of collaboration [Makel der Kollaboration].<sup>48</sup> But especially those who took care of the children and youth nonetheless subverted the official contracts and built up a clandestine network of help and rescue. In doing so, they cooperated closely with Jewish communists and Zionists, who in 1943 founded the *Representative Council of French Jewish Institutions* (*Conseil Représentatif des Israélites de France*, CRIF) as part of the inner resistance.<sup>49</sup>

## The search for belonging and political consciousness-raising

After the liberation, France still had the biggest Jewish community in Europe, with some migration to Israel and the United States and a huge number of arriving Jewish immigrants from liberated Germany and Eastern European countries. French and International Jewish relief organisations took care of around ten thousand children and youth without parents, mostly finding them temporary shelter in one of the numerous orphanages. The situation for Jewish children and youth in France was quite different from the situation of unaccompanied Jewish minors in other countries in liberated Europe and also from the situation of the offspring

---

<sup>46</sup> See Vera Friedländer, *Die Kinder von La Hille. Flucht und Rettung vor Deportation* (Berlin: Aufbau, 2004).

<sup>47</sup> See Maurice Rajsfus, *Les juifs dans la collaboration: l'UGIF (1941–1944): précédé d'une courte étude sur les juifs de France en 1939* (Paris: Études et documentation internationales, 1980).

<sup>48</sup> Bernhard Wasserstein, *Europa ohne Juden. Das europäische Judentum seit 1945* (Berlin: List/Ullstein, 2001), 101. Beate Klarsfeld writes that Kurt Lischka championed the founding of the UGIF. Klarsfeld, *Erinnerungen*, 304. The UGIF had also taken over the responsibility for interned Jewish children and youth.

<sup>49</sup> See Adam Rayski, *The Choice of the Jews Under Vichy Between Submission and Resistance* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005); Olivier Wieviorka, *The French Resistance* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016). The organisation is also known as *Conseil représentatif des institutions juives de France*, and exists until today. Serge Klarsfeld is one of its members. See Samuel Ghiles-Meilhac, *Le CRIF. De la Résistance juive à la tentation du lobby. De 1943 à nos jours* (Paris: Éditions, 2001).

of the around 1.5 million displaced forced labourers in Germany and the regions of the former German Reich.<sup>50</sup> Employees of welfare aid organisations assumed that Jewish children and youth who had survived in hiding in France were privileged in a way, betraying fewer effects of harm, misery, disorientation and homelessness. In the eye of the French public, the needs of child survivors also seemed to be of negligible importance, because there were so many vulnerable people who deserved public recognition, first and foremost the resistance fighters and former camp inmates returning to France.

But the accomplishments of Jewish charities such as OSE concretely posed the question of Jewish identity after 1945. OSE alone opened 25 children's homes in liberated France, a 1946 statistic drawn from the central records of Union OSE in Geneva reported 5,263 children under the protection of OSE France.<sup>51</sup> Social workers of the OSE and other humanitarian aid organisations recognised the suffering, isolation and loss of the younger Jewish population and tried to support the childrens' and youths' search for orientation and autonomy. Historian Rebecca Clifford underlines the strategies of child survivors to influence decisions, because their longing for a safe place sometimes constituted a challenge for the aid organisations with their limited financial resources.<sup>52</sup> The philosopher Jacques Derrida, who himself survived in a Catholic monastery, describes the "pain of belonging before, during and after the war".<sup>53</sup> Even if individuals experienced their trauma differently, those who were concerned carried a common cultural message that required "cultural negotiations".<sup>54</sup> For many, it was a long time before they could process the shock of separation and loss during the Holocaust and realise the past's impact on their psychological vulnerability.

In the spirit of democratic renewal, international tracing services and relief organisations had formulated "the right [...] a child has to his own heritage"<sup>55</sup> as

---

50 See Johannes-Dieter Steinert, "Polish and Soviet Child Force laborers in National Socialist Germany and German occupied Eastern Europa, 1939–1945," in *Freilegungen: Rebuilding Lives – child survivors and DP children in the Aftermath of the Holocaust and Forced Labor*, ed. Henning Borggräfe et al. (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2017); Verena Buser, "Child survivors and Displaced children in the Aftermath Studies. An Overview," in *Freilegungen*.

51 Hazan et al., "L'OSE et le sauvetage des enfants juifs," in Sémelin, *La résistance aux génocides*, 264.

52 See Rebecca Clifford, "Ich gehörte nirgendwohin." *Kinderleben nach dem Holocaust*, trans. Stephan Gebauer (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2022), 92–101.

53 Cit. after Mary Fraser Kirsh, "Remembering the 'pain of belonging': Jewish children hidden as Catholics in Second World War France," in *The young victims*, 257.

54 Kirsh, "Remembering the 'pain of belonging'", 276.

55 Susanne Urban, "Unaccompanied Children and the Allied Child Search. 'The right ... a child has to his own heritage'," in *The young victims*, 277–298.

a human rights principle for all unaccompanied children and youth who had survived war and Holocaust. In France, the aim was to reunite the families in case one of the parents or a relative had survived or returned from the camps – in contrast, for example, to the Netherlands, where hidden child survivors tended to stay with their foster parents after the war.<sup>56</sup> The aim of Jewish organisations was to stabilise and enlarge the Jewish community.<sup>57</sup> This was understandable enough, as they had to deal with the loss of around six million members of their community in the Holocaust, but as a significant number of the *hidden child* survivors in France had converted to Catholicism.<sup>58</sup> When on 30 October 1956, fifty Jewish delegates from all over the World inaugurated the *Mémorial to the unknown Jewish martyr (Mé-morial du Martyr Juif Inconnu* close to the CDJC) in order to commemorate the millions of Jews murdered in the Holocaust, the former *hidden children* remained on the sideline, still without knowledge of their origin and the whereabouts of their parents and other family members. Jacques Sémelin underlines that also the secular French context hindered the definition of Jewishness in the aftermath of the Holocaust.<sup>59</sup> But when the “*hidden children* reached adulthood, they found new ways to express their Jewish identity”.<sup>60</sup> Often, their sensitive memory was triggered by certain political events after 1945. Michael Rothberg analyses the massive police violence against the Algerian immigrant community during the anticolonial manifestation in Paris 17 October 1961 as such a trigger point, provoking strong solidarity on the side of the French youth.<sup>61</sup> Especially the descendants of Jewish families did not want to live again under authoritarian rule or experience police violence or discrimination, this time directed against migrants from Algeria. The brutal colonial war was hotly debated in the French public for different reasons, not least because the De Gaulle regime and many former French resistance fighters who supported the war lost their political credibility. Following Rothberg’s thesis – as supported by a recent publication of Charlotte Wiedemann<sup>62</sup> – entangle-

---

56 See Clifford, *Kinderleben nach dem Holocaust*, 41, Fn.14.

57 See David Weinberg, “The Revival of French Jewry in Post-Holocaust France: Challenges and Opportunities,” in *Post-Holocaust France and the Jews, 1945–1955*, ed. Seán Hand and Steven T. Katz (New York: New York University Press, 2015).

58 See Daniella Doron, “Lost children and lost childhoods. Memory in Post-Holocaust France,” in *Post-Holocaust France*, 89.

59 See Jacques Sémelin, conclusion (The Survival of the Jews in France: A Multifactorial Approach), to *The survival of Jews in France*, 259–297.

60 Fraser Kirsh, “Remembering the ‘pain of belonging’,” 270.

61 See Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 267–308.

62 See Charlotte Wiedemann, *Den Schmerz der anderen begreifen: Holocaust und Weltgedächtnis* (Berlin: Propyläen 2022), 164–167.

ments of structural violence as well as of past and present have left an imprint on the minds of the former *hidden children*, yielding what is called an “ethics of a multigenerational memory”.<sup>63</sup>

One of the protesters during the demonstration of 17 October 1961 was 33-year-old Elie Kagan. A decade later, he accompanied Serge and Beate Klarsfeld as a political friend, documenting the campaigns of the *FFDJF* with his camera.<sup>64</sup> Kagan, himself the offspring of an Eastern European Jewish immigrant family, had survived the raids of the *Velodrome d’hiver* by hiding at the age of 14. In a poem, he writes about the link between the police violence of 1961 and 1942 thus creating a memory trope that might have been quite typical for child survivors. He writes: “My fear, which surprises me. October 61, July 42 [...] Frenchmen, noses against the windows, indifferent. They shoot, they kill, and then they quickly erase it.”<sup>65</sup> During that time, the personal continuities on the perpetrators’ side were not yet discussed in public. That the chief of the Paris police, Maurice Papon, had already ordered as regional prefect under Vichy the deportations from Bordeaux in May 1942 was only discussed publicly more than 30 years later. In the trial in Lyon in 1997–1998, Maurice Papon was sentenced to ten years in prison for “crimes against humanity”.<sup>66</sup> Serge Klarsfeld, who himself had survived the deportation of his father by hiding behind a wall in the family flat in Nizza,<sup>67</sup> acted as plaintiff and accessory prosecutor in the trial against Papon, as in the Lischka trial nearly 20 years earlier.

In May 1960, Serge Klarsfeld had met Beate Künzel at the metro station Porte de Saint-Cloud, just after her arrival from Berlin. She intended to work as an Au-pair in Paris for only one year, but this coincidental encounter marked the beginning of a lifelong love relationship between the Romanian-French Jew and the German non-Jewish young woman. The trial against Adolph Eichmann in Jerusalem that started on 11 April 1961 focused on Eichmann’s responsibility in advising and coordinating the deportation trains from all over Europe to the National Socialist annihilation camps. The questions were similar in all trials against desk culprits: What had the SS-officers known about the aim of the deportations? What had been the consequences of their decisions and what had been their motives for signing the decisive documents?

---

<sup>63</sup> Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*, 267.

<sup>64</sup> See Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*, 345.

<sup>65</sup> Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*, 301.

<sup>66</sup> Baruch, Marc Olivier, “À propos du procès de Maurice Papon,” *French Politics and Society* 3 (1998); Richard J. Golsan: *The Papon Affair. Memory and Justice in Trial* (New York: Routledge, 2000).

<sup>67</sup> See Klarsfeld, *Erinnerungen*, 30.

After the so called Wannsee-Conference, the decision for the “Final Solution” had been telegraphed to all state representatives in the capitals of occupied Europe, also to Paris.<sup>68</sup> The genocide as a “crime against the Jewish people”, as the “crime against humanity” was specified by the Jerusalem court in the trial against Adolf Eichmann, located the deportations at the center of National socialist policies. The Eichmann trial also deepened knowledge about National Socialist violence, because for the first time the voices of Holocaust survivors testifying before the court in Jerusalem were transported to a worldwide public. As French historian Annette Wievorka puts it: “Survivors acquired the social identity of survivors, because society now recognized them as such.”<sup>69</sup> Under the impression of these events, the Klarsfelds right from the beginning of their relationship discussed Serge Klarsfeld’s experience of his father’s deportation and of his own survival. The question arose as to how former National Socialists could be called to juridical accountability, especially the SS-functionaries who had advised the deportations from their central offices in Paris. Whereas Serge Klarsfeld began research on archival evidence concerning the SS-apparatus in France, Beate Klarsfeld started a militant action to denounce Kurt Georg Kiesinger during his election campaign for chancellor of West Germany in 1969. Kiesinger had not been a member of the SS, but as a convinced National Socialist he had been in a leading position in the foreign propaganda apparatus of the NS-regime in Vichy-France.<sup>70</sup>

Toward the end of the 1960s, the new radical political critique that emerged all over Europe aimed to reveal National Socialist continuities and traditions. In the radical student movements in France, many descendants of Jewish families were involved.<sup>71</sup> Child survivors, children of Jewish resistance fighters or of Holocaust survivors had their political coming-out at that time, when the hegemonic discourse of the resistance disintegrated with De Gaulle’s resignation as head of the state in 1969 and his death one year later.<sup>72</sup> In the same year Willy Brandt, who had spent the National Socialist period in exile, became the first social-democratic chancellor in West Germany after 1945. As the political climate looked prom-

---

68 The so-called “final solution” (National Socialist euphemism for the state-organised genocide) took place far away in occupied Eastern Europe. The deportation route from the detention camps Gurs and Rivesaltes near the Spanish border in Southern France – Jewish families from South-Western Germany had been deported here before – to Auschwitz was over 2,000 kilometers.

69 Annette Wievorka, *The Era of the Witness*, trans. by Jared Stark (Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press, 2006), 88.

70 See Klarsfeld, *Erinnerungen*, 91.

71 See Robert Hirsch, *Sont-ils toujours des juifs allemands? La gauche radicale et les juif depuis 1968* (Nancy: Arbres bleus éditions, 2017), 83.

72 See Angenlahr, *Der Kölner Lischka Prozess*, 48.

ising, Serge and Beate Klarsfeld started their campaign against former German SS-functionaries in Vichy-France with the attempted kidnapping of Kurt Lischka on 20 March 1971.<sup>73</sup> Some weeks before they had already confronted Hagen and Lischka at their homes, in front of a recording camera, with documents they had once signed as SS-functionaries in Paris.<sup>74</sup> During the National Socialist Period, Kurt Lischka (1909–1989) had been assigned to Paris as a SS Lieutenant Colonel and chief of the Gestapo, while Herbert Martin Hagen (1913–1999), also a former SS Lieutenant Colonel, had been the supervisor of Adolf Eichmann in the *Main Office for the Security of the Reich* (*Reichssicherheitshauptamt*, RSHA). The younger Ernst Heinrichsohn (1920–1994), had been active as a guard at the deportation center of Drancy. After the war, he studied law and in 1952, as representative of the Christian Democratic Party (CSU), was elected mayor of Bürgstadt, a small city in Bavaria. He came into public focus in 1978, when the *FFDJF* together with the German-Jewish journalist Lea Rosh documented a round table discussion in a local restaurant of the small village for “Kennzeichen D”.<sup>75</sup> Most of the village citizens preferred to put the NS past behind them and demanded that the criminal prosecution of their mayor be abandoned.<sup>76</sup> But the *FFDJF* insisted on their request, reinforcing their legal arguments by adding that Lischka, Hagen and Heinrichsohn had already been judged *in absentia* by a French military court in the 1950s without having served their sentences.<sup>77</sup>

## The resilience of hidden children

The political campaign of the Klarsfelds against the three former SS-functionaries raises many questions, for example concerning the activists’ motivations and their choice of methods and tools. Political activism during that 1970s became broadly accepted as furthering democracy. In West Germany, Jewish voices were still mar-

---

73 See Klarsfeld, *Erinnerungen*, 270.

74 The home addresses could easily be found in German telephone books.

75 *Kennzeichen D* was a 45-minute-feature, telecasted by West German public television between 9 September 1971 and 14 March 2001.

76 See Judith Weißhaar, “Lea Rosh erinnert sich an Bürgstadt,” in *Der Lischka Prozess*; Dirk Rauber, “1979. Kennzeichen D: Bürgstadt, seine Bürger und der Bürgermeister Heinrichsohn,” in *Der Lischka Prozess*.

77 See Bernhard Brunner, *Der Frankreich-Komplex. Die nationalsozialistischen Verbrechen in Frankreich und die Justiz der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2004), 91–96, 326. Lischka and Hagen had been sentenced to lifelong forced labour because of crimes against French citizens, and Lischka also because he had taken hostages as revenge. Heinrichsohn had even been sentenced to death for having participated in the execution of hostages.

ginalised, and speaking up in the name of Holocaust victims required some courage. Jewish activists needed to manage their personal vulnerability, gaining strength and social support in order to be able to speak up in public. Antisemitism was still virulent, openly in the form of right-wing movements and parties but also in form of more silent popular resentments.<sup>78</sup>

Although the Holocaust had affected each child survivor in a specific and personal way, it was necessary for all of them to work through their past experiences of loss and clandestine hiding. For many, confronting their hidden sorrow required a special cultural context. Several steps of personal empowerment were necessary for individuals to become aware of their own biography and confront the public with their need for recognition. Having survived the Holocaust in France as a child meant to be hurt socially, psychologically and culturally. After the violent rupture from parents and family members, fearful silence under clandestine conditions often became internalised as part of children's identities. Most child survivors did not know what exactly happened, but suffered because of secondary feelings like shame and guilt. The intriguing question of why oneself had survived, while loved ones had been murdered,<sup>79</sup> found no convincing answer. This immense vulnerability was private and political at the same time. Coming of age was accompanied by emotional conflicts that impeded the development of self-care and self-efficacy, while promoting consciousness raising and the need for a public voice at the same time.<sup>80</sup>

Boris Cyrulnik, whose parents had been deported in 1942, survived the anti-Jewish raids in Bordeaux 1944 at the age of seven and became a successful neuropsychiatrist after the war.<sup>81</sup> During a conference in 1995, when he was already 58 years old, he decided to study the phenomenon of resilience.<sup>82</sup> Looking at his own biographical imprint, his aim was to find out more about the factors of encouragement and support that might enable those affected by trauma to develop high-performance personalities. As a neuropsychiatrist he knew that the integration of

---

78 See Michael Höttemann, "Sekundärer Antisemitismus. Antisemitismus nach Auschwitz," *Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung* (BpB), November 23, 2020, accessed January 5, 2023. <https://www.bpb.de/themen/antisemitismus/dossier-antisemitismus/321575/sekundaerer-antisemitismus/>.

79 See William G. Niederland, *Folgen der Verfolgung: Das Überlebenden-Syndrom, Seelenmord* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1980), 10.

80 See Selma Porobic, "Zum Zusammenhang von sozialen Identitätstransformationen und sozialem Trauma," in *Soziales Trauma: Ein interdisziplinäres Lehrbuch*, ed. Andreas Hamburger et al. (Berlin/Heidelberg: Springer, 2022).

81 See Boris Cyrulnik, *Rette dich, das Leben ruft! Erlebnisbericht*, trans. Rainer Kober (Berlin: Ullstein, 2013).

82 Concerning the time and temporal allocation of witness accounts: Adophe Nysenholc, "Les Autobiographies d'enfants cachés: Réalité où fiction?," in *Qui sont les enfants cachés?*.



trauma into autobiography requires a complex performance of the brain, depending on relationships to other human beings. Trauma-researcher Monika DeYoung underlines the need for a safe place and supportive company as a precondition which enables the individual to develop a sense of coherence. Seen from this perspective, the group meetings of the *FFDJF* enabled members to become aware of such a “felt’ self in secure relation with others”.<sup>83</sup> Also Cyrulnik underlines the importance of a circle of friends, but also warns against the emotional linkage of trauma bonding. In order to further resilience, three factors are necessary: *first*, to transform “affective groups”<sup>84</sup> into “affiliation groups”<sup>85</sup> with official membership. *Second*, each group member needs “the right to talk to others”,<sup>86</sup> which requires attentiveness on the side of the listener. *Third*, a well-defined political aim and a meaningful agenda not only help to raise public awareness, but also promote reaching beyond political boundaries.<sup>87</sup> Integration on the personal (micro-level), social (meso-level) and political (macro-level) level is equally important. It is of utmost importance to respect individual differences. Journalist Helen Epstein found out in oral history-interviews that “the children of Jewish resistance fighters, for example, displayed a pride and strength in their identity as Jews”,<sup>88</sup> which was strikingly different from those Jewish interview partners who had survived in hiding. Child survivors who had lost their parents in the Holocaust transported this early suffering sometimes into later life, developing symptoms of desperation or even depression. Having experienced hiding and a denied Jewish identity for several years could evoke the feeling as if one did not have the right to exist. Posing as a non-Jew and taking on an artificial identity, often with a conversion to Catholicism, could produce severe forms of alienation. For many, the different factors of clandestine hiding had a strong impact on the formation of the social self, and it was helpful in the process of growing-up to look for resources of strengthening personal resilience and social support.

As the core experiences of psychological trauma are disempowerment and disconnection from others, neuropsychiatrist Judith Hermann underlines the hinge function of the social level (meso-level) for healing, assigning five important aspects: a healing relationship, safety, remembrance and mourning, reconnection

---

83 Patricia A. DeYoung, *Understanding and Treating Chronic Shame* (London/New York: Routledge, 2021), 228.

84 Cyrulnik, *Rette dich*, 148.

85 Cyrulnik, *Rette dich*, 198.

86 Cyrulnik, *Rette dich*, 133.

87 See Cyrulnik, *Rette dich*, 60 and 200.

88 See Helen Epstein, *Children of the Holocaust. Interviews with sons and daughters of survivors* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1979), 137.



and commonality.<sup>89</sup> These five aspects found their empirical verification in the group gatherings of the *Militants de la Mémoire/FFDJF*. The care aspects of the group were usually experienced as a given that did not have to be mentioned explicitly. But as I was able to learn from conversations with members of the group, meeting friends with similar fates was extremely important. It helped them to remember and accept their personal experiences of loss and violence and allowed them to feel safe in an atmosphere of shared well-being and supportive reciprocal nourishment. This resource offered the possibility for posttraumatic growth, thus opening the self towards the political realm with the strength to face societal power structures. The campaign to call former SS functionaries to juridical account for orchestrating the deportations from France started in 1971 with the attempted kidnapping of Lischka and ended nine years later with the court judgement in Cologne on 11 February, 1980.<sup>90</sup> On each of the thirty-two days of the proceedings, a huge group of French Jews had left Paris the evening before on the night trains, which arrived at Cologne Main Station early in the morning.

The French Jews came to Cologne with high expectations of a just trial. Demonstrating in the streets of Cologne, many men wore a kippot, openly manifesting their Jewishness. Others were carrying political posters, until then an uncommon scene, as German Jews had tended to stay away from public attention. The French-Jewish activists, most of them former *hidden children*, were accompanied by their own children and partners as well as by some Jewish intellectuals and antifascist supporters from Cologne.<sup>91</sup> The trial, and especially the manner in which it was led by judge Dr. Werner Fassbender, was seen as a victory for the political engagement of the *FFDJF*. It could also be interpreted as a landmark in memory culture, revealing the ignorance and defense mechanisms of the West-German majority population, who for a long time had effectively marginalised critical voices that sought to address present continuities with the National Socialist past.<sup>92</sup>

## Conclusion: justice and recognition

Recovering from genocidal trauma requires personal empowerment and trusting relationships. Group structures encourage survivors to assume control over their

---

<sup>89</sup> See Judith Herman, *Die Narben der Gewalt: traumatische Erfahrungen verstehen und überwinden*, trans. Verena Koch and Renate Weitbrecht, (Paderborn: Junfermann Verlag, 2018), 126–243.

<sup>90</sup> See Anne Klein, Martin Rapp and Judith Weißhaar, “Chronologie des Protests. Der Lischka Prozess in Köln 1979/80 und seine Vorgeschichte,” in *Lischka Prozess*.

<sup>91</sup> See Klarsfeld, *Erinnerungen*, 407.

<sup>92</sup> See Cyrulnik, *Rette dich*, 139.

emotional trauma, to acquire resilience and to speak up in public for their rights. But the court procedures also needed documents in order to prove that the former SS-functionaries Lischka, Hagen and Heinrichsohn had been responsible for the deportations from France. During and directly after the war, Jewish historians together with former resistance groups had started to collect sources in an archive, which later became the *Contemporary Jewish Documentation Center* (CDJC) in Paris. Part of the collection comprised bureaucratic documents that the German SS-officers had left behind when fleeing Paris during its liberation.<sup>93</sup> Serge Klarsfeld handed these documents over to German political and juridical institutions and published them shortly before the trial started in Cologne.<sup>94</sup> Besides these documents, which evidenced administrative decisions and executive orders of the German staff in the SS-office in Paris, Jewish witnesses testified before court about the cruelty of Heinrichsohn in Drancy. Thus, judge Dr. Heinz Fassbender pronounced harsh sentences for the former SS-officers, a judgement that was seen to demonstrate public recognition of the victims' experiences and political engagement.<sup>95</sup>

Law historian Lawrence Douglas underlines that such visible success might positively feed our "legal imagination", our wish to believe in justice, but also tends to make forgotten victims' mental loads of past suffering, fear and loss.<sup>96</sup> Therefore it seems important to consult the critical voice of Axel Honneth, who deepens our understanding of what it means to live with the wounds of a traumatic history. Honneth differentiates between three levels of "recognition" (emotional, cognitive, social) and links them to six relational dimensions: personal status, forms of recognition, developmental potential, practical relation-to-self, forms of disrespect and threatened component of personality.<sup>97</sup> Honneth has developed this matrix to grasp the complexity and dynamics of social processes after traumatic events, to explain better how it might be possible to arrange for effective coping processes and the development of resilience. The concrete dynamics always have to be evaluated in light of place and time. Seen in such a historical perspective, this

---

93 See Laura Jokusch, "Breaking the silence: the *Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine* in Paris and the writing of Holocaust history in liberated France," in *After the Holocaust. Challenging the Myth of Silence*, ed. David Cesarini and Eric J. Sundquist (London/New York: Routledge, 2012).

94 See Serge Klarsfeld, *Die Endlösung der Judenfrage in Frankreich: Deutsche Dokumente 1941–1944* (Paris: Beate and Serge Klarsfeld Foundation, 1977).

95 See Heinz Fassbender, "Der Prozess gegen Lischka, Hagen und Heinrichsohn aus der Sicht des damaligen Schwurgerichtsvorsitzenden," in *NS-Unrecht vor Kölner Gerichten nach 1945*, ed. Anne Klein and Jürgen Wilhelm (Köln: Greven, 2003).

96 Lawrence Douglas, *The Memory of Judgement: Making law and history in the trials of the Holocaust* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 257.

97 See Honneth, *Struggle of recognition*, 129.

case study on the *FFDJF* will hopefully support further research into the dimensions and dynamics of children and youth in times of war, who survived war and genocide and later in life were able to contribute to a critical memory culture and retroactive justice. As Lucille Cairns underlines, the “spatially singular and temporally limited situation” of Jewish children and youth who survived the Holocaust in France draws “an ethical picture that, albeit in inflected form, globally permeates various different geopolitical configurations today.”<sup>98</sup>

The members of the group *Militants de la mémoire*, who in the direct run-up to the Lischka trial changed their designation to *Sons and Daughters of Jewish Deportees from France*, provide one example of the political identity of French Jews after the Holocaust. By claiming public recognition for their family histories and addressing the specific remembrance of the 11,400 Jewish children who were deported from France, the activists institutionalised a new cultural understanding of what it meant to be Jewish after the Holocaust. They challenged not only German post-war democracy, but also the hegemonic French narrative of the Resistance by focusing on the collaboration of Vichy. Beate Klarsfeld acted as a bridge-builder in the double sense of the word: between Jewish and Non-Jewish culture as well as between France and West Germany, also concerning the language gap. She helped to transform the silence in West-German society, which until the 1970s sheltered many former perpetrators.<sup>99</sup> Research on the deported Jews was deepened by the thorough documentation of the nearly 40 convoys that left France mostly for Auschwitz-Birkenau and Sobibor. The *Mémorial de la déportation des Juifs de France*, published 1978, presented across 656 pages the names of the nearly 76,000 Jews who had been deported from France to the annihilation camps.<sup>100</sup> In addition, names of 3,000 Jews who had died in the French camps and 1,000 interned Jews who had been shot were listed.<sup>101</sup> This extensive resource gave some family memory back to the former *hidden children*. For the members of the *FFDJF* and other Jewish descendants, this volume was more than a historical document or a piece of evidence in court – it was also a personal remembrance book that

---

98 Lucille Cairns, “Jewish Children’s Homes in Post Holocaust France, Personal Témoignages,” in *Post-Holocaust France and the Jews, 1945–1955*, ed. Lucille Cairns (New York: New York University Press, 2015).

99 See Anne Klein, “Beate Klarsfeld,” in *Protest: Deutschland 1949–2020*, ed. Martin Langebach (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 2021).

100 See Serge Klarsfeld, *Le Mémorial de la Déportation des Juifs de France* (Paris: Beate and Serge Klarsfeld Foundation, 1978). The latest edition appeared in 2012, because it was possible to collect additional pictures and information on Holocaust victims through the network of survivors, some of whom had emigrated to Canada, the United States, Israel, Australia, Mexico or South American countries after the war.

101 Klarsfeld, *Erinnerungen*, 392.

provided information on what had happened to their parents, from which they had been separated by force. Seen from the liminal perspective of Jewish activists, memory politics is always conflictual.<sup>102</sup> Historian Saul Friedländer directs his critique against the idea of a generalised memory culture and argues for a partisan view, even in historical research: “I wouldn’t call it a bias, since there is no neutral place to stand.”<sup>103</sup>

## References

- Angenlahr, Theresa. *Der Kölner Lischka Prozess. NS-Verbrechen und Erinnerungskultur in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und in Frankreich*. Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang, 2021.
- Bailly, Danielle. *Hidden Children of France, 1940–1945*. Translated by Betty Becker-Theye. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010.
- Baruch, Marc Olivier. “A propos du procès de Maurice Papon.” *French Politics and Society* 3 (1998): 38–45.
- Baumel-Schwartz, Judith Tydor. “Jewish Refugee Children in the USA (1934–1945): Flight, Resettlement, Absorption.” In *The young Victims of the Nazi regime. Migration, the Holocaust and Postwar Displacement*, edited by Simone Gigliotti and Monica Tempian, 11–30. London/Oxford et al.: Bloomsbury, 2016.
- Berman, Katryn. “Hidden Children in France during the Holocaust,” Yad Vashem. Accessed August 22, 2022. <https://www.yadvashem.org/articles/general/hidden-children.html>.
- Boiry, Philippe A. *Les Jeunes dans la Résistance*. Périgueux: Pilote 24, 1996.
- Braumann, Jean, Georges Loinger, and Frida Watterberg, eds. *Organisation juive de Combat. Résistance/Sauvetage. France 1940–1945*. Paris: Éditions Autrement, 2002.
- Brunner, Bernhard. *Der Frankreich-Komplex. Die nationalsozialistischen Verbrechen in Frankreich und die Justiz der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*. Göttingen: Wallstein, 2004.
- Buser, Verena. “Child survivors and Displaced children in the Aftermath Studies. An Overview.” In *Freilegungen: Rebuilding Lives – child survivors and DP children in the Aftermath of the Holocaust and Forced Labor*, edited by Henning Borggräfe, Akim Jah, Nina Ritz, and Steffen Jost, 27–40. Göttingen: Wallstein, 2017.
- Cairns, Lucille. “Jewish Children’s Homes in Post Holocaust France. Personal Témoignages.” In *Post-Holocaust France and the Jews, 1945–1955*, edited by Lucille Cairns, 139–155. New York: New York University Press, 2015.
- Claims Conference, Le *Child Survivor Fund (Fonds pour les enfants survivants de la Shoah)*. Accessed December 25, 2022. <http://www.claimscon.de/unsere-taetigkeit/informations-en-francais/child-survivor-fund-informations-en-francais.html>.

---

**102** See Tabatha Yeatts, *Wiesel, Wiesenthal, Klarsfeld: The Holocaust Survivors* (New York: Enslow Publishing, 2014).

**103** Wulf Kansteiner, epilogue (Interview with Saul Friedlander, conducted with Claudio Fogu and Todd Presner), to *Probing the Ethics of Holocaust Culture*, edited by Claudio Fogu et al. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), 424.

- Clifford, Rebecca. *“Ich gehörte nirgendwohin.” Kinderleben nach dem Holocaust.* Translated by Stephan Gebauer. Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2022.
- Cohen, Asher. *Persécutions et sauvetages: Juifs et Français sous l’Occupation et sous Vichy.* Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1993.
- Corbin, Alain, Nadine Fresco, and Nicole Lapierre. *Enfants cachés: analyses et débats.* Paris: L’Harmattan, 2006.
- Cyrułnik, Boris. “Une Crypte dans l’âme.” In *Qui sont les enfants cachés? Penser avec les grands témoins.* Edited by Nathalie Zajde, 57–72. Paris: Odile Jacob, 2014.
- Cyrułnik, Boris. *Rette dich, das Leben ruft! Erlebnisbericht.* Translated by Rainer Kober. Berlin: Ullstein, 2013.
- Delpard, Raphaël. *Überleben im Versteck: jüdische Kinder, 1940–1944.* Translated by Bettina Schäfer. Bonn: Dietz, 1994.
- DeYoung, Patricia A. *Understanding and Treating Chronic Shame.* London/New York: Routledge, 2021.
- Doron, Daniella. “Memory in Post-Holocaust France.” In *Post-Holocaust France and the Jews, 1945–1955*, edited by Seán Hand and Steven T. Katz, 85–117. New York: New York University Press, 2015.
- Douglas, Lawrence. *The Memory of Judgement: Making law and history in the trials of the Holocaust.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001.
- Epstein, Helen. *Children of the Holocaust. Interviews with sons and daughters of survivors.* New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1979.
- Faßbender, Heinz. “Der Prozess gegen Lischka, Hagen und Heinrichwohn aus der Sicht des damaligen Schwurgerichtsvorsitzenden.” In *NS-Unrecht vor Kölner Gerichten nach 1945*, edited by Anne Klein and Jürgen Wilhelm, 177–182. Köln: Greven, 2003.
- Fogg, Shannon L. *The Politics of Everyday Life in Vichy France: Foreigners, Undesirables, and Strangers.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Friedländer, Saul. *Wenn die Erinnerung kommt. Autobiographie.* Translated by Helgard Oestreich. Munich: DVA, 1979.
- Friedländer, Vera. *Die Kinder von La Hille. Flucht und Rettung vor Deportation.* Berlin: Aufbau, 2004.
- Ghiles-Meilhac, Samuel. *Le CRIF. De la Résistance juive à la tentation du lobby. De 1943 à nos jours.* Paris: Éditions, 2001.
- Golsan, Richard J. *The Papon Affair. Memory and Justice in Trial.* New York: Routledge, 2000.
- Hansen-Schaberg, Inge, Hanna Papanek, and Gabriele Rühl-Nawabi. *Ernst Papanek: Pädagogische und therapeutische Arbeit. Kinder mit Verfolgungs-, Flucht- und Exilenerfahrungen während der NS-Zeit.* Vienna/Cologne/Weimar: Böhlau, 2015.
- Hazan, Katy, and Georges Weill. “L’OSE et le sauvetage des enfants juifs de l’avant-guerre à l’après-guerre.” In *La résistance aux génocides: de la pluralité des actes de sauvetage*, edited by Jacques Sémelin, Claire Andrieu, and Sarah Gainsburger, 245–264. Paris: Presses de Science Po.
- Hazan, Katy. *Le sauvetage des enfants juifs pendant l’Occupation: une forme de résistance civile.* Paris: Éditions du Cercle d’étude de la déportation et de la Shoah, 2020.
- Hazan, Katy. *Les orphelins de la Shoah. Les maisons de l’espoir (1944–1960).* Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2000.
- Hazan, Katy. *Rire le jour, pleurer la nuit.* Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 2013.
- Herman, Judith. *Die Narben der Gewalt: traumatische Erfahrungen verstehen und überwinden.* Translated by Verena Koch, and Renate Weitbrecht. Paderborn: Junfermann, 2018.

- Hinton, Peta. "‘Situated Knowledges’ and New Materialism(s): Rethinking a Politics of Location." *Women. A Cultural Review* 25, no. 1 (2014): 99–113. Accessed December 25, 2022, doi:10.1080/09574042.2014.901104.
- Hirsch, Robert. *Sont-ils toujours des juifs allemands? La gauche radicale et les juif depuis 1968*. Nancy: Arbre bleu editions, 2017.
- Höttemann, Michael. "Sekundärer Antisemitismus. Antisemitismus nach Auschwitz." Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung (BpB), November 23, 2020. Accessed January 5, 2023. <https://www.bpb.de/themen/antisemitismus/dossier-antisemitismus/321575/sekundaerer-antisemitismus/>.
- Honneth, Axel. *The Struggle for recognition. The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*. Translated by Joel Anderson. Cambridge/Oxford/Boston: Polity Press, 1995.
- Jacob, Frank. *Ernst Papanek and Jewish Refugee Children. Genocide and Displacement*. Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2021.
- Jewish Partisan Educational Fund. "Bernhard Musmand." Accessed January 4, 2023. <https://www.jewishpartisans.org/partisans/bernard-musmand>.
- Jokusch, Laura. "Breaking the silence: the Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine in Paris and the writing of Holocaust history in liberated France." In *After the Holocaust. Challenging the Myth of Silence*, edited by David Cesarini and Eric J. Sundquist, 67–81. London/New York: Routledge, 2012.
- Kansteiner, Wulf. Epilogue: Interview with Saul Friedlander (conducted with Claudio Fogu and Todd Presner), to *Probing the Ethics of Holocaust Culture*, edited by Claudio Fogu, Wulf Kansteiner, and Todd Presner, 411–425. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016.
- Kirsh, Mary Fraser. "Remembering the ‘pain of belonging’: Jewish children hidden as Catholics in Second World War France." In *The young Victims of the Nazi regime. Migration, the Holocaust and Postwar Displacement*, edited by Simone Gigliotti and Monica Tempian, 257–276. London/Oxford et al.: Bloomsbury, 2016.
- Klarsfeld, Beate and Serge. *Erinnerungen*. Translated by Andrea Stephani, Anna Schade, and Helmut Reuter. Munich: Piper, 2015.
- Klarsfeld, Serge. "Orphelins de la Shoah et enfants cachés." In *Qui sont les enfants aches? Penser avec les grands témoins*, edited by Nathalie Zajde, 13–24. Paris: Odile Jacob, 2014.
- Klarsfeld, Serge. *Die Endlösung der Judenfrage in Frankreich: Deutsche Dokumente 1941–1944*. Paris: Beate and Serge Klarsfeld Foundation, 1977.
- Klarsfeld, Serge. *Le Mémorial de la Déportation des Juifs de France*. Paris: Beate and Serge Klarsfeld Foundation, 1978.
- Klein, Anne, and Birte Klarzyk. "The *Fils et Filles des Déportés Juifs de France* and the Lischka trial in Cologne, 1971–1980." In *Seeking accountability for Nazi and war crimes in East and Central Europe: a people's justice?*, edited by Eric Le Bourhis, Irina Tschernewa and Vanessa Voisin, 387–428. Rochester/New York: Boydell & Brewer Inc., 2022.
- Klein, Anne, ed. *Der Lischka Prozess. Eine jüdisch-französisch-deutsche Erinnerungsgeschichte. Ein BilderLeseBuch*. Berlin: Metropol, 2013.
- Klein, Anne. *Flüchtlingspolitik und Flüchtlingshilfe 1940–1942. Varian Fry und die Komitees zur Rettung politisch Verfolgter in New York und Marseille*. Berlin: Metropol, 2007.
- Klein, Anne. "'Militants de la Mémoire'. Repräsentationen jüdischen Engagements in den 1970er Jahren." In *Opfer als Akteure. Jahrbuch zur Geschichte und Wirkung des Holocaust* 12, edited by Fritz Bauer Institut, Katharina Stengel, and Werner Konitzer, 126–147. Frankfurt a.M.: Campus, 2008.

- Klein, Anne. "Beate Klarsfeld." In *Protest: Deutschland 1949–2020*, edited by Martin Langebach, 187. Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 2021.
- Klein, Anne. "Historical justice through democratic action: French Holocaust survivors and the Lischka trial in Cologne (1971–1980)." In *Making Justice Visible. War Crime Trials, Media and Memory after World War II*, edited by Ruth Leiserowitz, Gintaré Malinauskaitė, and Hektoras Vitkus, 293–319. Osnabrück: fibre, 2022.
- Klein, Anne, Martin Rapp, and Judith Weißhaar. "Chronologie des Protests. Der Lischka Prozess in Köln 1979/80 und seine Vorgeschichte." In *Der Lischka Prozess. Eine jüdisch-französisch-deutsche Erinnerungsgeschichte. Ein BilderleseBuch*, edited by Anne Klein, 107–112. Berlin: Metropol, 2013.
- Lazare, Lucien. *Rescue as Resistance*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1996.
- Lazarus, Jacques. *Organisation juive de combat: Résistance/sauvetage. France 1940–1945*. Paris: Éditions Autrement, 2008.
- Niederland, William G. *Folgen der Verfolgung: Das Überlebenden-Syndrom. Seelenmord*, Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1980.
- Nysenholc, Adolphe. "Les autobiographies d'enfants cachés: réalité où fiction?" In *Qui sont les enfants cachés? Penser avec les grands témoins*, edited by Nathalie Zajde, 103–118. Paris: Odile Jacob, 2014.
- Paris City Hall. "Sie waren noch Kinder. Deportation und Rettung jüdischer Kinder in Paris." 1940–1942. Accessed August 22, 2022. <https://artsandculture.google.com/story/KwURxv3TVhUA8> A
- Paxton, Robert O. "Confronting the Histories of Vichy and European Fascism: An Interview." *The National World War II Museum, New Orleans*. December 20, 2021, Accessed August 25, 2022. <https://www.nationalww2museum.org/war/articles/robert-paxton-vichy-france>.
- Porobic, Selma. "Zum Zusammenhang von sozialen Identitätstransformationen und sozialem Trauma." In *Soziales Trauma: Ein interdisziplinäres Lehrbuch*, edited by Andreas Hamburger, Camellia Hancheva, and Vamik Volkan, 269–277. Berlin/Heidelberg: Springer, 2022.
- Poujol, Catherine. *Église de France et les enfants juifs*. Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2013.
- Prinz, Claudia. "Vor und nach Paxton. Der Paradigmenwechsel in der Deutung des Vichy-Regimes." *Zeithistorische Forschungen/Studies in Contemporary History* 4, no. 12 (2007): 263–268. Accessed December 24, 2022. doi:10.14765/zzf.dok-1905.
- Rajsfus, Maurice. *Des juifs dans la collaboration: l'UGIF (1941–1944): précédé d'une courte étude sur les juifs de France en 1939*. Paris: Études et documentation internationales, 1980.
- Rajsfus, Maurice. *La Police de Vichy – Les forces de l'ordre au service de la Gestapo, 1940/1944*. Paris: Le Cherche Midi, 1995.
- Rauber, Dirk. "1979 Kennzeichen D: Bürgstadt, seine Bürger und der Bürgermeister Heinrichsohn." In *Der Lischka Prozess. Eine jüdisch-französisch-deutsche Erinnerungsgeschichte. Ein BilderleseBuch*, edited by Anne Klein, 178–189. Berlin: Metropol, 2013.
- Rayski, Adam. *The Choice of the Jews Under Vichy Between Submission and Resistance*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005.
- Reed, Walter W. *The children of La Hille. Eluding Nazi Capture during World War II*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1992.
- Rosbottom, Ronald C. *Sudden Courage. Youth in France confront the Germans, 1940–45*. New York: Custom House, 2019.
- Rothberg, Michael. *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009.
- Seibel, Wolfgang. *Persecution and Rescue: The Politics of the "Final Solution" in France, 1940–1944*. Translated by Ciaran Cronin. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2016.



- Sémelin, Jacques. Conclusion. *The Survival of the Jews in France: A Multifactorial Approach, to The survival of Jews in France: 1940–1944*. Translated by Natascha Lehrer and Cynthia Schoch. 259–297. New York: Oxford University Press, 2019.
- Sémelin, Jacques, ed. *The Survival of Jews in France, 1940–44*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019.
- Sémelin, Jacques. Introduction to *The Survival of Jews in France, 1940–44*, edited by Jacques Sémelin. 1–6. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019.
- Steinberg, Lucien. *Le Comité de défense des juifs en Belgique, 1942–1944*. Brussels: Éditions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 1973.
- Steinert, Johannes-Dieter. "Polish and Soviet Child Force laborers in National Socialist Germany and German occupied Eastern Europa, 1939–1945." In *Freilegungen: Rebuilding Lives – child survivors and DP children in the Aftermath of the Holocaust and Forced Labor*, edited by Henning Borggräfe, Akim Jah, Nina Ritz, and Steffen Jost, 142–159. Göttingen: Wallstein, 2017.
- Toniolo, Giandomenico. Introduction to *Frame Analysis: First and Second Order Theories*. Basel: Springer International Publishers, 2019.
- Urban, Susanne. "Unaccompanied Children and the Allied Child Search. 'The right ... a child has to his own heritage'". In *The young Victims of the Nazi regime. Migration, the Holocaust and Postwar Displacement*, edited by Simone Gigliotti and Monica Tempian, 277–298. London/Oxford et al.: Bloomsbury, 2016.
- Wasserstein, Bernhard. *Europa ohne Juden. Das europäische Judentum seit 1945*, Berlin: List/Ullstein, 2001.
- Weinberg, David. "The Revival of French Jewry in Post-Holocaust France: Challenges and Opportunities." In *Post-Holocaust France and the Jews, 1945–1955*, edited by Seán Hand and Steven T. Katz, 26–37. New York: New York University Press, 2015.
- Weißhaar, Judith. "Lea Rosh erinnert sich an Bürgstadt." In *Der Lischka Prozess. Eine jüdisch-französisch-deutsche Erinnerungsgeschichte. Ein BilderleseBuch*, edited by Anne Klein. 183–190. Berlin: Metropol, 2013.
- Wiedemann, Charlotte. *Den Schmerz der anderen begreifen: Holocaust und Weltgedächtnis*. Berlin: Propyläen 2022.
- Wieviorka, Olivier. *The French Resistance*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016.
- Wievorka, Annette. *The Era of the Witness*. Translated by Jared Stark. Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press, 2006.
- Yeatt, Tabatha. *Wiesel, Wiesenthal, Klarsfeld: The Holocaust Survivors*. New York: Enslow Publishing, 2014.
- Zajde, Nathalie, ed. *Qui sont les enfants cachés? Penser avec les grands témoins*. Paris: Odile Jacob, 2014.
- Zalashik, Rakefet. "Differenziertes Trauma – Die (Wieder)Entdeckung der 'Child Survivor' -Kategorie." In *Holocaust und Trauma. Kritische Perspektiven zur Entstehung und Wirkung eines Paradigmas*, edited by José Brunner and Nathalie Zajde, 116–137. Göttingen: Wallstein, 2011.
- Zuccotti, Susan. *The Holocaust, the French, and the Jews*. New York: Basic Books, 1994.



Baard Herman Borge and Lars-Erik Vaale

## “An echo of our parents”: Norway’s Legal Reckoning with Underage NS Collaborators

On 18 June, 1945, a 15 ½ year old boy, O. A. E. (born 1929), was brought before the Stjørdal and Verdal court of inquiry together with his father. Both had spent two days in Vollan circuit jail and six weeks in Falstad internment camp on suspicion of criminal treason, as they during the German occupation had been members of the collaborationist party Nasjonal Samling (NS). According to the newspaper *Adresseavisen* on 19 June, 1945, the 15-year-old stated “boldly” when asked by the magistrate that he had joined the NS’s sub-organisation for 10 to 18-year-olds (NSUF) “to help create a healthy youth.” The boy was released on condition of reporting to the police and his case was later dismissed.<sup>1</sup>

Young E. was one of around 5,000 Norwegians born between 1924 and 1931 who almost exclusively were from NS families and who had all joined the party as minors. After the liberation in May 1945, they came under suspicion of treason.<sup>2</sup> E.’s example illustrates some of the challenges that group constituted for the justice system. Even though the age of criminal liability was 14, the legal age was 21 and the voting age 23. So, how could a minor be charged with having committed a political crime?

In the Norwegian research literature, the treatment of underage NS members during the post-war judicial reckoning so far has been little investigated.<sup>3</sup> In hindsight, did they get a fair hearing, i.e. in accordance with the Norwegian prewar legal standard, where their special situation was taken into account by the courts, or were many punished unreasonably? We will show how the judiciary dealt with

---

**Note:** This chapter was written in conjunction with Lars-Erik Vaale’s investigation for the Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion (Arbeids- og Inkluderingsdepartementet, AID), and based upon his report *Myndighetenes behandling av NS-barn i Norge etter 1945* (The governmental treatment of NS children in Norway after 1945), published 24 April, 2023.

1 RA/S–3138–38/D/Dc/L0067/0006, Hdat. 18/10/49, O. A. E.

2 The estimate is based on Stein Ugelvik Larsen, *Database med opplysninger om 61 462 NS medlemmer og frontkjempere* (Bergen: unpublished, 2018). Some of the youngest ones are probably not included in this material.

3 This theme was briefly addressed in Johannes Andenæs, *Det vanskelige oppgjøret: Rettsoppgjøret etter okkupasjonen* (Oslo: Tano-Aschehoug, 1998), 131, 213, 257.

the youngest among the close to 93,000 suspected collaborators.<sup>4</sup> A question of special interest in that connection is to what extent relevant mitigating circumstances such as adolescence and parental influence were acknowledged and taken into consideration by the police and courts.

Empirically, our analysis is based on a variety of sources, from a database – created by the political scientist Stein Ugelvik Larsen in the 1970s – containing personal information on all investigated members of the NS/NSUF and the legal reckoning involving them,<sup>5</sup> but also the original registry cards on which the electronic register was based,<sup>6</sup> as well as historical and legal literature, court transcripts and newspaper reports from public trials. As an analytical tool, we make use of transitional justice theory, which deals with how newly installed or re-established democratic governments through legal processes address injustices and crimes committed under the prior authoritarian regime.

## Historical and legal background

Already on the evening of 9 April, 1940, when German troops had occupied important towns in southern Norway, Army Major Vidkun Quisling (1887–1945), a former minister of defence and leader of the small, fascist-like NS party, came forward publicly in a radio speech as a collaborator and self-proclaimed head of state. From September 1940 and until the liberation, his NS-regime cooperated with the German occupiers and also despite little popular support sought to reform society as stated in the party's authoritarian ideology.<sup>7</sup>

The legislative basis for settling scores with Quisling and all his followers, possibly the most comprehensive transitional justice process in history, was twofold. The first basis was Norwegian pre-war legislation, that is two sections of the *Civil Penal Code* of 22 May, 1902, namely section 86 on aiding the enemy “in word or deed” and section 98 on unlawfully altering the state constitution of the kingdom. In addition, existing criminal legislation was supplemented by a series of transitional laws, known as provisional statutes, issued by the London government-in-

---

4 Baard Herman Borge and Lars-Erik Vaale, *Grunnlovens største prøve: Rettsoppgjøret etter 1945* (Oslo: Scandinavian Academic Press, 2018), 64–65.

5 All statistics from Larsen, *Database*.

6 Riksarkivet, Oslo (RA), S-1543, Erstatningsdirektoratet (ED).

7 Borge and Vaale, *Grunnlovens største prøve*, 13–15.

exile between October 1941 and May 1945, as well as by later ordinances and laws issued up to 1950.<sup>8</sup>

Out of the 49,000 people who were eventually punished, 26,000 were so-called passive NS members, whose formal membership was the only count in the indictment.<sup>9</sup> The foundation in law for their punishment was the most important of the new penal regulations, the *National Treason Ordinance* (NTO) of 15 December, 1944, in conjunction with Section 86 of the Civil Penal Code. More serious cases of treason were sentenced under the 1902 Penal Code (§§ 86 and 98) and the Military Penal Code of the same year, supplemented by provisional statutes.<sup>10</sup> The Norwegian government-in-exile’s decision to prosecute every single NS member, including the completely passive ones, is unprecedented in the history of legal settlements with fallen regimes.<sup>11</sup>

As for minors suspected of unlawful collaboration, the legal foundation also combined pre-war laws and new provisional statutes. Historically, the Criminal Code of 20 August, 1842, had set the minimum criminal age at 10 years, with absolute freedom from liability for children under that age. For children between 10 and 15 years of age, the rule on relative criminal responsibility applied, where responsibility was conditional on the child having realised the criminal nature of its actions. Later, the *Civil Penal Code* of 1902 raised the minimum age to 14 years (Section 46), but Section 55 of the Act also contained a clear provision on sentence reduction for persons under the age of 18, and stated that under no circumstances could a custodial sentence be imposed on them for life.<sup>12</sup>

On 1 June 1928, the Parliament (Stortinget) passed an act on underage offenders, which was amended on 26 May, 1939. The modified act had not yet come into force when the settlement with the NS was prepared and implemented, but it clearly shows that the authorities’ focus before 1940 was on treatment, not punishment, for young offenders. The law of 1939 gave an opening for the judge to give the prosecuting authority the right to send a defendant who had turned 18 to a labour school instead of prison, and then the imposed punishment lapsed. Professor Jon Skeie, J.D. (1871–1951), wrote in his overview of Norwegian criminal law from 1946

---

8 Finn Hiorthøy, “Lovgivningstiltak vedrørende landssvikoppgjøret,” in *Om landssvikoppgjøret*, published by Justis- og Politidepartementet (Gjøvik: Mariendal, 1962), 36–49.

9 Andenæs, *Det vanskelige oppgjøret*, 24.

10 Borge and Vaale, *Grunnlovens største prøve*, 12.

11 Hans Fredrik Dahl and Øystein Sørensen, “Et parti av lovbyrtere,” in *Et rettferdig oppgjør? Rettsoppgjøret i Norge etter 1945*, ed. Hans Fredrik Dahl and Øystein Sørensen (Oslo: Pax, 2004), 93.

12 Linda Grønning, “Kriminell lavalder – noen utgangspunkter,” *Tidsskrift for strafferett* 4 (2014): 315–16; Jon Skeie, *Den norske strafferett. Bd. 1: Den alminnelige del* (Oslo: Norli, 1946), 196–197.

that young offenders could justify a lighter sentence than ordinary, even if the defendant had reached the age of 18.<sup>13</sup>

There was no provision on sentence reduction for persons under the age of 18 in the government-in-exile's first provisional ordinance on treason of 22 January, 1942, but only in the later NTO of 15 December, 1944.<sup>14</sup> The latter, on the basis of which most cases were settled during the reckoning, was drawn up by the government in collaboration with the resistance movement. None of the two laws singled out the NSUF, and consequently equated the children and youth organization with the mother party in relation to criminality.

Section 2 of the NTO made it punishable either to have been, applied for or consented to becoming a member of NS, its affiliates or similar organisations after 8 April, 1940. The legal rationale was that the criminalisation of NS membership itself could not be subsumed under the provisions on treason and high treason in the civil and military penal laws from 1902 alone. Section 3 of the ordinance authorised punishment with imprisonment or forced labour for up to three years, fines, loss of public trust or limited loss of rights for such actions. If they were made under duress, the court could, according to § 5, determine a penalty below the device's minimum or waive the penalty altogether. The same applied if the actions in question were committed by the accused before the age of 18. The provision was continued unchanged in the *National Treason Act* of 21 February, 1947.<sup>15</sup>

From the liberation onwards, NS and NSUF members under the legal age of 21 were basically treated under the same laws as adults, i. e., two paragraphs of the 1902 Penal Code as well as provisional laws, over all the NTO of 1944. Although that ordinance did allow for a more lenient treatment of minors, it was a matter of discretion whether this should be done.

---

<sup>13</sup> Jon Skeie, *Den norske strafferett. Bd. 1: Den alminnelige del* (Oslo: Norli, 1946), 380.

<sup>14</sup> Hiorthøy, "Lovgivningstiltak," 41, 46.

<sup>15</sup> "Provisorisk anordning om tillegg til straffelovgivningen om forræderi (Landssvikanordningen) av 15. desember 1944," in *Samling av provisoriske anordninger; kgl. res. m.v.*, published by Justisdepartementet (London: Justisdepartementet, 1945), 203–20; Erik Solem, *Landssviklova: Lov um straff og økonomisk straff for landssvikarar* (Oslo: Tanum, 1947), 32.

## Potentially mitigating circumstances in cases against minor collaborators

In May 1945, when the mass arrests of NS members began, the young people in question here were between 14 and 21 years old and suspected of illegal acts of collaboration, most of which had been committed one to five years earlier.

Legally, several circumstances could potentially lead to a more lenient practice regarding underage members of the NS. Firstly, their age. Traditionally, the main argument in legal literature for exempting young offenders from punishment has been their lack of, or limited, culpability. Unlike adults, minors cannot be automatically found guilty for their own actions and therefore held responsible and punished. So, a young lawbreaker cannot be assumed without further ado to have had criminal intent, i. e. to have acted with resolve or determination to commit a crime.<sup>16</sup>

In the historical case at hand, the judiciary’s evaluation of the accountability and criminal intent of a young collaborator hinged on whether he or she could be assumed to have committed treasonous acts independently, and consciously. In other words: To what extent had they been misled by others, and had they at the time understood that their actions were punishable by law?

Concerning the first of those two considerations, influence from other people, the minors’ family background repeatedly stood out. As mentioned earlier, nearly all of them came from a home where one or both parents, often also siblings, also belonged to the NS. In the case of the young O. A. E., not only his father but also his mother had joined the party already in June 1940.<sup>17</sup>

Thus, if we look at the typical initial decision among the youngest offenders to become collaborators, that is to join the NSUF, who did so among the country’s children and young people was anything but random. Only rarely would non-NS parents allow their children to enlist, even if the latter wanted to. Within the NS, all members who had children were on the contrary expected to send them to the youth organisation. Members who did not comply were meticulously registered and could be exposed to pressure from the local party organisation.<sup>18</sup>

All told, it seems unlikely that most minors initially came to the NSUF entirely out of their own free will. Nonetheless, enlisting could also be attractive to some

---

<sup>16</sup> Gröning, “Kriminell lavalder,” 315–16.

<sup>17</sup> RA/S–1543/DI/L0004/0001, ED–kort nr. 17374, A. E.

<sup>18</sup> John Mikal Kvistad, *Det unge Norges fylking klar til slag: Historien om Nasjonal Samlings Ungdomsfylking 1933–1945* (PhD diss., University of Oslo, 2011), 90–91.

minors, as NS families increasingly were isolated socially. In many ways the NSUF became a social refuge for children of NS members, since peers often broke contact with them. Within the youth organisation, the isolation led to a strong social cohesion but also exposed the young people to an even more one-sided influence.<sup>19</sup>

Regarding possible criminal intent behind joining, it is important to establish at what age the typical NSUF member joined, as their ages at the time of enrollment ranged from 10 to 17, and one would expect the older ones to be somewhat more independent and knowledgeable. As shown in table 1, more than four out of five minor collaborators came to the youth organisation in 1940–1942, in the first half of the German occupation.

**Table 1:** 4,237 investigated NSUF or NS members born 1924–1931, by year of enrollment.<sup>20</sup>

	1940–1942	1943–1945	Total
<i>Born 1924–1927</i>	3,023 (79,5%)	784 (20,5%)	3,807 (100%)
<i>Born 1928–1931</i>	385 (89,6%)	45 (10,4%)	430 (100%)

The majority thus made their fateful decision three to five years before they were investigated. While the oldest of the two age cohorts displayed in Table 1 typically were still in their teens (13–17 years old) at the time of admission, the younger cohort was usually only 10–14 years old. For the legal assessment of young peoples' decision to join the NSUF or NS, and to a certain extent also later acts of collaboration, as will be argued later, the fact that most had joined the NS movement at such an early age could have two implications. Firstly, it reduces their culpability and makes conscious criminal intent less likely, especially concerning their original motivation for entering the NSUF. Secondly, their young age of entry also means that most had been exposed to indoctrination over a period of three to five years while at an impressionable stage of development.

The NS did not always accept resignations. Still, both adult and minor members sometimes left. While just eight percent of the NSUF or NS members born 1924–1926 left the party, mostly in 1943–1945, only 1 ½ percent of those born 1927–1931 did the same. The reasons for young peoples' infrequent exit, even as they grew older, are probably complex. Several factors could affect minors' abilities to act independently by leaving the NS movement: Firstly, the children's loyalty to parents, who often would forbid their minors from withdrawing. Second, leav-

<sup>19</sup> Kvistad, *Norges fylking*, 90–91.

<sup>20</sup> Larsen, *Database*.

ing also meant losing a close-knit social community with peers. Third, the effect of yearlong propaganda, both at home and in the NS, will have been substantial.

Regularly, entering the NSUF or NS as a young person led to more and sometimes graver acts of collaboration, as that person was persuaded, or ordered, to assume particular positions and perform a multitude of services for the party or its regime.<sup>21</sup> Thus, while the gravity of their unlawful actions frequently escalated over time, minors found themselves caught in a web from which, as argued above, it was often not easy to escape.<sup>22</sup>

A typical career of a minor within the NS regime is that of S. M. (born 1925). According to the newspaper *Hamar Stiftstidende* from 21 December, 1945, he joined the NSUF at the age of 16, by his own admission because his parents and siblings were already in the movement, but also because the youth organisation had “such a nice uniform.” When he turned 18, he was, like many other NSUF members, automatically transferred to the NS, although the party’s own regulations dictated that transfer should only take place upon application. Later, he took part in both weapons training, guard duty and standby duty, that is actions that were considered serious by the courts.<sup>23</sup>

From a legal point of view, the multiple unlawful acts of collaboration carried out by minors after they joined the party cannot necessarily be excused and thus lead to acquittal because of the mitigating circumstances described above. However, even their more serious acts were committed not only at a young age but also within a specific context, which should be considered.

## The Norwegian treason trials in the light of transition theory

Prior to our empirical analysis of the treason trial of Quisling’s youngest followers, we posit seven hypotheses, based on our application of transition theory and our knowledge of the legal settlement as such. The field of transition theory, in which transitional justice is a core perspective, was initially developed by political scientists in response to the wave of transitions from authoritarian to democratic rule

---

21 In the NS movement more than one in three (34,9%) were females; see Larsen, *Database*.

22 Stein Ugelvik Larsen, “Die Ausschaltung der Quislinge in Norwegen,” in *Politische Säuberung in Europa: Die Abrechnung mit Faschismus und Kollaboration nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg*, ed. Klaus-Dietmar Henke, and Claus Woller (Munich: dtv, 1991), 258–59.

23 “Påstand om 4 ½ års fengsel for hotelldirektør E. D.,” *Hamar Stiftstidende*, 21 December, 1945, see also “Dagens gjester i forhørsretten,” *Hamar Arbeiderblad*, 11 July, 1945; “Seks hedemarkslandssvikere får dom i dag,” *Hamar Arbeiderblad*, 21 December, 1945.

in southern Europe in the late 1970s and subsequent examples of democratisation in other parts of the world.<sup>24</sup> Yet, concepts and insights from this theoretical tradition can also be useful for the study of regime changes and subsequent legal processes that occurred long before the theories discussed here were formulated. There are many parallels between the transition back to democracy in Norway and other western European countries following the German occupation and later waves of democratisation.<sup>25</sup>

Historically, new or reestablished democracies have chosen different solutions to the challenges raised by transitional justice, not least how to handle perpetrators and others who supported the old regime. Basically, the successor regime can either start a legal reckoning, as done in Norway and other occupied countries after their liberation in 1944–1945 or refrain from doing so. In transition theory, it is assumed that variation between countries on that score reflects differences in context. Typically, a transition caused by the collapse of the non-democratic regime will be followed by prosecutions, while a negotiated transition will not. The second decisive factor is the post-transitional balance of power: If the new democratic government is strong and former adherents of the authoritarian regime are weak and delegitimised, a comprehensive legal process is likely; otherwise not.<sup>26</sup>

Where prosecutions are initiated following a transition to democracy, a typical feature is that the legal procedures chosen in this type of exceptional situation are partly different from those implemented under normal conditions. This reflects the tension that often arises between rule of law principles and other considerations, not least political ones in the broadest sense.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, such court settlements are also usually characterised by haste and limited resources. Finally, those suspected of collaborating with the fallen regime are often treated with little nuance due to an underlying perception of collective guilt.<sup>28</sup>

---

24 Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of democratic transition and consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and post-communist Europe* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); Jon Elster, *Closing the books: Transitional justice in historical perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

25 Stein Ugelvik Larsen, "Rettsoppgjør i en elitestyrt overgang: Gjeninnføringen av demokrati i Norge etter 1945," in *Forsoning eller rettferdighet? Om beskyttelse av menneskerettighetene gjennom rettstribunaler og sannhetskommisjoner*, ed. Bård-Anders Andreassen and Elin Skaar (Oslo: Cappelen Akademisk Forlag, 1998), 236, 252, 269.

26 Baard Herman Borge, "Transitional Victimization: Collaborator's Offspring as Children at Risk," in *Children & Society* 33 (2019), 215–216.

27 Ivo de Figueiredo, "Et rettferdig oppgjør? Etterkrigsoppgjøret som rettslig og historisk problem," in Dahl and Sørensen, *Et rettferdig oppgjør?*, 44.

28 Eva Schandevyl, "Transitional Justice and Cultural Memory: The Prison Diaries of Ernest Claes and their Literary Adaptation (1944–1951)," *Life Writing* 1 (2018), 10.



In Norway, following Germany’s capitulation and the instant collapse of Quisling’s regime the exile government on its return from London enjoyed legitimacy in public opinion and was determined to punish all former members of the NS. Both the form of transition and the ensuing power relations thus, in accordance with transition theory, provided for a comprehensive criminal process and harsh punishments. Another factor pulling in the same direction was the strong emotions that tend to characterise such court settlements when, as in this case, they are implemented immediately after the transition. While the Norwegian judiciary itself was not unaffected by the atmosphere, public opinion was heated and reluctant to accept lenient sentences.<sup>29</sup>

## Seven assumptions on the judiciary’s treatment of the youngest collaborators

Our first assumption (A1) about the course of the reckoning with under-aged collaborators born 1924–1931 is that even the youngest among them were subjected to zealous police scrutiny, also for petty acts that might fall within the broad definition of treason in the NTO of 15 December, 1944. A reason for A1 is the comprehensiveness of the legal settlement with NS and the lack of nuance often found in transitional justice processes.

In the second assumption (A2), we presume that most of the young ones in Larsen’s database did receive some form of penalty, even though a membership in the NSUF alone, according to a decision by the Attorney General in the autumn of 1945, would not be sufficient to punish.<sup>30</sup> The reason for A2 is that, as explained earlier, there were frequently other charges brought, of varying severity, in addition to NSUF membership. Even if trivial, they could in total justify a penalty for treason.

A third assumption (A3) is that the youngest in our age sample nevertheless both avoided punishments more often and, if punished, received milder penalties than the oldest. What makes such a difference likely is that the older minors had not only committed more, but also in many cases more serious treasonous acts. Another factor supporting H3 is that section 5 of the NTO, as mentioned above, allowed for a lighter penalty if unlawful acts of treason were committed before the age of 18.

---

<sup>29</sup> Borge and Vaale, *Grunnlovens største prøve*, 279–281.

<sup>30</sup> Andenæs, *Det vanskelige oppgjøret*, 31.

Assumption number four (A4) suggests that a significant number of minors were arrested and put in pretrial detention for weeks or months, even though they were only suspected of petty offences. The basis for A4 is that during the judicial settlement, minors were treated in many ways like grownups. The London government's directives on who should be arrested and detained gave no minimum age. Besides, Home Front arrest squads often brought in more suspects than those named on the official lists. Since arrestation and often prolonged internment with questionable legal justification became a prior punishment for many adult NS members, some of the youngest almost certainly were also subjected to it.<sup>31</sup>

The fifth assumption (A5) is that minors were routinely ascribed criminal intent to betray their country, even when they themselves denied it. Like A4, this assumption assumes that minors and adults were treated in largely the same way. Neither young nor old had the right to a publicly appointed defence lawyer while the investigation was ongoing; the legal basis used was practically the same, as was the practice concerning criminal intent, according to A5.<sup>32</sup>

In the sixth assumption (A6) we assume, based on the limited room for nuance in transitional justice processes, that the typical mitigating circumstances explained earlier were given varied and often only moderate weight in the assessment of individual minors.

Finally, given the considerable room for judges' discretion in the legal assessment of minors assumed in A6, our seventh assumption (A7) is that the judiciary's practice regarding underage collaborators came to vary significantly. In the results section below our seven empirical assumptions are discussed chronologically, based on all the available sources.

## Results 1: An overview of the legal settlement with minor NS and NSUF members

In the following table our sample of minors has been divided into three age groups, based on patterns found in the database.

---

<sup>31</sup> Borge and Vaale, *Grunnlovens største prøve*, 214–221.

<sup>32</sup> "Provisorisk anordning om rettergang i landssviksaker av 16. februar (Rettergangsordningen)," in *Samling av provisoriske anordninger, kgl. res. m.v.*, published by Justisdepartementet (London: Justisdepartementet, 1945), 246–256.

**Table 2:** 3,968 investigated NSUF or NS members born 1924–1931, by outcome of their cases.<sup>33</sup>

	Punished		Other outcome		Total
	Sentence	Fine	Case dismissed	Failure to prosecute, or acquittal	
<i>Born 1924–1926</i>	995 (31,2%)	1,286 (40,3%)	644 (20,2%)	264 (8,3%)	3,189 (100%)
<i>Born 1927–1928</i>	81 (13,1%)	118 (19,1%)	313 (50,6%)	106 (17,1%)	618 (100%)
<i>Born 1929–1931</i>	3 (1,8%)	5 (3,1%)	135 (83,8%)	18 (11,2%)	161 (100%)

If we start with A1, the bottom row of Table 2 shows that also the youngest, born in 1929–1931, as we assumed, were investigated by the police. Whether they were scrutinised for petty offences, we will discuss shortly. Regardless of that, there are far fewer investigated in this group, only 161, than in the two older groups. This could be due to the incompleteness of the NSUF archives combined with a lower recruitment 1943–1945. However, it also suggests that some cases in this age category, particularly those where only membership of the NSUF was a reason for suspicion, were disregarded and not investigated. The justification for such a practice would probably be the circular of the Attorney General of 15 November, 1945. Since membership of the NSUF alone would not lead to a punishment, further investigations were probably not always considered necessary.<sup>34</sup>

Although the information found in Larsen’s database does not specify the grounds for the 161 investigations in question, the fact that less than five percent of the youngest suspects in the end received a punishment indicates mostly trivial acts of treason. In police documents, such examples abound. While S. B. S. (born 1929) was investigated because of an application to the NS for money to travel to a course in model aircraft construction held by the party’s militia, the police in B. K. T.’s (born 1929) case, among other things, tried to establish whether the boy had participated in a ski race under the auspices of NS and received a participant badge.<sup>35</sup> In conclusion, A1 nevertheless was weakened, since many of the youngest likely were not investigated.

A2, on the other hand, was substantiated as the numbers for all three age groups in table 2 when added up show that 2,488 minors, i.e. nearly two thirds (62,7%) of the total sample, were either sentenced (27,2%) or fined (35,5%) for trea-

<sup>33</sup> Larsen, *Database*.

<sup>34</sup> Andreas Aulie, “Registrering av landssvikforbrytelsene med gjerningsbeskrivelse og statistikk,” in *Om landssvikoppgjøret*, published by Justisdepartementet (Gjøvik: Mariendal, 1962), 167, 247–248.

<sup>35</sup> RA/S-3138-28/D/Da/L0207/0002, Anr. 3277, S. B. S.; RA/S-3138-34/D/Da/L0014/0002, Anr. 98, B. K. T.

son.<sup>36</sup> Table 2 also supports A3, as the percentage who were punished increases significantly with the age of the suspects.

We now move on to A4. Since arrest and detention were not always recorded in the first months after the liberation, it cannot be determined how many minors were detained, or for how long. However, in our review of cases, leaving the more serious acts of collaboration aside, we found many examples of arrests with unclear justification and apparently unreasonably long detention. Thus, 15-year-old O. A. E., the boy who, as said in the introduction, was interned for more than six weeks due to his membership in the NSUE, was not an isolated case. The aforementioned B. K. T. was kept in internment for a full four months, mainly with the curious justification that there were still many Germans in Stryn, the small rural community he lived in.<sup>37</sup> Overall, the threshold for keeping underage collaborators in extended custody seems to have been low, even if they were only suspected of trivial offences. In conclusion, therefore, A4 is supported.

## Results 2: On the criminal intent of young suspects

I have never heard of it being a punishable offence to be a member of NS or any other organisation I have been a member of. J. H. B., (born 1924), 1945.<sup>38</sup>

To evaluate A5 it is necessary to review how the young defendants' criminal intent was evaluated in a sample of court cases. Although the NTO effectively disregarded the Penal Code's intent requirement by making NS membership itself a criminal offence, the court, or in trivial cases against passive members only the police, still had to address the issue. When dealing with adults, courts and police officers satisfied the intent requirement by routinely declaring, often contrary to the defendant's own statement, that he or she "must have understood" that NS was providing unlawful assistance to the enemy.<sup>39</sup> To what extent was the same practice followed in cases involving minors, where such attribution of criminal intent could be even more problematic from a legal point of view?

On the one hand, our review confirmed that even the young collaborators were regularly imputed with an intent to commit treason, even though, in accordance with the prevailing perception of reality in their families and environments,

<sup>36</sup> Out of the 3,968 a total of 1,079 were sentenced and 1,409 fined.

<sup>37</sup> RA/S-3138-34/D/Da/L0014/0002, Anr. 98, B. K. T.

<sup>38</sup> Cited after police interrogation, 8 August 1945, in RA/S-3138-04/D/Db/L0007/0008, Anr. 26/45, J. H. B., translated by the authors.

<sup>39</sup> Borge and Vaale, *Grunnlovens største prøve*, 145, 333.

they themselves denied it. In its verdict against B. T. (born 1924), Kongsberg District Court found that she had understood that Norway was at war with Germany, that the King and Government were continuing the fight from London and that NS was supporting the enemy. In her later application for pardon, however, she denied any criminal intent. When joining the NSUF at the age of 16, she had no knowledge of politics. Furthermore, she could not understand how caring for patients as a voluntary nurse for the German Red Cross at Aker hospital in Oslo could be an illegal act.<sup>40</sup> In its verdict against V. E. B. (born 1924), the Oslo District Court concluded that her joining the NSUF at the age of 16 was intentional treason, even though she herself had perceived the organisation as a kind of scouting movement. The court’s rather curious reasoning was that at the same time she had also taken a job in a German company and must therefore have been aware that both the job and her NSUF membership were criminal offences.<sup>41</sup>

In many cases, the court drew a distinction in its assessment of intent between a defendant’s initial acts of collaboration, typically admission to the NSUF, and later, often more serious acts. The argument was that, although the defendants may not have fully understood the unlawfulness of their first actions, at least as they grew somewhat older they must have realised that NS supported the enemy. In one such case, the one against B. H. (born 1926), who joined the NSUF at the age of 15 ½, Numedal county court assumed that he had already a year later, after having learned about the organisation’s ideology at a course, become sufficiently conscious and thus capable of committing intended treason.<sup>42</sup> To conclude, A5 was supported by the evidence.

### Results 3: On the significance of mitigating circumstances in the courts

As regards A6, this will also be illustrated by an examination of selected court decisions and their bases. A first observation is that, in cases against minors, there were widely differing views on possible mitigating circumstances and their significance among both prosecutors and judges. Although the young age of the accused was normally mentioned, it was not clear how this factor would affect the sentencing. Among the lawyers who participated in the treason trials, some argued that adolescence should not be exaggerated as a moderating or exonerating factor. In

---

<sup>40</sup> RA/S–3138–15/D/Da/L0033/0008, Anr. 232/45, B. T.

<sup>41</sup> RA/S–3138–01/D/Da/L0081/0001, Dnr. 659, V. E. B.

<sup>42</sup> RA/S–3138–15/D/Da/L0046/0008, Anr. 375/45, B. H.

the case against B. A. J. (born 1925), the prosecutor Olaf Trampe Kindt (1913–1995) rejected the idea that the defendant’s youth should have a mitigating effect, as Kindt considered the crimes too serious.<sup>43</sup> In another case, against E. W. (born 1926), the prosecuting lawyer, Iver Holter Alnæs (1904–1978), even stated that the court should react strictly precisely because of the defendant’s young age.<sup>44</sup> However, a third prosecutor, police officer Ølvar Berven (1898–1979), highlighted adolescence as an extenuating circumstance in his assessment of G. D.’s (born 1926) actions. He and other young people had been victims of ruthless propaganda, Berven said.<sup>45</sup>

Similar age and environmental factors, primarily the minor’s family background, were most often mentioned during the trials. Typically, one or both parents of the defendant had been members of the NS, and judges therefore assumed that this had influenced him or her to a greater or lesser extent. When the Supreme Court unanimously reduced the sentence against E. L. (born 1925), a son of a prominent NS man, the main reason was that the Aker county court had placed too little emphasis on the father’s influence. It had been “very strong,” according to the final verdict.<sup>46</sup> In some cases, however, information about the NS affiliation of parents and other close relatives was ignored by the court. Although in the case of P. L. (born 1925), who enrolled in the NSUF at 16, both his parents were members of the NS, this fact was neither mentioned as mitigating by the district court nor during the appeal hearing in the Supreme Court.<sup>47</sup>

There are only a few examples of the court looking at the situation of these young defendants in its entirety, where both entry into the NSUF and later acts of treason can often be understood in the light of circumstances outside themselves. When the lawyer Johs. Aanderaa (1905–1997), the defender of L. M.E. (born 1928), referred to the fact that he came from a NS family and was just 13 when he was admitted to the NSUF, only to be boycotted by his comrades and later “met with Nazi nonsense at all hours of the day,” the court took little account of this.<sup>48</sup>

---

43 RA/S–3138–12/D/Da/L0030/0006, Dnr. 255, B. A. J.

44 RA/S–3138–01/D/Da/L0020/0002, Dnr. 153, E. W. Traditionally, an argument for punishing young first-time offenders severely has been that it discourages them from committing new crimes in the future. Robert Galbiati and Francesco Drago, “Deterrent effect of imprisonment,” in *Encyclopedia of Criminology and Criminal Justice* (New York: Springer, 2014), 1023–1030.

45 RA/S–3138–08/D/Da/L0022/0265, Anr. 97/46, G. D.

46 RA/S–3138–01/D/Da/L0192/0006, Dnr. 1314, E. L.

47 RA/S–3138–10/D/Da/L0001/0001, Dnr. 1, R. S.

48 RA/S–3138–29/D/Da/L0055/0004, Anr. 321/45, L. M.E.

Several court reports give the impression that judges also often failed to see how, among other things, loyalty to parents and long-term NSUF indoctrination, as described earlier, made it difficult for young people to change course. Instead, it was often treated as a criminal offence for the young person not to have resigned from the party or not to have refused to carry out orders from superiors. Thus, B. H. (born 1926) was reproached by the Supreme Court for, at the age of 16, not having discussed the contents of an NSUF course with others who did not belong to the NS at his place of residence.<sup>49</sup> In the case against K. A. (born 1928), who at 16 had been ordered by the local NS militia leader to perform armed guard duty, and whose father was also in the NS and did guard service, a fact apparently unknown to the court, the boy was punished for not refusing.<sup>50</sup> Even when an NSUF boy had volunteered for German military service and was then consequently put under military discipline, as in the case of F. N. C. (born 1926), the court punished him for not later attempting to disobey orders or escape.<sup>51</sup>

All in all, A6 was supported. That the weight given to the special mitigating circumstances was highly variable appears evident, not least due to the many different judges and courts involved in the legal reckoning. Lower court judgments could be made both stricter and milder by various departments of the Supreme Court depending on how youth and NS family had been weighted. Besides, even convictions where the court has allegedly given a young defendant a reduced sentence for treason appear in many cases to be as severe as in comparable cases against adults.

As for our final assumption (A7), it follows logically from the conclusion of A6 that the seventh is also supported by the empirical sources. Moreover, given the difficult judgments the court had to make in cases against juveniles, it is safe to assume that sentences varied even more than when the defendants were older.

## Conclusion

We had uniforms and we marched, but we did not know what we were doing, we were merely an echo of our parents. A. B., (born 1932).<sup>52</sup>

---

<sup>49</sup> RA/S–3138–15/D/Da/L0046/0008, Anr. 375/45, B. H.

<sup>50</sup> RA/S–3138–32/D/Da/L0039/0201, Dnr. 198, K. A.; RA/S-1543/D1/L0002/0007, ED-kort nr. 13219, S. A.

<sup>51</sup> RA/S–3138–05/D/Da/L0010/0007, Ark. 152, F. N. C.

<sup>52</sup> Cited after Baard Herman Borge, “*De kalte oss naziengel*”: *NS–barnas historie 1945–2002* (Oslo: Samlaget, 2002), 90, translated by the authors.

To summarise, the Norwegian court settlement with the youngest collaborators in general went as we expected based on transitional justice theory and knowledge about the trials. All our assumptions, except for A1, were substantiated. There is therefore good reason to argue that many of the youngest NS members were unfairly treated by the police and courts not only by today's but also by pre-war legal standards. The root cause of this injustice is that children in their teens were largely treated as adults in the sense that many of them were presumed, on dubious grounds, not only to have acted both voluntarily and independently, but also to have committed the political crime of treason deliberately. The courts routinely ruled that underage defendants had "voluntarily" and "without coercion" joined the NSUF, regardless of their parents being members of the NS or not. Although the juveniles rarely mentioned having been pressured or influenced at home, as this could have worsened their father's and mother's treason cases, crucial parental influence was often cited in testimonies.

In the Norwegian legal literature, the discussion of children's criminal responsibility at different ages has historically revolved around their culpability. It has often been pointed out that they have not yet developed an understanding of the social nature of certain crimes and therefore cannot construct counter-narratives like an adult.<sup>53</sup> Even so, while a political act such as treason in German-occupied Norway is an obvious example of a crime committed in a complex social context, only rarely did the judiciary reflect on how the minors related to their political crimes. When R. S. (born 1926) was asked by magistrate Gunnar Christian Otterbech (1881–1963) why he at 14 had joined the NSUF, he replied that he thought the party programme was "correct". However, when Otterbech followed up by asking if he really had had any interest in politics at such a young age, S. replied in the negative.<sup>54</sup> In this way he was probably representative of many young defendants.

Finally, what lessons may be drawn for dealing with young offenders, both in general and after future transitions to democracy? From today's perspective, the assessments and sentences that took significant account of the circumstances of minors' actions undoubtedly appear in the best light. Thus, the attitude demonstrated by the two Supreme Court judges, Cathinko Stub Holmboe (1892–1980) and Einar Hanssen (1874–1952), who in several cases argued strongly for sentence reduction because they thought a minor NS member received too harsh a punishment, may stand as an example to follow for future jurists.<sup>55</sup>

---

<sup>53</sup> Gröning, "Kriminell lavalder," 317–318.

<sup>54</sup> RA/S–3138–10/D/Da/L0001/0001, Dnr: 1, R. S.

<sup>55</sup> RA/S–3138–32/D/Da/L0013/0071, Dnr. 70, O. E. A.; RA/S–3138–32/D/Da/L0012/0064, Dnr. 63, I. H. O.; RA/S–3138–05/D/Da/L0010/0007, Ark. 152, F. N. C.; RA/S–3138–15/D/Da/L0046/0008, Anr. 375/45, B. H.



## References

### Sources

Riksarkivet/The National Archives, Oslo (RA), S-1543, Erstatningsdirektoratet/The Directorate of Compensation (ED).

Riksarkivet/The National Archives, Oslo (RA), S-3138, Landssvikarkivet/The treason trials archive (LA).

### Literature

Andenæs, Johs. *Det vanskelige oppgjøret: Rettsoppgjøret etter okkupasjonen*. Oslo: Tano-Aschehoug, 1998.

Aulie, Andreas. “Registrering av landssvikforbrytelsene med gjerningsbeskrivelse og statistikk.” In *Om landssvikoppgjøret*, published by Justis- og Politidepartementet, 107–391. Gjøvik: Mariendal, 1962.

Borge, Baard Herman. “*De kalte oss naziyngel*”: *NS-barnas historie 1945–2002*. Oslo: Samlaget, 2002.

Borge, Baard Herman. “Transitional Victimization: Collaborator’s Offspring as Children at Risk.” In *Children & Society* 33 (2019), 213–225.

Borge, Baard Herman, and Lars-Erik Vaale. *Grunnlovens største prøve: Rettsoppgjøret etter 1945*. Oslo: Scandinavian Academic Press, 2018.

Dahl, Hans Fredrik, and Øystein Sørensen. “Et parti av lovbrytere.” In *Et rettferdig oppgjør? Rettsoppgjøret i Norge etter 1945*, edited by Hans Fredrik Dahl and Øystein Sørensen, 87–117. Oslo: Pax, 2004.

Elster, Jon. *Closing the books: Transitional justice in historical perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

Figueiredo, Ivo de. “Et rettferdig oppgjør? Etterkrigsoppgjøret som rettslig og historisk problem.” In *Et rettferdig oppgjør? Rettsoppgjøret i Norge etter 1945*, edited by Hans Fredrik Dahl, and Øystein Sørensen, 30–51. Oslo: Pax, 2004.

Galbiati, Roberto, and Francesco Drago. “Deterrent effect of imprisonment.” In *Encyclopedia of Criminology and Criminal Justice*, 1023–1030. New York: Springer, 2014.

Gröning, Linda. “Kriminell lavalder – noen utgangspunkter.” *Tidsskrift for strafferett* 4 (2014), 314–332.

Hiorthøy, Finn. “Lovgivningstiltak vedrørende landssvikoppgjøret.” In *Om landssvikoppgjøret*, published by Justis- og Politidepartementet, 36–79. Gjøvik: Mariendal, 1962.

Kvistad, John Mikal. *Det unge Norges fylking klar til slag: Historien om Nasjonal Samlings Ungdomsfylking 1933–1945*. PhD diss., University of Oslo, 2011.

Larsen, Stein Ugelvik. *Database med opplysninger om 61 462 NS medlemmer og frontkjemper*. Bergen: unpublished, 2018.

Larsen, Stein Ugelvik. “Die Ausschaltung der Quislinge in Norwegen.” In *Politische Säuberung in Europa: Die Abrechnung mit Faschismus und Kollaboration nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg*, edited by Klaus-Dietmar Henke, and Claus Woller, 241–280. Munich: dtv, 1991.

Larsen, Stein Ugelvik. “Rettsoppgjør i en elitestyrte overgang: Gjennnføringen av demokrati i Norge etter 1945.” In *Forsoning eller rettferdighet? Om beskyttelse av menneskerettighetene gjennom*

- rettstribunaler og sannhetskommisjoner*, edited by Bård-Anders Andreassen and Elin Skaar, 235–273. Oslo: Cappelen Akademisk Forlag, 1998.
- Linz, Juan, and Alfred Stepan. *Problems of democratic transition and consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and post-communist Europe*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996.
- “Provisorisk anordning om tillegg til straffelovgivningen om forræderi (Landssvikanordningen) av 15. desember 1944.” In *Samling av provisoriske anordninger, kgl. res. m.v.*, published by Justisdepartementet, 203–220. London: Justisdepartementet, 1945.
- “Provisorisk anordning om rettergang i landssviksaker av 16. februar (Rettergangsordningen).” In *Samling av provisoriske anordninger, kgl. res. m.v.*, published by Justisdepartementet, 246–256. London: Justisdepartementet, 1945.
- Schandevyl, Eva. “Transitional Justice and Cultural Memory: The Prison Diaries of Ernest Claes and their Literary Adaptation (1944–1951).” *Life Writing* 1 (2018), 9–22.
- Skeie, Jon. *Den norske strafferett. Bd. 1: Den alminnelige del*. Oslo: Norli, 1946.
- Solem, Erik. *Landssviklova: Lov um straff og økonomisk straff for landssvikarar*. Oslo: Tanum, 1947.

---

Part III: **Critical Reflections on the German  
Discourse on ‘Children of the Occupation’**



Elke Kleinau

# Black German ‘Occupation Children’ in the Focus of Anthropological Research: Continuities and Discontinuities

## Introduction

In the early 1950s, several anthropological studies on Black German children were published in the then recently founded Federal Republic of Germany.<sup>1</sup> These children were mostly the offspring of German women and Black US soldiers who had been temporarily stationed in Germany after the Second World War. They were referred to at the time by many derogatory names; ‘Besatzungskinder’ [‘occupation children’] was one of the least offensive.<sup>2</sup> The children were the subject of debates in academia, politics, the media and wider society, with ‘race’ being “equated with ‘Blackness’ (rather than ‘Jewishness’) and Blackness with African American paternity”.<sup>3</sup> Discussions centred on whether and in what respects Black children differed from *white* children of the same age. There were two opposing standpoints. The first vehemently took the view that Black children could not be integrated into *white* German society and proposed that they should be adopted abroad, preferably in the United States. Should this plan not prove feasible for all the children, special institutions would need account for their upbringing and education. The

---

1 I use the expression Black German children, firstly, by way of distinction from discriminatory contemporary terms and, secondly, to highlight that these children, as the children of single mothers, were German citizens. In hegemonic discourse, *white* is unmarked while Black is marked. Since Black functions as a political self-designation, it is capitalised in this chapter. By contrast, *white* is italicised to indicate its constructed nature and the privileged status of *whiteness*: see Adibeli Nduka-Agwu and Wendy Sutherland, “Schwarze, Schwarze Deutsche,” in *Rassismus auf gut Deutsch: Ein kritisches Nachschlagewerk zu rassistischen Sprachhandlungen*, ed. Adibeli Nduka-Agwu and Antje Lann Hornscheidt (Frankfurt a.M.: Brandes & Apsel, 2013), 85–90.

2 Pejorative terms used in contemporary German sources have been placed in single quotation marks to indicate critical distance from them. These terms include ‘Rasse’, here translated as ‘race’, which often is not used as a critical category of analysis (akin to ‘ethnicity’) but refers to a concept of ‘natural racial identity’. ‘Mischling’, a pejorative term used for a person of mixed ‘race’ (similar to English expressions such as ‘half-breed’), has in most cases been left untranslated.

3 Heide Fehrenbach, “‘Ami-Liebchen’ und ‘Mischlingskinder’: Rasse, Geschlecht und Kultur in der deutsch-amerikanischen Begegnung,” in *Nachkrieg in Deutschland*, ed. Klaus Neumann (Hamburg: Hamburger edition, 2001), 185. This and all other quotations from German sources have been translated into English.

other standpoint favoured integration and hoped that the prejudices that existed in society could be dispelled by science, politics and the media.<sup>4</sup>

It was not the first time that ‘Mischlinge’ or ‘Rassenmischlinge’ [‘people of mixed race’] had been the focus of scholarly attention. Anthropological studies of ‘Mischlinge’ had a long tradition in Germany, stretching back from the post-war period through the National Socialist and colonial eras. This tradition was firmly embedded in scholarly theories and institutions, and had many prominent representatives. There had already been Black ‘occupation children’ after the First World War, the result of relations between French colonial soldiers and local women. Referred to as ‘Rhineland bastards’ [‘Rheinlandbastarde’], these children were the subject of a racist panic whipped up in the Weimar Republic by the Black Shame campaign [Schwarze-Schmach-Kampagne]. Colonial soldiers were also stationed in the French occupation zone after the Second World War, but their children did not, by contrast, become a focus of anthropological research in the fledgling Federal Republic.<sup>5</sup>

Heide Fehrenbach argues that the societal and scholarly attention paid to Black ‘occupation children’ played a key role in the “transition from the National Socialist ‘racial state’ [‘Rassenstaat’] to a democracy”.<sup>6</sup> By demonstrating social acceptance of this minority, Fehrenbach claims, Germany was able to redefine itself after the end of the National Socialist dictatorship and, through a process of “national rehabilitation”, present itself to the international community as a “reformed character”.<sup>7</sup> As examples of scholarly acceptance, Fehrenbach points to Walter Kirchner’s and Rudolf Sieg’s anthropological studies of ‘biracial’ or ‘mixed’ [‘Mischlinge’] children.<sup>8</sup> Although these studies have some continuities with the ideas of ‘Rassenanthropologie’ [‘racial anthropology’] and ‘Rassenhygiene’ [‘racial hygiene’] from earlier periods, Fehrenbach claims that, unlike their predecessors, they took

---

4 See Yara-Colette Lemke Muniz de Faria, *Zwischen Fürsorge und Ausgrenzung: Afrodeutsche ‚Besatzungskinder‘ im Nachkriegsdeutschland* (Berlin: Metropol, 2002).

5 See Reiner Pommerin, “Sterilisierung der Rheinlandbastarde”: *Das Schicksal einer farbigen deutschen Minderheit, 1918–1937* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1979), 10–22; Sandra Maß, *Weißer Helden, schwarze Krieger: Zur Geschichte kolonialer Männlichkeit in Deutschland, 1918–1964* (Cologne/Weimar/Vienna: Böhlau, 2006), 71–120.

6 Heide Fehrenbach, “‘Farbige’ Besatzungskinder in der westdeutschen Nachkriegsgesellschaft,” in *Besatzungskinder: Die Nachkommen alliierter Soldaten in Österreich und Deutschland*, ed. Barbara Stelzl-Marx and Silke Satjukow (Vienna/Cologne/Weimar: Böhlau, 2015), 295.

7 Heide Fehrenbach, “‘Farbige’ Besatzungskinder,” 317.

8 See Walter Kirchner, “Eine anthropologische Studie an Mulattenkindern in Berlin unter Berücksichtigung der sozialen Verhältnisse” (PhD diss., Free University of Berlin, 1952); Rudolf Sieg, *Mischlingskinder in Westdeutschland: Festschrift für Frédéric Falkenburger* (Baden-Baden: Verlag für Kunst und Wissenschaft, 1956).

account of the children's social environment and distanced themselves from a purely biologicistic perspective.<sup>9</sup> In this chapter I would like to critically question Fehrenbach's thesis about the discontinuity of anthropological research by closely examining some of the studies she mentions, as well as some of the studies from the colonial and National Socialist periods to which both Kirchner and Sieg explicitly refer.

My investigation proceeds in chronological order. The first section (2.1) considers a study of a group descended from Boer men and indigenous women that was conducted by Eugen Fischer (1874–1967) in the colony of German South West Africa, and was the first published in Germany to address questions of 'Rassenmischung' ['racial mixing']. At the time of publication, Fischer was a professor of anatomy at the University of Freiburg. He would later become one of three directors of the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute of Anthropology, Human Heredity and Eugenics, which was founded in 1927. In the next section (2.2), I analyse Wolfgang Abel's 1937 study of the children of French colonial soldiers and German women born after the First World War. Abel (1905–1997) was an assistant to Fischer at the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute, and his report on the 'Rhineland bastards' gave scientific legitimation to these children and young people being forcibly sterilised during the National Socialist period in the name of 'racial hygiene'.<sup>10</sup> Finally, in order to confirm or refute the thesis concerning the discontinuity of anthropological research, the third section of this chapter focuses on the writings of Walter Kirchner, as these venture more explicitly than Sieg's study into the realm of psychological and sociological conclusions. I examine Kirchner's references to the ideas and methods of earlier anthropological studies from the colonial and National Socialist periods. One key focus concerns whether the paradigm shift that ostensibly occurred in anthropology during the transition to a post-war democratic order was motivated by a desire to critically distance the discipline from anthropologists who had helped to legitimise crimes against Black children and young people.

---

<sup>9</sup> See Fehrenbach, "Farbige' Besatzungskinder," 307.

<sup>10</sup> In the days of the Wilhelmine Empire, German academic discourse adopted the concept of 'racial hygiene' rather than the internationally standard term 'eugenics'. This was a consequence of many German scholars and scholarly institutions having links to the ethno-nationalist movement. See Peter Weingart, Jürgen Kroll and Kurt Bayertz, *Rasse, Blut und Gene: Geschichte der Eugenik und Rassenhygiene in Deutschland* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1992), 98–100.

## ‘Mischlinge’ in anthropological discourse

### Colonial discourse

Around the turn of the century, there was great general interest in Mendel’s theory of inheritance, with biologists and zoologists conducting many and varied experiments on the crossing of plant and animal species. Against this backdrop, Eugen Fischer sought to obtain “material on the question of racial mixing, that is, cross-breeding and heredity in humans”.<sup>11</sup> In 1908, he carried out a field study in the colony of German South West Africa that he claimed was the first in the history of anthropology to investigate “a typical bastard population [Bastardpopulation]” rather than “pure racial types overseas”.<sup>12</sup> The question he was concerned with was “whether and how the mixing of peoples of different races produces a new race, a mixed race [Mischrasse], whether such a race will survive, whether and how it will change, whether the ‘old’ race will reassert itself, ‘unmix’ itself, whether and how a new environment will affect a race that migrates”.<sup>13</sup> After the ‘Rehoboth Bastards’<sup>14</sup> achieved fame back in the ‘motherland’ as allies who had fought alongside Germany in the colonial war against the Herero and Nama peoples (1904–1907), Fischer concluded that there might be value in “depart[ing] from the old convention of the anthropology of pure races and instead study[ing] the phenomenon of bastardisation”.<sup>15</sup> Fischer’s use of the term ‘race’ is confusingly ambiguous: while his dramatic reference to “the genesis and death of races [Ras-

---

11 Eugen Fischer, *Die Rehobother Bastards und das Bastardisierungsproblem beim Menschen: Anthropologische und ethnographische Studien am Rehobother Bastardvolk in Deutsch-Südwest-Afrika* (Jena: Gustav Fischer, 2013), 57.

12 Fischer, *Rehobother Bastards*, v.

13 Fischer, *Rehobother Bastards*, 1.

14 According to Fischer, ‘Rehoboth Bastards’, or ‘Rehobother Bastards’, was how the group he studied referred to themselves; he reported that they were proud of their *white* lineage (see Fischer, *Rehobother Bastards*, 139). In the Middle Ages, ‘bastard’ was a pejorative label applied to the child of a nobleman and a woman below his standing. Only later on did the term come to be used more generally for those born out of wedlock. Kien Nghi Ha explains that people of ‘mixed’ origin challenged “the absolutist faith in the divinely given superiority of those born to rule as an unquestionable legitimization of power” and “the ideology of pure aristocratic blood”. In the colonial context, “the idea of pure aristocratic blood as a means of social exclusion” became the “historical point of departure for modern concepts of race”. Kien Nghi Ha, *Unrein und vermisch: Postkoloniale Grenzgänge durch die Kulturgeschichte der Hybridität und der kolonialen “Rassenbastarde”* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2010), 122.

15 Fischer, *Rehobother Bastards*, 3.



senentstehung und Rassentod]"<sup>16</sup> appears to suggest that he espouses the degeneration thesis, which postulates the decline of 'higher races' as a result of 'racial mixing',<sup>17</sup> elsewhere he casts doubt on the existence of 'pure races', arguing that the "genesis of almost all peoples", including in Europe, had involved such mixing. This was, he claims, a consequence of wars and military conflicts, following which a "class of conquerors" invariably installed itself over the "indigenous population" and "generations of racial mixing" ensued.<sup>18</sup> However, nowhere in the world had this process produced a discrete, independently existing 'race'. The result, rather, was a "racial hodgepodge [Rassenbrei], a racial proletariat" that was "wholly uninteresting" from an anthropological perspective.<sup>19</sup> In German South West Africa, by contrast, a "clearly delineable mixed population" had resulted from "peaceful mixing"<sup>20</sup> of two "heterogeneous original races [Stammrassen]" in a precisely defined geographic region south of Windhoek, and due to the small size of this population it was possible to trace the families "back to their origins [...] in the region of today's Cape Land in the second half of the eighteenth century".<sup>21</sup> The Rehobothers' ancestors were semi-nomadic Boer cattle farmers who moved inland to escape enforced settlement by the British colonial administration. The Boers, in turn, were a group descended from mainly Dutch immigrants to the Cape Colony. Due to a lack of *white* women, the Boer men married indigenous Nama women. According to Fischer, since the men's "simple life" was not dissimilar to that of a "primitive people [Naturvolk], many enduring [...] good and blessed mixed marriages took place",<sup>22</sup> and the offspring of these marriages in turn married 'their own kind'. This gave rise to small communities "that due to the herdsman's life were preserved in relative isolation and hence as true bastards".<sup>23</sup> Concubinage, rape and prostitution were far more common in the colonies than legal marriages, but Fischer wholly ignores these violent aspects of the relations between *white* men and indigenous women.

In the early stages of the colonisation of German South West Africa, the Rehobothers, who were fending off livestock raids by the Nama and Herero, formed an 'alliance of protection and defense' [Schutz- und Trutzbündnis] with the Germans and fought on their side in the colonial war, which earned them "privileged

---

16 Fischer, *Rehobother Bastards*, 1.

17 On the degeneration thesis, see Weingart, Kroll and Bayertz, *Rasse, Blut und Gene*, 17–66.

18 Fischer, *Rehobother Bastards*, 15.

19 Fischer, *Rehobother Bastards*, 16.

20 Fischer, *Rehobother Bastards*, 16.

21 Fischer, *Rehobother Bastards*, 17.

22 Fischer, *Rehobother Bastards*, 20.

23 Fischer, *Rehobother Bastards*, 21.

status among the natives”.<sup>24</sup> By contrast with the ‘purely’ indigenous population, Fischer believed the Rehobothers were capable of learning, though he primarily ascribed the community’s positive development to “twenty years of cultivating efforts [Kulturarbeit]” by the mission.<sup>25</sup> In his eyes, the missionaries’ success in getting the Rehobothers to build permanent houses while the “pure Hottentots” remained in their “squalid huts” proved that the former were “greatly superior to the pure natives in terms of vigour, intelligence and industry”.<sup>26</sup> Fischer thus conceded that the Rehobothers were somewhat more civilised than the Nama, but attributed this to “German rule”.<sup>27</sup>

By surveying families who had been living in Rehoboth since 1870, Fischer produced twenty-three family trees, which he checked against the mission’s registry of baptisms. He identified thirty-seven men married to Nama women as the community’s ‘founding fathers’, whose descendants had propagated among themselves. The men’s origins was far less homogeneous than originally assumed. Fischer found “seventeen Dutch, eleven Germans” and nine whose origin was uncertain.<sup>28</sup> Two of the men may have been from Britain, while the surnames of two others made Fischer “suspect that the male line too led to Hottentots and not to whites”.<sup>29</sup> Fischer was also not convinced of the ‘purity’ of the maternal line, which may also have included “Damara or Herero girls”.<sup>30</sup>

The Rehobothers initially refused to cooperate with the anthropologist, as they were “too highly cultivated to be studied ‘like natives’”. Fischer could, they told him, “just as well conduct his studies on the missionary and *Oberleutnant* (district head)”,<sup>31</sup> they were not ‘savages’ [‘Wilde’]. Thomas Etzemüller, who has studied Fischer’s unpublished memoirs, recounts that Fischer was able to win the Rehobothers’ trust “because he had ‘cured’ one inhabitant’s (already subsiding) pneumo-

---

24 Fischer, *Rehobother Bastards*, 35. For instance, they were not required to carry a passport and were exempt from the ban on keeping horses and heavy livestock. This ban deprived the Herero and Nama of their livelihoods, and they were forced into wage labour for the *white* farmers.

25 Fischer, *Rehobother Bastards*, 35.

26 Fischer, *Rehobother Bastards*, 31. ‘Hottentots’ was a pejorative contemporary term for the Nama people. In the colonial context, ‘primitive huts’ were opposed to the ‘houses’ that ‘civilised’ people lived in. See Elke Kleinau and Lilli Riettiens, “‘Nature’ in German colonial literature for children and young people,” *History of Education* 49, no. 4 (2020): 450–451.

27 Fischer, *Rehobother Bastards*, 35.

28 Fischer, *Rehobother Bastards*, 43.

29 Fischer, *Rehobother Bastards*, 43.

30 Fischer, *Rehobother Bastards*, 46.

31 Fischer, *Rehobother Bastards*, 57.

nia [...] and because he often prescribed heavy wine as medicine”.<sup>32</sup> Aware that it was officially forbidden to give alcohol to the indigenous population,<sup>33</sup> which in the eyes of the *whites* also included the Rehobothers, Fischer may have thought it imprudent to disclose this tactic in his published study. Publicly, he instead ascribed it to the missionary’s efforts, who told the Rehobothers that Fischer might be able to prove “that they were really ‘different’ from [...] [and] ‘better’ than the ‘natives’”.<sup>34</sup> Due to the ‘racial pride’ of his ‘objects of investigation’ [Untersuchungsobjekte], Fischer could not deploy the full spectrum of contemporary anthropological research methods. Measuring naked bodies – a method used without compunction on ‘savages’ at that time – would have brought the enterprise to an abrupt conclusion. Fischer would also not countenance digging for skeletal remains in a Christian cemetery that was still in active use, though he had fewer scruples about doing so at abandoned burial sites.<sup>35</sup> Fischer took measurements of 310 men, women and children, documenting their height, the length of their torso, legs, arms and hands, the width of their nose and mouth and the distance between their eyes. He also photographed them from the front, in profile and in half profile. In the absence of a Dutch comparison group, he referred to a study of 100 men from Baden (in southern Germany) provided by a friendly colleague and a measurement of 100 Baden women conducted by Fischer and a female fellow researcher named Breitung.<sup>36</sup> The comparison with these groups is questionable in several respects. Fischer explained his decision to use a south German population group, despite the fact that the “Nordic race” supposedly predominated among the Rehobothers’ *white* ancestors,<sup>37</sup> by saying that “no single ethnic group in Europe [...] has really been the subject of thorough anthropological study”.<sup>38</sup> While nothing is known about the group of women, the men were soldiers, which means they had undergone a medical examination, been declared fit for military service and likely represented a positive selection of Baden men in terms of physical performance and height. The Rehobother population displayed so little homogeneity that Fischer divided them into three groups according to the degree of “mixing

---

32 Thomas Etzemüller, *Auf der Suche nach dem Nordischen Menschen* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2015), 104.

33 Fischer, *Rehobother Bastards*, 26, 262.

34 Fischer, *Rehobother Bastards*, 57.

35 Fischer, *Rehobother Bastards*, 58.

36 See Fischer, *Rehobother Bastards*, 59. This study of Baden women appears never to have been published. See Amalie Rhiel, “Untersuchungen zur Anthropologie und Konstitution der deutschen Frau,” *Zeitschrift für Morphologie und Anthropologie* 26, no. 2 (1927): 333, accessed September 19, 2022, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2574895>.

37 Fischer, *Rehobother Bastards*, 45.

38 Fischer, *Rehobother Bastards*, 64.

of blood [Blutmischung]”: mainly European, intermediate and mainly ‘Hottentot’.<sup>39</sup> His observations on his subjects’ facial features make clear that the classification of people into these groups was by no means based on objective criteria: the classification was, he said, extremely difficult, since “even someone very familiar with this people may in some cases be uncertain whether a particular individual is a pure Boer or bastard and in others whether they are a bastard or a Hottentot”.<sup>40</sup> The classification was determined not just by the Rehobothers’ phenotypical appearance, but also by the line of descent gleaned from family trees. ‘Regularly bastardised’ [regelmäßig verbastardisiert] individuals were assigned to the intermediate group. The mainly European group comprised individuals in whom, “just as in the breeding of animals”, the ‘lesser race’ had been ‘improved’, in this case by *white* men, while Fischer claimed that for most of those assigned to the final group this was due to “a woman bringing in pure Hottentot blood when a bastard man married a Hottentot instead of a bastard girl”.<sup>41</sup> This categorisation of higher and lower ‘races’ influenced not just the Europeans’ perceptions but those of the ‘Basters’ themselves: although family social standing was generally measured in the community according to their wealth, even members of poorer families could gain prestige if they were more European in appearance.<sup>42</sup> According to Fischer, the ‘influx of European blood’ was evident not just phenotypically, but also in the fact that certain individuals had inherited “greater energy, prudence and industry” [Energie, Voraussicht, Tüchtigkeit].<sup>43</sup>

After analysing the vast quantities of physiological data that Fischer had collected and making elaborate calculations of correlations, he concluded that his findings were consonant with Mendel’s laws of inheritance. He had not discovered a new ‘race’, but his research had – “probably for the first time on a somewhat broader basis – established that human races cross in accordance with Mendelian laws, just like countless plant and animal breeds”.<sup>44</sup> Fischer here ascribes to himself the status of a scientific pioneer, a view that was still being reproduced in a 1961 reprint of his study that praised it as “the foundational scientific work of human genetics”.<sup>45</sup> Etzemüller has persuasively demonstrated that Fischer used

---

39 Fischer, *Rehobother Bastards*, 63.

40 Fischer, *Rehobother Bastards*, 75.

41 Fischer, *Rehobother Bastards*, 62.

42 See Fischer, *Rehobother Bastards*, 53.

43 Fischer, *Rehobother Bastards*, 236.

44 Fischer, *Rehobother Bastards*, 171.

45 Cited in Tina Campt and Pascal Grosse, “‘Mischlingskinder’ in Nachkriegsdeutschland: Zum Verhältnis von Psychologie, Anthropologie und Gesellschaftspolitik nach 1945,” *Psychologie und Geschichte* 6, no. 1–2 (1994): 72.

questionable means to produce an “evidence of objectivity”,<sup>46</sup> but what is of greater interest for the context of ‘children of the occupation’ is the far-reaching psychological and political conclusions that Fischer drew from his bio-anthropological measurements, observations and interviews and his ‘purely objective’ interpretations of photographs. While Fischer used what were at that time standard anthropological tools to take the measurements of the Rehobothers’ bodies,<sup>47</sup> it is not at all clear what methods were used to conduct and analyse the interviews and ethnographic observations.

Despite granting to the Rehobothers a degree of intellectual distinction, which set them apart from the ‘pure’ Herero and Nama, the general characteristics Fischer observed were almost wholly negative. He ascribed to them a certain “impassivity [Teilnahmslosigkeit]” and a “placid temperament, tending towards the phlegmatic”, which he believed was a product both of their Boer ancestry and the influence of the climate.<sup>48</sup> Fischer also described the Rehobothers as having a “poverty of feeling [Gefühlsarmut]”, which was also evident in “the lack of poetry, art and song”.<sup>49</sup> Though the Rehobothers undeniably displayed a certain “tenacity and endurance” when hunting, they lacked the “industrious energy” [Arbeitsenergie] of the European, the “tenacity to persist and keep on trying by new ways and new means to achieve a goal once it has been set”.<sup>50</sup> In addition, they lack the ability to deny oneself certain things so as to obtain greater rewards in the future. As an example of behaviour directed at immediate gratification, Fischer mentions the Rehobothers’ thirst for alcohol, which he himself had fuelled in his attempts to recruit participants to his study. Contrary to views holding that indigenous people were capable of being educated and ‘civilised’, Fischer insisted that the ‘Basters’ were “culturally and intellectually inferior to the pure whites”.<sup>51</sup> Like all ‘coloured races’, they were completely unable to produce task and goal-oriented leaders for politics, industry, technology and science, notwithstanding the existence of “occasional highly gifted bastard individuals”.<sup>52</sup> In “free competition”, the ‘Basters’ were

---

46 Etzemüller, *Auf der Suche nach dem nordischen Menschen*, 110–113.

47 Fischer, *Rehobother Bastards*, 58–60.

48 Fischer, *Rehobother Bastards*, 292. The characterisation of the Boers as ‘phlegmatic’ and ‘idle’ became a common motif in German colonial discourse. It occurs, for instance, in several works by the feminist and colonial agitator Clara Brockmann. See Wolfgang Gippert and Elke Kleinau, *Bildungsreisende und Arbeitsmigrantinnen: Auslandserfahrungen deutscher Lehrerinnen zwischen nationaler und internationaler Orientierung (1850–1920)* (Cologne/Weimar/Vienna: Böhlau, 2014), 239.

49 Fischer, *Rehobother Bastards*, 292.

50 Fischer, *Rehobother Bastards*, 294.

51 See Fischer, *Rehobother Bastards*, 296.

52 Fischer, *Rehobother Bastards*, 297.

inferior to the *whites*, they were in need of “continuous white leadership [Führung]”.<sup>53</sup> Fischer believed the Rehobothers’ “arrogance over their ‘superior’ blood” to be dangerous,<sup>54</sup> as it threatened to undermine the *white* rule established in the colony by blurring the ‘racial barrier’ [Rassenschranke]. Ha notes that ‘Mischlinge’ were deemed to pose a threat due not to their “otherness” but rather the “cultural and physical similarity [...] between colonised and colonisers”.<sup>55</sup> In his policy conclusions, Fischer recommended treating the Rehobothers as “natives [Eingeborene]”.<sup>56</sup> “Justice”, he said, does not consist “in artificial protection”, nor were the Rehobothers owed gratitude for their support in the war as the ‘Basters’ had simply “done their duty”, and even that only because they themselves stood to benefit.<sup>57</sup> The Rehobothers merited protection only insofar as they were of benefit to the *whites* as a “native labourer class”.<sup>58</sup> This recommendation dovetailed neatly with the educational policy that the missions were already practising with ‘Mischling’ children. Educating these children offered an apt solution to the acute shortage of skilled labourers in the colony, particularly in jobs that were less attractive to the *whites* but for which the ‘pure’ natives lacked the necessary skills.<sup>59</sup> However, Fischer warned that any further ‘mixing’ with *whites* must be prevented at all costs, as “every European people without exception had suffered intellectual and cultural decline from absorption of substandard elements”.<sup>60</sup> Here Fischer clearly outs himself as an advocate of the degeneration thesis, despite not having presented any empirical evidence for this thesis in his study. Although Fischer regarded the ban on ‘mixed marriages’ introduced in 1905 as a matter for legislators and administrators, he did expressly welcome the classification of ‘Mischling’ children as ‘natives’ [Eingeborene] and the exclusion of their whole family from the *white* community, as the man in such families had broken “the bridge between himself and his people”.<sup>61</sup> The ‘mixed marriages’ ban and the annulment of existing mar-

---

53 Fischer, *Rehobother Bastards*, 298.

54 Fischer, *Rehobother Bastards*, 299.

55 Ha, *Unrein und vermischt*, 144.

56 Fischer, *Rehobother Bastards*, 301.

57 Fischer, *Rehobother Bastards*, 302.

58 Fischer, *Rehobother Bastards*, 303.

59 See Frank Becker, “Die ‘Bastardheime’ der Mission: Zum Status der Mischlinge in der kolonialen Gesellschaft Deutsch-Südwestafrikas,” in *Rassenmischehen – Mischlinge – Rassentrennung: Zur Politik der Rasse im deutschen Kolonialreich*, ed. Frank Becker (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2004), 188.

60 Fischer, *Rehobother Bastards*, 302.

61 Fischer, *Rehobother Bastards*, 304. On the ban on ‘mixed marriages’ and the restrictions faced by German settlers who continued to live with their indigenous wives, see Birthe Kundrus, “Die Farbe der Ehe’: Zur Debatte um die kolonialen Mischehen im Deutschen Kaiserreich,” in *Ge-*

riages two years later deprived wives and children of German citizenship, so that racism “suspended the patrilineal rule that otherwise applied”.<sup>62</sup>

In the early twentieth century, Fischer was regarded by the international scientific community as an eminent authority in his field. Subsequent work consistently referred to his study as “an authoritative source”, in which the harm of ‘racial mixing’ had been proved beyond any doubt. This thesis “was henceforth considered a basic tenet of racial hygiene”.<sup>63</sup>

## Anthropological discourse in the Weimar Republic and under National Socialism

In the 1920s, the discourse of ‘racial hygiene’ no longer centred on the ‘Mischlinge’ living in the colonies, as the German Empire had lost its colonial possessions after the First World War. Rather, with French colonial troops now occupying the Rhineland, the discussion of the harms of ‘racial mixing’ shifted to the ‘motherland’. The Black Shame campaign was based on a “propagandistic narrative” about “marauding, raping hordes of African soldiers”,<sup>64</sup> who were regarded by most Germans as a sexual and ‘racial’ threat and a national humiliation. The soldiers, whose deployment on European soil had already been described during the war itself as “a threat to European culture and civilisation”,<sup>65</sup> came from various parts of the French colonial empire: today’s Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Senegal, Madagascar and Vietnam. The majority were Moroccans, which is why reports of alleged sexual crimes against *white* German women concentrated on this group. Groups from across the political spectrum participated in the campaign, ranging from the ethno-nationalist German Emergency Association against the Black Shame [Deutscher Notbund gegen die Schwarze Schmach] to the Rhenish Women’s League [Rheinische Frauenliga], and they were supported by activists abroad.<sup>66</sup> The German-American journalist Ray Beveridge toured Germany and Scandinavia, advocated solidarity with Germany’s protest against the ‘breach of civilisation’ [‘Zivilisationsbruch’] and openly called for the lynching of Black men who molested

---

*schlechterdiskurse zwischen Fiktion und Faktizität*, ed. Waltraud Ernst and Ulrike Bohle (Münster: LIT, 2006), 135–151.

62 Ha, *Unrein und vermischt*, 157.

63 Weingart, Kroll and Bayertz, *Rasse, Blut und Gene*, 101.

64 Maß, *Weißer Helden, schwarze Krieger*, 3.

65 Pommerin, “*Sterilisierung der Rheinlandbastarde*”, 10.

66 See Maß, *Weißer Helden, schwarze Krieger*, 83–87.



white women.<sup>67</sup> At the request of the Swedish pastor Martin Liljeblad, in 1923 the German authorities began a first census of the ‘Mischling’ children in the Rhineland. Contrary to the propaganda about the instinctual urges [starke Triebhaftigkeit] of the ‘black hordes’, only one woman reported “the birth of her child being due to rape”.<sup>68</sup> The precise number of children was difficult to ascertain, because many mothers would not disclose the identity of the father and in many cases it was impossible to determine a child’s ‘racial’ origin.<sup>69</sup> Liljeblad predicted the nightmare scenario of a ‘deluge’ of an estimated 1,800 ‘coloured bastard children’ per year, who in the long term would threaten the nation’s ‘racial’ unity as inner enemies. Although this prediction was completely detached from reality,<sup>70</sup> the foreign ministry nonetheless felt compelled to appoint two ‘racial hygiene’ experts for a conference planned in Sweden. One of them was Eugen Fischer.<sup>71</sup>

Politicians, civil servants and doctors discussed measures to ‘maintain racial purity’, but plans to strip the children of their citizenship, sterilise them and deport them to Africa or Asia were officially dropped after 1927. There was no legal basis for carrying out these measures, since as children of single mothers the Rhenish ‘occupation children’ were German citizens. Many of the mothers refused to hand over their children and sterilisation was prohibited in the Weimar Republic. Despite this, doctors had been carrying out illegal sterilisations on ‘mentally deficient people’ [‘Schwachsinnige’] since 1919, without the prosecutors intervening.<sup>72</sup> The fact that these measures were not used on the ‘Mischling’ children, who were often classified as ‘intellectually substandard’ [‘geistig minderwertig’], was likely due not only to a lack of consent from their mothers but also to the Weimar Republic’s “foreign policy considerations”.<sup>73</sup> One point that supports this thesis is that the ‘Third Reich’ was also mindful of foreign policy consequences in its early days, and the forced sterilisation of children in 1937 was conducted in complete secrecy and outside of any legal framework.

A law allowing voluntary sterilisation on a eugenic basis never came to a vote in the Weimar Republic.<sup>74</sup> The committee that prepared the draft bill for the law

---

67 See Julia Roos, “Racist Hysteria to Pragmatic Rapprochement? The German Debate about Rhenish ‘Occupation Children’, 1920–1930,” *Contemporary European History* 22, no. 2 (2013): 161.

68 Pommerin, “*Sterilisierung der Rheinlandbastarde*”, 23.

69 See Pommerin, “*Sterilisierung der Rheinlandbastarde*”, 26.

70 See Pommerin, “*Sterilisierung der Rheinlandbastarde*”, 28.

71 See Pommerin, “*Sterilisierung der Rheinlandbastarde*”, 27.

72 See Pommerin, “*Sterilisierung der Rheinlandbastarde*”, 37, 40.

73 Pommerin, “*Sterilisierung der Rheinlandbastarde*”, 40.

74 See Pommerin, “*Sterilisierung der Rheinlandbastarde*”, 40.



included Eugen Fischer and Hermann Muckermann (1877–1962), a Catholic theologian, former Jesuit priest and head of the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute's eugenics department,<sup>75</sup> who would later be Walter Kirchner's doctoral supervisor. The draft bill laid the groundwork for the passing of the *Law for the Prevention of Hereditarily Diseased Offspring* [Gesetz zur Verhütung erbkranken Nachwuchses] in 1933, which allowed the forced sterilisation of 'genetically defective' ['erblich belastet'] individuals. This law was not used on the Rhenish 'Mischling' children, but the National Socialist regime's interest in a quick 'solution to the problem' is clear from the fact that the Prussian interior minister commissioned a statistical survey of the offspring of colonial soldiers. Since this quantitative survey alone did not 'prove' that these children were 'intellectually substandard', it was accompanied by an anthropological study conducted by Wolfgang Abel (1905–1997) in July 1933. He was supposed to establish, or himself wished to establish, "whether it could be determined on the basis of appearance what race the fathers belonged to" and "how the bastard children compared with average German children in terms of their state of health and intellectual capacities".<sup>76</sup> The study focused on Wiesbaden and the borough of Biebrich, which was incorporated in 1926, because a large number of children of occupation soldiers were registered there. Of the forty-four children living in Wiesbaden and the two living in Biebrich, some were excluded because their fathers were *white*.<sup>77</sup> That left a group of thirty-three children, spanning a wide range of ages: twenty-seven children aged seven to thirteen each had a Moroccan father, six aged five to nine a Vietnamese one.<sup>78</sup> Abel's methodology was similar to Fischer's. The children were meticulously measured and photographed, with Abel showing a marked interest in "negroid nose shapes" and "Mongolian folds".<sup>79</sup> For records of the children's health, he referred to health questionnaires administered by the Wiesbaden school physician,<sup>80</sup> which among other things documented the children's behaviour at home and at school and their educational attainment compared with their class as a whole.<sup>81</sup> The children

---

75 See Hans-Walter Schmuhl, "Hermann Muckermann: Ein Akteur im Spannungsfeld von Wissenschaft, Öffentlichkeit und Politik," *Römische Quartalschrift für Christliche Altertumskunde und Kirchengeschichte* 109, no. 1–2 (2014): 249.

76 Wolfgang Abel, "Über Europäer-Marokkaner und Europäer-Annamiten-Kreuzungen," *Zeitschrift für Morphologie und Anthropologie* 36, no. 2 (1937): 312.

77 See Abel, "Über Europäer-Marokkaner und Europäer-Annamiten-Kreuzungen," 312.

78 See Abel, "Über Europäer-Marokkaner und Europäer-Annamiten-Kreuzungen," 313, 315.

79 Abel, "Über Europäer-Marokkaner und Europäer-Annamiten-Kreuzungen," 316, 317.

80 Abel 'profited' from the assistance of a whole series of 'local 'radical detectives': politicians, doctors, school councillors, teachers. Julia Roos, "Constructing Racial Visibility: Biracial 'Occupation Children' in the Third Reich, 1933–1937," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 37, no. 1 (2023), 3.

81 See Abel, "Über Europäer-Marokkaner und Europäer-Annamiten-Kreuzungen," 321.

had remarkably poor health, with frequent occurrences of rickets and tuberculosis, which Abel immediately ascribed to their “paternal heritage”;<sup>82</sup> environmental factors such as poor living conditions or malnutrition were not considered an adequate explanation. By contrast, psychological problems that manifested at an early age, such as “night crying, nail-biting, twitching eyelids [and] speech defects”, were attributed to the children’s mothers,<sup>83</sup> who according to Abel were likewise “not exactly of the best stock [Erbe]”.<sup>84</sup> Abel did not provide any facts about the social origins and precarious economic situation of the mostly single mothers,<sup>85</sup> but with remarks such as that about their ‘stock’ he did stoke resentment against ‘dissolute’ women who had been intimate with ‘men of a foreign race’ [‘Fremdrassige’] and therefore lacked a resolute National Socialist ‘racial consciousness’ [‘Rasbewusstsein’]. Noting the “frequent psychopathies of Jews”, Abel also drew a connection between the question of ‘racial mixing’ between Blacks and *whites* on the one hand and the ‘Jewish question’ on the other.<sup>86</sup> The concept of ‘host peoples’ [‘Wirtsvölker’] presented both Jewish and Black people as ‘blood-sucking parasites’ on the ‘body of the German people’.<sup>87</sup>

To ascertain the intellectual capacity of the colonial soldiers’ children, the report cards of all the children in their classes were analysed. The number of documents that were analysed sounds impressive – “1,500 report cards from 993 school-children”<sup>88</sup> – but there were only report cards for twenty-seven ‘Mischling’ children, so the comparison appears to have little informative value. Although Abel himself admitted that his findings were not statistically significant, he still claimed that the children’s performance was substandard on average and believed this was supported by Robert Yerkes’s 1921 study on adult *white* and ‘coloured’ army recruits.<sup>89</sup>

The German-Moroccan children’s behaviour was judged to be very poor. However, Abel did not observe the children’s behaviour in the classroom himself, but relied on statements from teachers and welfare workers, who claimed that the children were difficult or impossible to teach and exhibited “disobedience, disorderliness, a preference for street life, great excitability and violent tempers”. The

---

82 Abel, “Über Europäer-Marokkaner und Europäer-Annamiten-Kreuzungen,” 321.

83 Abel, “Über Europäer-Marokkaner und Europäer-Annamiten-Kreuzungen,” 321.

84 Abel, “Über Europäer-Marokkaner und Europäer-Annamiten-Kreuzungen,” 324.

85 For a good account of the precarious living conditions of ‘occupation mothers’ and their children, see Roos, “Racist Hysteria to Pragmatic Rapprochement?” 164–165.

86 Abel, “Über Europäer-Marokkaner und Europäer-Annamiten-Kreuzungen,” 324.

87 Abel, “Über Europäer-Marokkaner und Europäer-Annamiten-Kreuzungen,” 328.

88 Abel, “Über Europäer-Marokkaner und Europäer-Annamiten-Kreuzungen,” 325.

89 See Abel, “Über Europäer-Marokkaner und Europäer-Annamiten-Kreuzungen,” 327–328.

German-Vietnamese children, by contrast, were considered “obedient and easy to teach”.<sup>90</sup> It is doubtful that Abel would have come to more positive conclusions had he conducted the observations himself, given that he did not even notice the considerable age gap between his two study groups. The oldest German-Moroccan children had already begun puberty, during which a certain rebelliousness against adult authority figures can be observed in almost all children.

Abel did not advance any policy solutions to the ‘Mischling problem’ in this publication, but from 1937 onwards he (as did Fischer) served as an anthropological expert for committees that decided on the sterilisation of ‘Rhineland bastards’. The sterilisations were carried out in a secret operation coordinated by the Gestapo in Berlin.<sup>91</sup>

Finally, it remains to be said that racial hygienic ideas were not an ‘invention’ of German colonialism, nor of National Socialism. The only thing unique about National Socialism was the ‘bureaucratic efficiency’ with which life-destroying ‘racial hygiene’ practices were implemented. ‘Racial hygiene’, eugenics in English-speaking context, which saw itself as an applied science from the very beginning, was a globally networked and received science. Its “norm-setting effect” unfolded primarily in Protestant countries, including Scandinavia, Germany and the United States.<sup>92</sup> It thus also found a hearing in democratic states, even in politically left-wing and feminist circles.<sup>93</sup> Forced sterilisation of people with disabilities, minorities and the urban poor was also used in countries such as democratic Sweden and in some states of the United States, for example Indiana and California.<sup>94</sup> But in no other Western country did eugenics become a state-privileged instrument for enforcing unprecedented crimes against people with disabilities and people labelled as ‘racially inferior’.

---

90 Abel, “Über Europäer-Marokkaner und Europäer-Annamiten-Kreuzungen,” 327.

91 Pommerin, “Sterilisierung der Rheinlandbastarde,” 78. Pages 79–82 describe specific cases in which Fischer and Abel acted as experts.

92 Marc Frey, “Eugenik in Deutschland und den Vereinigten Staaten, 1900 bis 1933,” in *Rassismus in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, ed. Ina Ulrike Paul and Sylvia Schraut (Berlin et al.: Peter Lang, 2018), 284–285.

93 See Ann Taylor Allen, “Feminism and Eugenics in France and Germany, 1918–1940: A Comparative Perspective,” in *Bildungsgeschichten. Geschlecht, Religion und Pädagogik in der Moderne*, ed. Meike Sophia Baader, Helga Kelle and Elke Kleinau (Cologne/Weimar/Vienna: Böhlau, 2006), 159–177.

94 See Claudia Roesch, *Wunsch Kinder. Eine transnationale Geschichte der Familienplanung in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2021), 9–10.

## Anthropological discourse in the early Federal Republic

After the fall of the National Socialist dictatorship and the mass murder of European Jews, it was no longer politically viable to link the ‘race question’ to the ‘Jewish question’, as Abel had done. Studies conducted in the 1950s concentrated on children with African American fathers, even though the fact that French colonial troops were once again stationed on German soil presented an opportunity for a comparison with the first generation of German ‘Mischling’ children. Julia Roos has shown that senior figures working in (social) science, youth and welfare services were well aware of the forced sterilisation of these children, especially as many of them had not just supported the sterilisation programme in the 1930s but been actively involved in it.<sup>95</sup> However, in academic discourse the first generation of ‘Mischling’ children were usually talked about as though they were “an extinct species”.<sup>96</sup>

The researchers who conducted studies on ‘mixed-race children’ in the 1950s had not begun their academic careers under National Socialism, but their doctoral theses were supervised by veteran eugenicists such as Hermann Muckermann, who in the Weimar Republic had contributed “like no other to publicly disseminating the idea of eugenics.”<sup>97</sup> He was also perhaps the best known proponent of Catholic eugenics, and the National Socialists refused to work with him despite his declared willingness to do so, so he was forced to stand down from his post at the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute. His reputation untarnished, he made a comeback with the founding of the Institute for Natural and Humanistic Anthropology in Berlin in 1947. However, the institute had no scholarly impact of note, and so was dissolved in 1961.<sup>98</sup>

Kirchner was one of Muckermann’s doctoral students. In his thesis, submitted to the Free University of Berlin in 1952, Kirchner fails to convincingly distance himself from the crimes committed against ‘Mischling’ children during the National Socialist period. He claims that discrimination exists “wherever people of mixed race live individually or in small groups within a pure-race population”.<sup>99</sup> Despite speaking of “personal suffering and misfortune”, and saying that “all notions of humanity and morality” had been “jettisoned”, he does not name those responsible

---

95 See Julia Roos, “The Race to Forget? Bi-Racial Descendants of the First Rhineland Occupation in 1950s West German Debates about the Children of African American GIs,” *German History* 37, no. 4 (2019): 525–526.

96 Roos, “The Race to Forget?”, 527.

97 Schmuhl, “Hermann Muckermann,” 242.

98 Schmuhl, “Hermann Muckermann,” 255.

99 Kirchner, “Eine anthropologische Studie an Mulattenkindern,” 36.

for the crimes against Black German children but simply says it all happened “for reasons of pure power politics”.<sup>100</sup> Nor does he say anything about science and scholarship's part in the National Socialists' atrocities. Moreover, the seamless transition he makes to the topic of racial discrimination in the United States makes it seem as if the handling there was comparable to the National Socialists'. This uncritical treatment of the National Socialist past was not uncommon in post-war scholarship. Wider critical engagement with that history only began in the early 1990s.<sup>101</sup>

Kirchner began to work on his thesis at the time when the oldest 'occupation children' were about to begin school, and politicians and educational experts were discussing how to integrate the Black German children into the Federal Republic's school system.<sup>102</sup> Against this backdrop, his study sought to offer solutions to pressing contemporary issues in education policy, and that aim came even more to the fore in the articles he published subsequently. He does not explain why he chose Black German 'occupation children' in Berlin for his study, given that he could have studied a far larger group of children in the American occupation zone in southern Germany, but it may have been for purely pragmatic reasons. A table showing an age breakdown of the study group<sup>103</sup> indicates that it was only the youngest of the Berlin children, aged one to six, whose fathers were African American soldiers. This is corroborated by the biographical profiles given of some of the older children, whose fathers are described as “showmen” who came from the former German colonies of Togo and Cameroon or were of unknown origin.<sup>104</sup> In his writings, Kirchner developed a research paradigm that rejects the Gobineauian theory of “higher and lower races” but still maintains the existence of human ‘races’ with special aptitudes for certain tasks or activities,<sup>105</sup> so from his perspec-

---

**100** Kirchner, “Eine anthropologische Studie an Mulattenkindern,” 36.

**101** With regard to the discipline of history, see Götz Aly, “Theodor Schieder, Werner Conze oder Die Vorstufen der physischen Vernichtung,” in *Deutsche Historiker im Nationalsozialismus*, ed. Winfried Schulze and Otto Gerhard Oexle (Frankfurt a. M.: Fischer TB, 1999), 163–182. With regard to educational science, see Wolfgang Klafki and Johanna-Luise Brockmann, *Geisteswissenschaftliche Pädagogik und Nationalsozialismus: Herman Nohl und seine 'Göttinger Schule', 1932–1937* (Weinheim: Beltz, 2002).

**102** See Elke Kleinau and Rafaela Schmid, “Das ‘fremde’ Kind: ‘Besatzungskinder’ im pädagogischen Diskurs der Nachkriegszeit,” in *Bildungsphilosophische Reflexionen und machttheoretische Studien*, ed. Markus Rieger-Ladich, Rita Casale and Christiane Thompson (Weinheim and Basel: Beltz Juventa, 2020), 211–227.

**103** See Kirchner, “Eine anthropologische Studie an Mulattenkindern,” 4.

**104** Kirchner, “Eine anthropologische Studie an Mulattenkindern,” 49, 50, 52.

**105** See Kirchner, “Eine anthropologische Studie an Mulattenkindern,” 3; Walter Kirchner, “Untersuchung somatischer und psychischer Entwicklung bei Europäer-Neger-Mischlingen im Kleinkind-

tive it made sense to “draw attention to [...] the heterogeneity of races and the resultant consequences of racial mixing”.<sup>106</sup> He specifically praises Eugen Fischer as a pioneer in this field,<sup>107</sup> and later makes several references to Abel’s work. But he does not mention that both Fischer and Abel explicitly supported the theory of ‘higher and lower races’. Although, making reference to Muckermann’s post-war publications, Kirchner does endorse the shared humanity of all ‘races’,<sup>108</sup> he also (again following Muckermann) regards “efforts to avoid distorting a people’s quintessential character [das Eigenartige eines Volkes] by inserting racial admixtures [Rassengemische] of a wholly different kind into that people’ as justified”.<sup>109</sup> ‘Racial mixing’ leads, in his view, to problems “that weigh most heavily on the Mischlinge themselves”. His work was intended to prevent the children “from becoming socially extraneous elements [soziale Fremdkörper] in our nation [Volk]” once they reached adulthood.<sup>110</sup>

Berlin’s Central Youth Bureau [Hauptjugendamt] and State Health Bureau [Landesgesundheitsamt] gave Kirchner access to the health and child welfare records of forty-four children aged six or under. He also referred to reports from care homes and nurseries, conducted interviews with family welfare and health-care workers and made contact with the children’s mothers to obtain their consent to a developmental assessment of their children. As well as conducting detailed physical measurements of the twenty-three children whose mothers gave their consent, Kirchner used a method developed by the psychologist Hildegard Hetzer (1899–1991) to evaluate young children’s psychological development.<sup>111</sup>

In the spirit of traditional anthropology, Kirchner’s study aimed to determine the children’s “biological capability [biologische Leistungsfähigkeit]”. To do so, it was necessary to examine “firstly the social milieu in which the Mischling [was] being raised, and secondly individual inherited traits that had entered into the mix apart from the racial ones [die rassistischen Eigenschaften]”.<sup>112</sup> However, since almost no specific details could be learned about the fathers, Kirchner

---

alter unter Berücksichtigung der sozialen Verhältnisse,” in *Studien aus dem Institut für natur- und geisteswissenschaftliche Anthropologie Berlin-Dahlem*, ed. Hermann Muckermann (Berlin: first report August 30, 1952), 29.

106 Kirchner, “Eine anthropologische Studie an Mulattenkindern,” 29.

107 Kirchner, “Eine anthropologische Studie an Mulattenkindern,” 1.

108 Kirchner, “Eine anthropologische Studie an Mulattenkindern,” 3; Kirchner, “Untersuchung somatischer und psychischer Entwicklung,” 29.

109 Kirchner, “Eine anthropologische Studie an Mulattenkindern,” 3–4.

110 Kirchner, “Untersuchung somatischer und psychischer Entwicklung,” 29.

111 Hildegard Hetzer is a politically controversial figure due to her involvement in assessing Polish children’s ‘racial fitness’ for Germanisation.

112 Kirchner, “Untersuchung somatischer und psychischer Entwicklung,” 29.

drew on a 1928 study by Melville J. Herskovits that documented the diverse 'racial' composition of African Americans, who according to the study also had *white* and native American ancestry.<sup>113</sup> Kirchner does not discuss the reasons for this 'diverse mixing of races', but it was likely due among other factors to the power that *white* male slave owners had over the sexuality of 'their' female slaves. Since there were very few 'pure' African Americans, Kirchner concludes that the majority of the Berlin children in his study were likely "back-crossings to the European side".<sup>114</sup> He worked on the premise that, as members "of coloured units", the fathers of the 'occupation children' "surely represented a select group", since presumably "the United States required its soldiers to meet certain standards of health and intelligence".<sup>115</sup> In the thesis, Kirchner admits that he has no information about the US Army's physical examinations, but assumes it "would not have accepted anyone morally unworthy, i. e. convicts and the like".<sup>116</sup> A lot of what he says is speculative, for instance his claim that it was "originally [the soldiers'] honest desire [...] to marry a German woman" and so they had placed "certain requirements" on the woman they chose, meaning that the German women likewise represented "a not unfavourable selection".<sup>117</sup> Why this marked emphasis on the positive selection of the African American soldiers and, albeit in more qualified terms, the German women? It does not tally with the many known motives for sexual relations between occupying soldiers and local women,<sup>118</sup> with the precarious living conditions of the children, most of whom were growing up without their biological fathers, or with the slurs levelled by *white* German mainstream society at women who had 'succumbed to the advances' of Black men. But according to Kirchner, the women had faced no discrimination in Berlin, where the occupying troops were seen not "as enemies" but "as a protection from the Communist threat".<sup>119</sup> After relations broke down between the former Allies almost as soon as the Second World War had ended, Berlin found itself on the front lines of the Cold War. It would have been highly imprudent at that time to denigrate the US soldiers, who were seen as guarantors of Western freedom, and Kirchner took the oppor-

---

113 Kirchner speaks of an "Indian strain" [indianischer Einschlag]. Kirchner, "Eine anthropologische Studie an Mulattenkindern," 7; Kirchner, "Untersuchung somatischer und psychischer Entwicklung," 30.

114 Kirchner, "Eine anthropologische Studie an Mulattenkindern," 7.

115 Kirchner, "Untersuchung somatischer und psychischer Entwicklung," 31.

116 Kirchner, "Eine anthropologische Studie an Mulattenkindern," 12.

117 Kirchner, "Eine anthropologische Studie an Mulattenkindern," 11.

118 See Elke Kleinau and Rafaela Schmid, "'Occupation Children' in Germany after World War II – Problems and Coping Strategies," *Children & Society* 33, no. 3 (2019): 239.

119 Kirchner, "Untersuchung somatischer und psychischer Entwicklung," 31.



tunity to demonstrate a reformed attitude on ‘questions of race’ by positively distinguishing members of the Western defence forces from the ‘uncivilised black hordes’ of the 1920s. Kirchner believed the differences he found when comparing his findings on the health of the Berlin children with the data Abel had collected on German-Moroccan children could be explained by “differences of milieu and circumstances” at the time of the children’s conception. Only women from the “lowest social classes, in some cases probably even ones who were genetically deficient [erblich belastet] and social outsiders [Asoziale]”, had had sexual relations with the colonial soldiers, “who probably also represented a very unfavourable selection”.<sup>120</sup> Kirchner is here echoing Abel’s remark that the mothers were ‘not exactly of the best stock’. Expressions such as ‘probably’ (in original German ‘wahrscheinlich’ or ‘vermutlich’) do not imply a basis in empirical evidence.

Kirchner had contradictory things to say about the children’s physical health. In his thesis, he comments that the children “had been born and raised in an economically difficult time when food was scarce” but also that it could be assumed that “their standard of living [was] above average for the population”, as “the mothers mostly [...] [lived off] financial contributions from the occupying soldiers”.<sup>121</sup> Did Kirchner learn this by asking the mothers of the children in the study? Or was this information contained in the child welfare records? Kirchner gives no answer. He only says that support was provided by fathers “who were still in contact with the child’s mother”.<sup>122</sup> Although the title of Kirchner’s thesis grandly proclaims that it will take account of social conditions, the details given about the mothers’ and their children’s social conditions are extremely vague, even as Kirchner gives over whole pages to tables of figures, calculations of correlations between the children’s heights, weights, physical proportions and data on hair colour and hair type. For comparison, he uses a study of Swiss children, a 1927 study by Herskovits on “American mulattoes [Negermischlinge]” and unpublished data on *white* Berlin children provided by the Robert Koch Institute.<sup>123</sup>

Before presenting his own findings on the children’s psychological development, Kirchner outlines the current state of research, starting with Robert Yerkes’s 1921 study on the intelligence of soldiers, which Abel had earlier used as proof of the “substandard intelligence of North and South American negroes and mulattoes compared with Europeans”.<sup>124</sup> Neither Abel nor Kirchner reflect on the methods Yerkes used to obtain his results. Kirchner found further confirmation of Yerkes’s

---

120 Kirchner, “Eine anthropologische Studie an Mulattenkindern,” 35.

121 Kirchner, “Eine anthropologische Studie an Mulattenkindern,” 15.

122 Kirchner, “Untersuchung somatischer und psychischer Entwicklung,” 31.

123 Kirchner, “Eine anthropologische Studie an Mulattenkindern,” 33.

124 Abel, “Über Europäer-Marokkaner- und Europäer-Annamiten-Kreuzungen,” 328.



assertion of the “lower intelligence of coloureds”<sup>125</sup> in Abel’s findings on the poor educational attainment of German-Moroccan children and in a German colonial-era study by Erich Franke (1915), which concluded that “negro children have a developmental advantage over European children until the onset of puberty” but that this advantage ceases after that point and “Europeans [...] soon [surpass] negroes with their superior intellectual abilities”.<sup>126</sup>

It is telling to note how Kirchner connected his own work on developmental psychology, which he conducted using Hetzer’s developmental quotients, to existing research. Hetzer’s tests were originally calibrated for Viennese children, for whom an average value of 1.0 had been calculated. For *white* Berlin children, Hetzer had only assumed an average developmental quotient of 0.93. For his study group, Kirchner found “an above-average developmental quotient of 1.03”,<sup>127</sup> which entailed that the ‘Mischling’ children had a “not inconsiderable developmental advantage” over *white* Berlin and Viennese children.<sup>128</sup> In his unpublished thesis, Kirchner directly refers to the aforementioned study by Franke and takes the view that this advantage would “probably stop at puberty” and that the Black children’s “intellectual capacity would likely [...] remain modest”.<sup>129</sup> He does not directly draw this conclusion in published works, but his finding about the Black children’s developmental advantage is immediately followed by a discussion of the areas where they were inferior to *white* children. Kirchner claims the Black children lacked bodily control, which appears to contradict the claim that they possessed “great skill in gymnastics” and took “inordinate pleasure in movement”.<sup>130</sup> However, he believes this no contradiction, as the “deficient bodily control” was caused not by “clumsiness, but by a factor in the volitional sphere, namely in a marked lack of readiness for action [Einsatzbereitschaft]”.<sup>131</sup> He also says that the children lacked perseverance and “care [Sorgfalt]”,<sup>132</sup> had a “superficial” grasp of tasks and displayed “a certain haphazardness [Willkür]” in their approach to problem-solving.<sup>133</sup> Where Kirchner does ascribe positive traits to the children, we find some well-known racist stereotypes. He emphasises the children’s good “linguistic memory” combined with a “sensitivity to [...] rhythm, intonation,

---

125 Kirchner, “Untersuchung somatischer und psychischer Entwicklung,” 33.

126 Kirchner, “Untersuchung somatischer und psychischer Entwicklung,” 36.

127 Kirchner, “Untersuchung somatischer und psychischer Entwicklung,” 36.

128 Kirchner, “Eine anthropologische Studie an Mulattenkindern,” 45.

129 Kirchner, “Eine anthropologische Studie an Mulattenkindern,” 62.

130 Kirchner, “Eine anthropologische Studie an Mulattenkindern,” 46.

131 Kirchner, “Eine anthropologische Studie an Mulattenkindern,” 46.

132 Kirchner, “Eine anthropologische Studie an Mulattenkindern,” 47.

133 Kirchner, “Eine anthropologische Studie an Mulattenkindern,” 46.

rhyme” and “an exceptional talent for music”, which Kirchner regards as an “inherited negroid trait”.<sup>134</sup> In the late 1950s, a team led by Klaus Eyferth conducted a survey of the German population in which these stereotypes turned out to be shared by many respondents, and the most commonly mentioned future careers for Black children were ones in the entertainment industry.<sup>135</sup> Kirchner also praises the children’s “ready and quick contact-making”<sup>136</sup> but just a few lines later this has mutated into an “excessive need for affection [Anlehnungsbedürfnis]” and a “heightened egotism [Geltungsbedürfnis] revealed in a constant desire for recognition”.<sup>137</sup> Across all traits, Kirchner sees clear evidence of “a strong dominance of instinctual urges”, which would pose “certain risks” when the children started school.<sup>138</sup> Finally, the published text, just like the unpublished one, suggests that the Black children’s developmental advantage would not last, since (to paraphrase Fischer) the *white* children would be more tenacious and persistent in pursuing their goals.

## Conclusion

Fischer’s and Abel’s anthropological research on ‘racial mixing’ provided scientific legitimation for racist ideologies, originally those of colonialism and later those underpinning National Socialist ‘race’ and population policy. Fischer’s ideas about ‘racial mixing’ causing ‘racial degeneration’ fed into the *Law for the Prevention of Hereditarily Diseased Offspring* and the *Nuremberg Laws*, in particular the *Blood Protection Act*, which served to legitimise notions of the ‘racial’ superiority of Germany over people of ‘foreign race’, such as Black, Slavic and Jewish people.<sup>139</sup> Aside from their scholarly work, both Fischer and Abel served as experts on committees that decided on the forced sterilisation of Black German ‘occupation children’. Just like other academic disciplines, anthropology made no attempt after 1945 to face up to its complicity in the crimes of the National Socialist regime. Many proponents of ‘racial hygiene’ managed to whitewash their reputations by

---

134 Kirchner, “Eine anthropologische Studie an Mulattenkindern,” 47.

135 See Klaus Eyferth, Ursula Brandt and Wolfgang Hawel, *Farbige Kinder in Deutschland: Die Situation der Mischlingskinder und die Aufgabe ihrer Eingliederung* (Munich: Juventa, 1960), 77.

136 Kirchner, “Eine anthropologische Studie an Mulattenkindern,” 47.

137 Kirchner, “Eine anthropologische Studie an Mulattenkindern,” 48.

138 Kirchner, “Untersuchung somatischer und psychischer Entwicklung,” 36.

139 The law introduced the new offence of racial defilement. See Alexandra Przyrembel, ‘Rassenschande’. *Reinheitsmythos und Vernichtungslegitimation im Nationalsozialismus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003).

claiming that the discipline had been 'politically misused', and they were able to secure "for their discipline the continuity of 'objective' research [...] without critically analysing that discipline itself".<sup>140</sup> A fresh start was only be possible after "the careers of the major racial hygienists" came to their "biographical end", which took the form of a "perfectly ordinary transition from one generation to the next, quietly and without fuss".<sup>141</sup>

It is notable that all the studies analysed here, including Kirchner's, derive psychological and political conclusions based on racist, preconceived views from precise scientific measurements. Abel and Kirchner worked with very small study groups but drew far-reaching generalisations from their results. Their conclusions were also contradictory. For instance, Fischer began his study by casting doubt on the idea that anyone was 'racially pure', even members of European peoples, but this did not prevent him or his successors from imagining a 'natural racial barrier' between Black and *white* that had to be respected if one did not wish to risk the survival (though presumably they really meant the privileges) of the *white* 'race'. Anthropological research on Black German children after 1945 by no means marked a clean break with earlier scholarship. Kirchner made no mention of Fischer's and Abel's theoretical and practical involvement in the National Socialist regime's forced sterilisation programme, and for the interpretation of his results he drew uncritically on his predecessors' studies and reproduced their racist ideas.

The partial renunciation of colonialist and National Socialist ideas, which Fehrenbach attests to Kirchner with her discontinuity thesis, can at best be attributed to the changes in Germany's foreign policy situation as it moved from a hot to a cold war. More precisely, one must differentiate here between the policies of the Federal Republic and the GDR. While there were officially no 'occupation children' in the GDR for reasons of the much-invoked German-Soviet friendship, the Federal Republic staged itself as the purified, better Germany, as a bastion in the fight against communism. Kirchner's positive reference to Black US soldiers was intended to demonstrate support for Western values. But even his concluding acknowledgement of the "humanity" inherent to "every human being"<sup>142</sup> cannot disguise the fact that he accorded 'objective' status to racist research from the National Socialist and colonial eras and so attempted to confer legitimacy on it.

---

140 Weingart, Kroll and Bayertz, *Rasse, Blut und Gene*, 582.

141 Weingart, Kroll and Bayertz, *Rasse, Blut und Gene*, 580. Abel appears to have been one of the few anthropologists who was not de-nazified in 1945, due to his extensive involvement in 'racial hygienist' reports for the SS, the army high command and so forth, and so was forced to vacate his chair in 'racial biology' at the University of Berlin.

142 Kirchner, "Eine anthropologische Studie an Mulattenkindern," 62.

## References

### Sources

- Abel, Wolfgang. "Über Europäer-Marokkaner- und Europäer-Annamiten-Kreuzungen." *Zeitschrift für Morphologie und Anthropologie* 36, no. 2 (1937): 311–329.
- Eyferth, Klaus, Ursula Brandt, and Wolfgang Hawel. *Farbige Kinder in Deutschland: Die Situation der Mischlingskinder und die Aufgabe ihrer Eingliederung*. Munich: Juventa, 1960.
- Fischer, Eugen. *Die Rehobother Bastards und das Bastardisierungsproblem beim Menschen: Anthropologische und ethnographische Studien am Rehobother Bastardvolk in Deutsch-Südwest-Afrika*. Jena: Gustav Fischer, 2013.
- Kirchner, Walter. "Eine anthropologische Studie an Mulattenkindern in Berlin unter Berücksichtigung der sozialen Verhältnisse." PhD diss., Free University Berlin, 1952.
- Kirchner, Walter. "Untersuchung somatischer und psychischer Entwicklung bei Europäer-Neger-Mischlingen im Kleinkindalter unter Berücksichtigung der sozialen Verhältnisse." In *Studien aus dem Institut für natur- und geisteswissenschaftliche Anthropologie Berlin-Dahlem*, edited by Hermann Muckermann, 29–36. Berlin: first report August 30, 1952.
- Sieg, Rudolf. *Mischlingskinder in Westdeutschland: Festschrift für Frédéric Falkenburger*. Baden-Baden: Verlag für Kunst und Wissenschaft, 1956.

### Literature

- Allen, Ann Taylor. "Feminism and Eugenics in France and Germany, 1918–1940: A Comparative Perspective." In *Bildungsgeschichten. Geschlecht, Religion und Pädagogik in der Moderne*, edited by Meike S. Baader, Helga Kelle, and Elke Kleinau, 159–177. Cologne/Weimar/Vienna: Böhlau, 2006.
- Aly, Götz. "Theodor Schieder, Werner Conze oder Die Vorstufen der physischen Vernichtung." In *Deutsche Historiker im Nationalsozialismus*, edited by Winfried Schulze and Otto Gerhard Oexle, 163–182. Frankfurt a. M.: Fischer TB, 1999.
- Becker, Frank. "Die 'Bastardheime' der Mission: Zum Status der Mischlinge in der kolonialen Gesellschaft Deutsch-Südwestafrikas." In *Rassenmischehen – Mischlinge – Rassentrennung: Zur Politik der Rasse im deutschen Kolonialreich*, edited by Frank Becker, 184–213. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2004.
- Campt, Tina, and Pascal Grosse. "'Mischlingskinder' in Nachkriegsdeutschland: Zum Verhältnis von Psychologie, Anthropologie und Gesellschaftspolitik nach 1945." *Psychologie und Geschichte* 6, no. 1–2 (1994): 48–76.
- Etzemüller, Thomas. *Auf der Suche nach dem Nordischen Menschen*. Bielefeld: transcript, 2015.
- Fehrenbach, Heide. "'Ami-Liebchen' und 'Mischlingskinder': Rasse, Geschlecht und Kultur in der deutsch-amerikanischen Begegnung". In *Nachkrieg in Deutschland*, edited by Klaus Neumann, 178–205. Hamburg: Hamburger edition, 2001.
- Fehrenbach, Heide. "'Farbige' Besatzungskinder in der westdeutschen Nachkriegsgesellschaft." In *Besatzungskinder: Die Nachkommen alliierter Soldaten in Österreich und Deutschland*, edited by Barbara Stelzl-Marx and Silke Satjukow, 294–320. Vienna/Cologne/Weimar: Böhlau, 2015.

- Frey, Marc. "Eugenik in Deutschland und den Vereinigten Staaten, 1900 bis 1933." In *Rassismus in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, edited by Ina Ulrike Paul and Sylvia Schraut, 283–314. Berlin/Bern/Brussels/New York/Warsaw/Vienna: Peter Lang, 2018.
- Gippert, Wolfgang, and Elke Kleinau. *Bildungsreisende und Arbeitsmigrantinnen: Auslandserfahrungen deutscher Lehrerinnen zwischen nationaler und internationaler Orientierung (1850–1920)*. Cologne/Weimar/Vienna: Böhlau, 2014.
- Ha, Kien Nghi. *Unrein und vermischt: Postkoloniale Grenzgänge durch die Kulturgeschichte der Hybridität und der kolonialen "Rassenbastarde"*. Bielefeld: transcript, 2010.
- Klafki, Wolfgang, and Johanna-Luise Brockmann. *Geisteswissenschaftliche Pädagogik und Nationalsozialismus: Herman Nohl und seine 'Göttinger Schule', 1932–1937*. Weinheim: Beltz, 2002.
- Kleinau, Elke, and Rafaela Schmid. "'Occupation Children' in Germany after World War II – Problems and Coping Strategies." *Children & Society* 33, no.3 (2019): 239–252.
- Kleinau, Elke, and Lilli Riettiens. "'Nature' in German colonial literature for children and young people." *History of Education* 49, no. 4 (2020): 450–451.
- Kleinau, Elke, and Rafaela Schmid. "Das 'fremde' Kind: 'Besatzungskinder' im pädagogischen Diskurs der Nachkriegszeit." In *Bildungsphilosophische Reflexionen und machtheoretische Studien*, edited by Markus Rieger-Ladich, Rita Casale, and Christiane Thompson, 211–227. Weinheim/Basel: Beltz Juventa, 2020.
- Kundrus, Birthe. "'Die Farbe der Ehe': Zur Debatte um die kolonialen Mischehen im Deutschen Kaiserreich." In *Geschlechterdiskurse zwischen Fiktion und Faktizität*, edited by Waltraud Ernst and Ulrike Bohle, 135–151. Münster: LIT, 2006.
- Lemke Muniz de Faria, Yara-Colette. *Zwischen Fürsorge und Ausgrenzung: Afrodeutsche 'Besatzungskinder' im Nachkriegsdeutschland*. Berlin: Metropol, 2002.
- Maß, Sandra. *Weißer Helden, schwarze Krieger: Zur Geschichte kolonialer Männlichkeit in Deutschland, 1918–1964*. Cologne/Weimar/Vienna: Böhlau, 2006.
- Nduka-Agwu, Adibeli, and Wendy Sutherland. "'Schwarze, Schwarze Deutsche.' In *Rassismus auf gut Deutsch: Ein kritisches Nachschlagewerk zu rassistischen Sprachhandlungen*, edited by Adibeli Nduka-Agwu and Antje Lann Hornscheidt, 85–90. Frankfurt a. M.: Brandes & Apsel, 2013.
- Pommerin, Reiner. "'Sterilisierung der Rheinlandbastarde': Das Schicksal einer farbigen deutschen Minderheit, 1918–1937." Düsseldorf: Droste, 1979.
- Przyrembel, Alexandra. "'Rassenschande': Reinheitsmythos und Vernichtungslegitimation im Nationalsozialismus." Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003.
- Rhiel, Amalie. "Untersuchungen zur Anthropologie und Konstitution der deutschen Frau." *Zeitschrift für Morphologie und Anthropologie* 26, no. 2 (1927): 333–358. Accessed September 19, 2022. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2574895>.
- Roesch, Claudia. *Wunschkinder: Eine transnationale Geschichte der Familienplanung in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2021.
- Roos, Julia. "Racist Hysteria to Pragmatic Rapprochement? The German Debate about Rhenish 'Occupation Children', 1920–1930." *Contemporary European History* 22, no. 2 (2013): 156–180.
- Roos, Julia. "The Race to Forget? Bi-Racial Descendants of the First Rhineland Occupation in 1950s West German Debates about the Children of African American GIs." *German History* 37, no. 4 (2019): 517–539.
- Roos, Julia. "Constructing Racial Visibility: Biracial 'Occupation Children' in the Third Reich, 1933–1937." *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 37, no. 1 (2023): 2–24.

Schmuhl, Hans-Walter. "Hermann Muckermann: Ein Akteur im Spannungsfeld von Wissenschaft, Öffentlichkeit und Politik." *Römische Quartalschrift für Christliche Altertumskunde und Kirchengeschichte* 109, no. 1–2 (2014): 241–255.

Weingart, Peter, Jürgen Kroll, and Kurt Bayertz. *Rasse, Blut und Gene: Geschichte der Eugenik und Rassenhygiene in Deutschland*. Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1992.

Rafaela Schmid

# Problematised ‘Fatherlessness’: On the (Re)Production of a ‘Victim Narrative’ in ‘Occupation Children’ Research

## Introduction

In the period after the Second World War, so-called ‘occupation children’<sup>1</sup> were born in Germany and Austria from sexual encounters between local women and members of the occupying forces. For the most part, the children grew up with their biological mothers or close relatives, but usually without their biological fathers.<sup>2</sup> In accordance with the contemporary debates on family policy, these family constellations were regarded as ‘incomplete’ families,<sup>3</sup> because the father as the ‘head’ of the family caused a lack of ‘completeness’ in the sense of a traditional bourgeois family ideal. It is astonishing that in the current research discourse on ‘occupation children’ the absence of the biological father is postulated as a central problem.<sup>4</sup> After all, the ‘retraditionalisation’ of the family that took place in post-war Germany and was promoted by family policy already met with criticism in contemporary discourse, which among other things drew attention to the stigmatisation of single mothers and their children.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, since then, an acceptance of single parents and their children as complete families has taken place on the level of family policy as well as at the level of society. It seems understandable that growing up as an illegitimate child in post-war Germany should be examined as a problematic issue in research, since illegitimate births were subject to preju-

---

1 I use single inverted commas in my texts to distance myself from terms and designations. This is done with the term ‘occupation children’, because it is a prejudiced foreign-designation. Since I do not want to constantly infantilise adults by calling them ‘children’, I also use the term ‘those affected’, which refers to former ‘occupation children’, depending on the context.

2 See Statistisches Bundesamt, Wiesbaden, *Statistische Berichte: Die unehelichen Kinder von Besatzungsangehörigen im Bundesgebiet und Berlin (West)* (Wiesbaden, 1956).

3 See Barbara Schadendorf, *Uneheliche Kinder: Untersuchungen zur Entwicklung und Situation in der Grundschule* (Munich: Johann Ambrosius Barth, 1964), 19; Sybille Buske, *Fräulein Mutter und ihr Bastard: Eine Geschichte der Unehelichkeit in Deutschland 1900 bis 1970* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2004), 200–203.

4 This chapter is based on the results of my dissertation, which have not yet been published in English; see Rafaela Schmid, *Vaterdezentrierungen: Psychoanalytische Entgegnungen zum Fachdiskurs über ‘Besatzungskinder’* (Weilerswist: Velbrück, 2022).

5 See Buske, *Fräulein Mutter und ihr Bastard*.

dice and biological mothers and children were frequently stigmatised.<sup>6</sup> On the one hand, this is not a unique feature of ‘occupation children’, since illegitimate births generally increased in the post-war period of the Second World War.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, this can only ever be considered a problem in the individual case. Also to be questioned is how the topic of growing up ‘fatherless’ is dealt with or approached, which is treated as a deficit quite naturally and almost exclusively in the research discourse. ‘Fatherless’ refers only to the absence of a biological father; growing up with a stepfather or adoptive father, or with another father figure, is also dealt with under the term ‘fatherlessness’.<sup>8</sup> In the literature, the absence of a biological father is now problematised and associated with ‘incompleteness’ and ‘lack’. Furthermore, growing up ‘fatherless’ is even pathologised when, for example, so-called ‘identity crises’ are justified by researchers by the absence of a biological father. Only by getting to know their biological father, or by knowing more about him, could ‘occupation children’ close ‘gaps’ and overcome their ‘crisis-like state’. ‘Health’ is only discussed in relation to the biological father, whereby ‘occupation children’ are understood as (passive) ‘victims’ of their circumstances.

Statements of affected individuals often serve as evidence of the assumed ‘risk factor’ of ‘fatherlessness’, which are almost exclusively taken unquestioningly as ‘truths’ and, moreover, are not treated as statements by individuals, but are generally assumed to apply to the majority of ‘occupation children’. My hypothesis is that in the debate about ‘occupation children’ there is a ‘common sense’ shared by researchers and those affected to the effect that the absence of a biological father leads to deficits and psychological impairments. ‘Fatherlessness’ is accordingly psychologised. Since the vocabulary used in the discussion of ‘fatherlessness’ seems to be borrowed from psychology and psychoanalysis, I further assume that this ‘common sense’ is caused by the trivialisation of psychological concepts and psychoanalytical theory, i.e. an ‘everyday psychological understanding’ of them.

In the following, based on the results of my critical-hermeneutic reading and analysis of the ‘discourse on the fatherlessness’ of ‘occupation children’, I outline

---

<sup>6</sup> See Rosemarie Nave-Herz, *Familie heute: Wandel der Familienstrukturen und Folgen für die Erziehung* (Darmstadt: Primus-Verlag, 2007), 97–98.

<sup>7</sup> See Buske, *Fräulein Mutter und ihr Bastard*, 196.

<sup>8</sup> I use single inverted commas for the terms ‘fatherless’ and ‘fatherlessness’ because they always refer to biological and not social fatherhood. This leads me, as it were, to consistently use the adjective ‘biological’ when referring to biological parents or when the research literature does so. It is apparent in the literature on ‘occupation children’ that ‘motherhood’ and ‘fatherhood’ are often uncritically associated with biological parentage, which is particularly evident in the fact that biological parenthood remains unmarked in contrast to social parenthood.



the emergence and mechanisms of psychologisation or an 'everyday psychological understanding'. In doing so, I assume that 'fatherlessness' does not represent a 'risk factor' *per se* for the upbringing of 'occupation children',<sup>9</sup> but is constructed as a central factor in the research discourse. I elaborate how a 'victim narrative' is (re)produced, which depicts the (former) children as 'victims' of their 'fatherless' upbringing. This narrative is based on a theoretically and methodologically poorly differentiated approach to the statements of those affected, the reciprocal conditionality of researchers and researched, as well as the research on (war-related) 'fatherlessness' dominated by psychology and psychoanalysis. Finally, possibilities for action based on this critique are generated. I conclude with a discussion of possibilities for critical research on Children Born of War (CBOW) based on a discourse on contemporary witnesses from biographical research. In doing so, I discuss how, in addition to recognising the subjective life stories of CBOW and despite the sometimes existing closeness of researchers to the researched, statements can be critically analysed in accordance with good scientific practice.

## The 'discourse on fatherlessness' – a dominant narrative about 'occupation children'

An initial reading of the research literature on 'occupation children' already suggests that a one-sided image of their 'fatherlessness' dominates the discourse. It is problematised in a way that links it with psychological vulnerability. I have therefore aimed at a critical reading of the research literature focussed on 'fatherlessness'.<sup>10</sup> The topic of 'fatherlessness' is not a "pre-opinion"<sup>11</sup> that is deductively applied to texts by the researcher. Rather, the topic of 'fatherlessness' only became recognisable as a dominant topic within the literature by reading it as openly as

---

9 See Elke Kleinau and Rafaela Schmid, "Aufwachsen ohne Eltern – ein Risikofaktor für Besatzungskinder?" in *Kinder des Zweiten Weltkrieges: Stigmatisierung, Ausgrenzung, Bewältigungsstrategien*, ed. Elke Kleinau and Ingvill C. Mochmann (Frankfurt a. M.: Campus, 2016).

10 Against this background and in the course of my dissertation work, sixty-seven publications on 'occupation children' that appeared between 1994 and 2019 were initially reviewed. These are articles from professional journals and online publications, articles from anthologies and monographs. Some of the texts are in the fields of psychology, education and literature, but the majority are in the field of history. All texts that did not explicitly address the relationship between 'occupation children' and their biological fathers were excluded from the selection. What remained after this selection were forty-nine texts that were subjected to further analysis.

11 Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Vom Zirkel des Verstehens," in *Gesammelte Werke* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1993), 60. This and other following quotes have been translated by me from German into English.

possible. My interpretation of the literature was tested for its central content, for “origin and validity”, by reading it again and again<sup>12</sup> – in the sense of the hermeneutic circle or the “spiral”.<sup>13</sup> The first thing that stood out was that the topic of ‘fatherlessness’ only appeared in studies that drew on reports from those affected – the first publication to be mentioned here was the study *Welcome Ami go Home* by the historian Ingrid Bauer, published in 1998.<sup>14</sup> In addition, the research discourse is dominated by individual authors – namely the historians Barbara Stelzl-Marx, Sabine Lee, Silke Satjukow and Rainer Gries as well as the psychologists Heide Glaesmer and Marie Kaiser – whose statements on the ‘fatherlessness’ of ‘occupation children’ are repeated in their own publications and are affirmed and reproduced by other researchers.

By focussing on ‘fatherlessness’ in the analysis of the literature on ‘occupation children’, I was able to identify a dominant narrative – in which the biological father is central – which I conceptualise as the ‘discourse on the fatherlessness of occupation children’. Overall, it becomes apparent that the arguments of the researchers are, on the one hand, based on the statements of affected individuals and yet assumed to apply to all ‘occupation children’. On the other hand, the statements of those affected are simply used to emphasise the arguments of the researchers. In general, it should be noted that the oral sources used are not sufficiently substantiated with references. For example, they are described as “friendly information”,<sup>15</sup> whereby it is not clear whether this refers to an interview based on scientific standards. The underlying methodological concepts are also mostly missing or not recognisable in the analysis sections. Theoretical references that would make the researchers’ argumentation comprehensible to readers are almost completely missing in the discussion of the ‘fatherlessness’ of ‘occupation children’.<sup>16</sup>

One of the contents of the ‘discourse on fatherlessness’ I have worked out is that the absence of the biological father is interpreted as an inhibiting factor for

---

12 Gadamer, “Vom Zirkel des Verstehens.”

13 Theodor Schulze, “Zur Interpretation autobiographischer Texte in der Erziehungswissenschaftlichen Biographieforschung,” in *Handbuch Qualitative Forschungsmethoden in der Erziehungswissenschaft*, ed. Barbara Friebertshäuser, Antje Langer, and Annedore Prengel (Weinheim/Basel: Beltz Juventa, 2013), 416.

14 Ingrid Bauer, *Welcome Ami Go Home: Die Amerikanische Besatzung in Salzburg, 1945–1955. Erinnerungslandschaften Aus Einem Oral-History-Projekt* (Salzburg/Munich: Pustet, 1998).

15 Barbara Stelzl-Marx, “Freier und Befreier. Zum Beziehungsgeflecht zwischen sowjetischen Besatzungssoldaten und österreichischen Frauen,” in *Die Rote Armee in Österreich*, ed. Stefan Karner and Barbara Stelzl-Marx (Graz: Verein zur Förderung von Folgen nach Konflikten und Kriegen, 2005), 441.

16 See Schmid, *Vaterdezentrierungen*, 42.

the 'healthy' development of the children. Here, the traditional bourgeois nuclear family functions at least implicitly as the ideal family, whereas all other family constellations are identified as 'incomplete' and thus 'deficient'. In particular, the relationship between the 'left-alone', single biological mother and the 'occupation child' is problematised. The historian Sabine Lee, for example, says – without being able to substantiate this – that the fact of having grown up with “single mothers or other relatives” often led to “stigmatisation and [...] considerable psychological consequences”.<sup>17</sup> The historian Barbara Stelzl-Marx even goes so far as to claim that growing up “without their biological father [...] had not only economic but also lifelong psychological consequences”.<sup>18</sup> The historians Silke Satjukow and Reiner Gries explicitly state that 'occupation children' grew up in “incomplete families”,<sup>19</sup> mostly even in “precarious close-knit communities: with their mothers, grandparents, in foster families or foster homes”.<sup>20</sup>

However, in the 'discourse on fatherlessness', the biological mother is not only shown to be 'inadequate', but even considered to be 'harmful' to the child's psychological development – for example, if she knowingly remained silent about the biological father. This narrative in particular is dramatised within the research literature by means of the metaphor of the “wall of silence”,<sup>21</sup> which is erected by family and acquaintances around the topic of the 'biological father' and which makes it “difficult or impossible” for the 'occupation children' to “understand their own identity and come to terms with their own life path [...]”.<sup>22</sup> In addition, it is postulated that the biological mother could have transmitted her 'traumatic complexes' to the child. With regard to the trauma of the biological mother, Satjukow and Gries refer in several places to “the traumatic complex of guilt, shame and atonement”,<sup>23</sup> which the biological mothers had transmitted to their children. Guilt was transmitted to the children because the biological mothers felt guilty for getting involved with the 'enemy', shame because they had given birth to an ille-

---

17 Sabine Lee, “Kinder Amerikanischer Soldaten in Europa. Ein Vergleich der Situation britischer und deutscher Kinder,” *Historical Social Research* 34, no. 3 (2009): 342.

18 Barbara Stelzl-Marx, “Die unsichtbare Generation. Kinder sowjetischer Besatzungssoldaten in Österreich und Deutschland,” *Historical Social Research* 34, no. 3 (2009): 369.

19 Silke Satjukow and Reiner Gries, *“Bankerte!”: Besatzungskinder in Deutschland nach 1945* (Frankfurt a. M./New York: Campus, 2015), 333.

20 Satjukow and Gries, *“Bankerte!”*, 329.

21 Lee, “Kinder amerikanischer Soldaten in Europa,” 342; Stelzl-Marx, “Die unsichtbare Generation,” 365.

22 Lee, “Kinder amerikanischer Soldaten in Europa,” 342.

23 Satjukow and Gries, *“Bankerte!”*, 339.

gitimate child and atonement because they had to make amends for these transgressions.<sup>24</sup>

A weighty part of the ‘discourse on the fatherlessness’ of ‘occupation children’ is the postulation of an ‘identity crisis’ as a result of ‘fatherlessness’. Lack of knowledge about one’s biological father and the resulting difficulty in coming to terms with one’s own biography “result[ed] in what many of those affected clearly describe as an identity crisis”.<sup>25</sup> The psychologists Heide Glaesmer et al., following Lee, point out that ‘occupation children’ “often describe the vague feeling that a decisive fragment of their identity is missing”,<sup>26</sup> leaving this statement uninterpreted. Accordingly, those affected allegedly had an ‘incomplete’, ‘deficient’ identity, which was caused by not knowing the biological father or by not knowing about the biological father. Satjukow and Gries even go so far as to claim that “they [those affected, RS] felt permanently incomplete”.<sup>27</sup> Without knowledge of one’s biological father, “this void” could not be filled “cognitively and emotionally”<sup>28</sup> and thus key questions – “Where is my father, who is my father – and so who am I?” – could not be answered.<sup>29</sup> The identity of ‘occupation children’ is thus directly linked to biological origin in the argumentation. However, usually only descent from the biological father is discussed and emphasised as important for the children’s identity development, whereas descent from the biological mother is not discussed in connection with identity development. The ‘identity state’ of those affected is pathologised in the mainstream of research literature, as it is described as a lifelong and permanently ‘crisis-like’ state and is passed off as a psychological consequence of the absence of the biological father.<sup>30</sup>

Finally, the so-called ‘search for the roots’ as a way out of the ‘identity crisis’ should be mentioned as the content of the ‘discourse on the fatherlessness’ of ‘occupation children’, which “play[ed] a key role for the ‘occupation children’ throughout their lives”.<sup>31</sup> In the corresponding texts, the ‘roots’ refer to the biological father, whose discovery – or more knowledge about him – on the one hand offers those affected the possibility of answering “questions about their own iden-

---

24 Satjukow and Gries, “Bankerte!”, 331–40.

25 Lee, “Kinder amerikanischer Soldaten in Europa,” 342.

26 Heide Glaesmer et al., “Die Kinder des Zweiten Weltkrieges in Deutschland,” *Trauma & Gewalt* 6, no. 4 (2012): 324.

27 Satjukow and Gries, “Bankerte!”, 359.

28 Satjukow and Gries, “Bankerte!”, 359.

29 Satjukow and Gries, “Bankerte!”, 350.

30 See Schmid, *Vaterdezentrierungen*, 85–98.

31 Stelzl-Marx, “Die unsichtbare Generation,” 367; Lee, “Kinder amerikanischer Soldaten in Europa,” 347.

tity, about the proverbial roots, which are only half known".<sup>32</sup> On the other hand, the search makes it possible to find a father and a 'new' and 'complete' family, whereby a 'state of completeness' can be achieved. Thus, Satjukow and Gries speak of the so-called 'shadow family', i.e. the 'new' family of the biological father; "[being] on the one hand [...] an unpleasant and incomprehensible competition, on the other hand it could hold the potential to gain the painfully missed complete family, to finally become complete and whole oneself."<sup>33</sup> Saskia Mitreuter, in co-authorship with Kaiser, Glaesmer and Stelzl-Marx, summarises this as follows: "Finding their father seems to imply feeling complete and finding some peace for many occupation children".<sup>34</sup> Accordingly, in the mainstream of research discourse, the biological father functions as the one who can redeem lifelong unsatisfied needs and, in the best case, make it possible to overcome the state presented as 'crisis-like'. Being 'complete' or 'whole' is linked to the biological father as a desirable state.

I therefore concluded that the focus on the father is based on an argumentation based on trivialised (developmental) psychological and psychoanalytical concepts, which identify the triad father-mother-child as the 'adequate constellation' for a 'successful' (identity) development of the child. The central position is assigned to the biological father, in which I identify deeply patriarchal structures, because the psychological 'health' of the 'occupation child' as well as a supposedly 'complete' state of identity are always constructed in dependence on the biological father, i.e. on the man. At the same time, this is accompanied by a devaluation of the biological mother, i.e. the woman, who is marked as 'deficient' and 'insufficient' for the (psychological) development of the child. It is becoming apparent that references to psychoanalysis and psychoanalytical theorems, such as the Oedipus complex, are being made in the research discourse. On the one hand, this occurs explicitly through the reference to the psychoanalytic work of Hartmut Rabold on the 'fatherlessness' of so-called 'Kriegskinder' (war children),<sup>35</sup> and on the other hand these references to psychoanalysis are apparent in the vocabulary used. For example, there is explicit talk of 'psychological and psychosomatic disorders', 'trauma', 'longing for the father', 'repression' and 'ambivalence'. References to psychoanalysis and psychoanalytical theorems are also implicit in the argumen-

---

<sup>32</sup> Lee, "Kinder amerikanischer Soldaten in Europa," 367.

<sup>33</sup> Satjukow and Gries, "Bankerte!," 349.

<sup>34</sup> Saskia Mitreuter et al., "Questions of Identity in Children Born of War – Embarking on a Search for the Unknown Soldier Father," *Journal of Child and Family Studies* 28, no. 2 (2019): 3227.

<sup>35</sup> See Silke Satjukow, "Besatzungskinder". Nachkommen deutscher Frauen und alliierter Soldaten seit 1945," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 37, no. 4 (2011): 574; Satjukow and Gries, "Bankerte!," 339.

tation.<sup>36</sup> Based on this and on the pathologisation of those affected, I identify a psychologisation of the ‘fatherlessness’ of ‘occupation children’. This means that ‘fatherlessness’ is interpreted (pseudo-)psychologically and associated with psychological vulnerability, which in turn is based on a shortened “reception of psychological knowledge”.<sup>37</sup> In the research discourse, therefore, an ‘everyday psychological understanding’ of the significance of the biological father is predominant. And this understanding attributes to the biological father the central role in the psychological development of the child. I speak here of ‘everyday psychological understanding’, because in the ‘discourse on the fatherlessness’ of ‘occupation children’, fundamental psychoanalytical and psychological theories and concepts are hardly explained, and yet statements about psychological conditions are made – mainly by people ‘outside’ the field, such as historians. The psychologisation of the ‘fatherlessness’ of ‘occupation children’ in turn leads to the fact – and this is the core thesis of this chapter – that ‘fatherlessness’ is declared a risk factor in the research literature, through which ‘occupation children’ are made into ‘victims’ of their circumstances.

## Psychologisations and the (re)production of a ‘victim narrative’

Psychologisations, or so-called ‘everyday psychology’ or ‘everyday psychological interpretations’, accompany our everyday actions and the interpretation of our environment as part of our efforts to create order and orientation in everyday life.<sup>38</sup> Moreover “[p]sychological thought patterns, psychological vocabulary, psychological categories [...] [infiltrate] the [...] basic language of orientation”.<sup>39</sup> This topic re-

---

36 In my dissertation, I compare the psychoanalytic theorems implicitly and explicitly contained in the research discourse on ‘occupation children’ with the help of a critical reading of Sigmund Freud’s writings. In doing so, I focus on the position of the father in Freudian theory, especially in the conception of the Oedipus complex, which is contrasted with the position of the biological father within the research literature, see Chapter III and IV in Schmid, *Vaterdezentrierungen*.

37 Marc Willmann, *De-Psychologisierung und Professionalisierung der Sonderpädagogik: Kritik und Perspektiven einer Pädagogik für “schwierige” Kinder* (Munich: Ernst Reinhardt, 2012), 104.

38 See Theo Herrmann, “Das Psychische: Der Stein im Schuh der Psychologie,” in *Psychologie, Psychologisierung, Psychologismus*, ed. Heinz Gumin and Armin Mohler (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1985); Beat Thommen, *Alltagspsychologie von Lehrern über verhaltensauffällige Schüler* (Bern: Hans Huber, 1985); Jerome S. Bruner, *Sinn, Kultur Und Ich-Identität* (Heidelberg: Carl Auer, 1997).

39 Odo Marquard, “Wirklichkeitshunger und Alibibedarf: Psychologisierung zwischen Psychologie und Psychologismus,” in *Psychologie, Psychologisierung, Psychologismus*, ed. Heinz Gumin and Armin Mohler (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1985), 3.

ceives little attention in research contexts and is thus not seen as a problem that can accompany or even determine research projects and processes. The logic of the 'objectivity of science' seems to prevail, while the subjective entanglements of researchers are hardly ever addressed. In relation to the research subject of 'occupation children', only the 'closeness-distance problem' during the interview situation<sup>40</sup> or the recruitment of study participants are critically discussed,<sup>41</sup> but not possible (pseudo-psychological) presumptions of the researchers, which can significantly influence research design as well as the interpretation of results or even statements of those affected.

The sociologist Uwe Flick states that theories of scientific psychology already contain or represent explications of 'everyday psychological consensus' ('common sense'), which could be due to the fact that "social and personality psychologists are implicitly or explicitly influenced by their own everyday experiences and cultural convictions when formulating their theories".<sup>42</sup> This phenomenon is rather unfavourable for research, after all, the "task of psychology [...] is [...] to expose 'false' everyday hypotheses as prejudices and to correct them".<sup>43</sup> Accordingly, psychological research should rather make 'everyday psychological knowledge' or 'common sense' its object of research.<sup>44</sup> Psychologist Theo Herrmann also argues that 'everyday psychology', or 'psychologising' as he calls it, should itself become an "object of study".<sup>45</sup> By the phenomenon of psychologising, he understands "a widespread folk capability, the use of a store of folk wisdom that makes each of us a lay psychologist".<sup>46</sup> The psychologist Beat Thommen expresses it as follows: "Everyone sees himself [...] as a little psychologist and feels addressed, affected or even challenged to criticise by the results of science, especially when the psychological findings run counter to his 'common sense'."<sup>47</sup> According to Herrmann, psychologising represents "a specific kind of argumentation" with the aim of "making one's own or other people's behaviour or experience or their conditions and consequences understandable and in this way gaining situational mastery, relief

---

40 See Sabine Lee, *Children Born of War in the Twentieth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), 87.

41 See Marie Kaiser et al., "Depression, Somatization, and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder in Children Born of Occupation After World War II in Comparison with a General Population," *The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease* 203, no. 10 (2015): 746–747.

42 Uwe Flick, *Psychologie des technisierten Alltags: Soziale Konstruktion und Repräsentation technischen Wandels in verschiedenen kulturellen Kontexten* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1996), 86.

43 Thommen, *Alltagspsychologie von Lehrern über verhaltensauffällige Schüler*, 31.

44 See Flick, *Psychologie des technisierten Alltags*, 86–87.

45 Herrmann, "Das Psychische: Der Stein im Schuh der Psychologie," 127.

46 Herrmann, "Das Psychische: Der Stein im Schuh der Psychologie," 122.

47 Thommen, *Alltagspsychologie von Lehrern über verhaltensauffällige Schüler*, 33.



and the reduction of complexity”.<sup>48</sup> In the process, people fall back on ‘generally held truisms’ about human behaviour that circulate in a society. Thommen calls this “psychological folk wisdom”,<sup>49</sup> while Herrmann speaks of “idioms, proverbs, quotations”<sup>50</sup> or what is held to be ‘truth’.<sup>51</sup> Linking this train of thought to the research on the ‘fatherlessness’ of ‘occupation children’, the ideal of the traditional bourgeois nuclear family and thus the postulated importance of the biological father for the ‘healthy’ development of the child could be read as ‘psychological folk wisdom’. This possible pre-assumption of researchers could not only influence their research questions, but also their view of the research object, their interpretation and thus the research results. Against this backdrop, and since hardly any basic psychological theories and concepts are explained in the ‘discourse on the fatherlessness’ of ‘occupation children’, I see the thesis reinforced that some researchers operate with ‘everyday psychological knowledge’ in relation to the topic of ‘fatherlessness’, a ‘common sense’ about what ‘fatherlessness’ means for a child’s upbringing, which arises from a trivialisation of psychological and psychoanalytical theories and concepts.

The fact that psychological and psychoanalytical theories and concepts have found their way into our (everyday) thinking, acting and speaking or – as the psychologist Dagmar Weber and the cultural scientist Brigitte Frizzoni state for Freudian psychoanalysis – can even be read as a ‘cultural good’,<sup>52</sup> is based on the fact that psychoanalysis, for example, has everyday life as its object of research and can thus be linked to everyday experiences.<sup>53</sup> Not all, but certain terms and concepts of psychoanalysis could thus be integrated into “‘familiar’ stories”.<sup>54</sup> The spread of psychological and psychoanalytical ideas in everyday life as well as the focus on therapy is also due to the so-called “psychoboom” of the 1970s in Germany.<sup>55</sup> This is said to have resulted in a “booming market of popular scientific psychologising advice literature”,<sup>56</sup> which is also said to have given speaking

---

48 Herrmann, “Das Psychische: Der Stein im Schuh der Psychologie,” 117.

49 Thommen, *Alltagspsychologie von Lehrern über verhaltensauffällige Schüler*, 22.

50 Herrmann, “Das Psychische: Der Stein im Schuh der Psychologie,” 117.

51 See Herrmann, “Das Psychische: Der Stein im Schuh der Psychologie,” 116.

52 See Dagmar Weber, *‘Freud Lebt!’: Kulturpsychologische Untersuchungen zum Verständnis FREUDscher Begriffe im Alltag der Gegenwart* (Paderborn: Snayder, 1997), 21; Brigitte Frizzoni, “Freud in der Populärkultur,” *Schweizerisches Archiv für Volkskunde* 110, no. 1 (2014): 69.

53 See Weber, *‘Freud lebt!’*, 109.

54 Weber, *‘Freud lebt!’*, 106.

55 Willmann, *De-Psychologisierung und Professionalisierung der Sonderpädagogik*, 104.

56 Willmann, *De-Psychologisierung und Professionalisierung der Sonderpädagogik*.



“about one’s own feelings and experiences [...] a tremendous boost”.<sup>57</sup> Frizzoni is concerned with the dissemination and transformation of Freudian psychoanalysis in popular culture media, such as film, comics and television, and what of it has “in a sense arrived in everyday life”.<sup>58</sup> For every “popularisation [goes] by definition [...] hand in hand with simplification”, which she sees, among other things, in the fact that the “‘vernacular’ persistently speaks of the ‘subconscious’ [Unterbewussten] instead of, as is terminologically correct, the ‘unconscious’ [Unbewussten]”.<sup>59</sup>

In a nutshell, psychological and psychoanalytical terminologies and concepts are used extensively in society because they are linked to everyday life and the world of emotions,<sup>60</sup> and can be integrated into existing narratives. However, the concepts and terms are subject to abbreviations that have arisen, for example, through their popularisation and have become “fixed in cultural memory” in this form.<sup>61</sup> This ‘cultural memory’ also seems to be present in scientific contexts, since here, too, ‘everyday psychological knowledge’ is partly used, which can be seen in the fact that psychological interpretations do not seem to require any theoretical foundation.

However, it is not only the ‘everyday psychological’ presumptions and interpretations of researchers that contribute to the fact that ‘fatherlessness’ is declared as a deficiency and associated with psychological vulnerability, making ‘occupation children’ appear as victims of their circumstances. A great deal of confirmation of this deficit-oriented view of the absence of the biological father can indeed be found in the narratives of those affected, which are quoted in the mainstream of research literature. However, this does not mean that there are not also those affected who tell other stories that counter this ‘victim narrative’. For example, Elke Kleinau and I have interviewed people for whom growing up with a biological father was problematic,<sup>62</sup> whereas for others growing up ‘fatherless’ was not a ‘life issue’.<sup>63</sup> However, it almost seems as if only those affected whose stories can be integrated into the ‘victim narrative’ get a word in the mainstream-research-liter-

---

57 Stefan Senne and Alexander Hesse, *Genealogie der Selbstführung: Zur Historizität von Selbsttechnologien in Lebensratgebern* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2019), 287.

58 Frizzoni, “Freud in der Populärkultur,” 71.

59 Frizzoni, “Freud in der Populärkultur,” 71.

60 See Eva Illouz, *Saving the Modern Soul: Therapy, Emotions, and the Culture of Self-Help* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 2008).

61 Frizzoni, “Freud in der Populärkultur,” 71.

62 See Elke Kleinau and Rafaela Schmid, “Aufwachsen ohne Eltern.”

63 See Elke Kleinau and Rafaela Schmid, “‘Occupation Children’ in Germany After World War II – Problems and Coping Strategies,” *Children & Society* 33, no. 3 (2019): 245–246.

ature. This could be linked, as it were, to the fact that contributions by Kleinau and myself that challenge the common narrative are simply ignored in the mainstream of research discourse.<sup>64</sup>

In addition, I suspect that the narratives of those affected are also influenced by preconceptions about a certain topic and that some of those affected present stories for which they hope to receive recognition from researchers. Thus, according to my thesis, it is a matter of a mutual conditionality of researchers and researched, through which a ‘victim narrative’ is (re)produced, which is based on psychologisations or ‘everyday psychological assumptions’.

In order to support this hypothesis, we can refer back to Harald Welzer’s thesis on the research of the 1990s on Germany’s National Socialist past. It states that researchers already approached contemporary witnesses with presumptions that implied “what a proper confrontation with history should look like”.<sup>65</sup> This goes hand in hand with the fact that the past has to be talked about in a certain way in order to be able to “stand as subjects who have learned from history”.<sup>66</sup> Welzer goes on to ask to what extent these assumptions have already arrived in everyday discourse and thus influence the narratives of contemporary witnesses. He speaks of “everyday scientific concepts”,<sup>67</sup> which, together with the researchers’ presumptions, determined what was told. With regard to the context of ‘occupation children’, I assume that research on ‘fatherlessness’ of ‘Kriegskinder’ as well as studies on so-called ‘Wehrmachtskinder’,<sup>68</sup> all of which were published earlier than the bulk of the literature on ‘occupation children’, shaped the assumptions of researchers and those affected. This could be justified by the fact that ‘occupation children’, for example, were considered a “special group of Kriegskinder”<sup>69</sup> or

---

64 In an anthology resulting from the H2020 Marie Curie Innovative Training Networks – *Children Born of War*, only older overview articles by Elke Kleinau appear in the introductory research state and in articles working with qualitative interviews. Publications of more recent date, which originate from our research project funded by the German Research Foundation (<https://gepris.dfg.de/gepris/projekt/279094103>), are not mentioned. See Sabine Lee, Heide Glaesmer and Barbara Stelzl-Marx, eds., *Children Born of War: Past, Present and Future* (London/New York: Routledge, 2022).

65 Harald Welzer, “Verdrängen, abspalten, aufarbeiten – Zur Psychologisierung biographischer Erzählungen von NS-Zeitzeugen,” *Journal für Psychologie* 7, no. 3 (1999): 45.

66 Welzer, “Verdrängen, abspalten, aufarbeiten.”

67 Welzer, “Verdrängen, abspalten, aufarbeiten.”

68 These were children born of sexual encounters between German soldiers and local women in occupied areas of Europe during the Second World War. See Ebba d. Drolshagen, *Wehrmachtskinder: Auf der Suche nach dem nie gekannten Vater* (Munich: Droemer, 2005); see also Ingvill C. Mochmann and Stein U. Larsen, “Kriegskinder in Europa,” *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 18–19 (2005).

69 Silke Satjukow and Barbara Stelzl-Marx, “Besatzungskinder in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart,” in *Besatzungskinder: Die Nachkommen alliierter Soldaten in Österreich und Deutschland*, ed. Barbara Stelzl-Marx and Silke Satjukow (Cologne: Böhlau, 2015), 12.

that questionnaires from research on 'Wehrmachtskinder' served as a basis for the development of survey instruments for 'occupation children'.<sup>70</sup> If there are already models in a similar context of how to talk about the absent biological father and what the effects of 'fatherlessness' are in general, it can happen that "in the discussion and interpretation of their own past, interviewees quite naturally make use of concepts and theorems that stem from the academic discourse of coming to terms with the past".<sup>71</sup> Historian Lu Seegers further assumes that historical documentaries can lead to "media-induced, biographical sense-making" in the respective persons concerned,<sup>72</sup> which she underlines with the case study that one of her interviewees has said to have interpreted his physical ailments after watching television programmes about 'Kriegskinder' as a "long-term effect of a war-related fatherless childhood".<sup>73</sup> The research literature on 'occupation children' also speaks of "psychological and psychosomatic disorders" due to 'fatherlessness'.<sup>74</sup> Radebold also refers to psychological effects, problems and disorders, for example a low "chance of [...] undisturbed identity formation" in connection with growing up without a father.<sup>75</sup> 'Fatherlessness' is thus psychologised in several contexts. Accordingly, it does not seem surprising that the narratives of former 'occupation children' also follow such psychologising patterns, that they thus fit into the general canon and represent what is expected of a person growing up 'fatherless'.<sup>76</sup> Against this background, it can be assumed that psychologisations of those affected can be derived from the fact that certain "terms and concepts [...] have migrated into everyday language" from a (popular) scientific and media discourse<sup>77</sup> – espe-

---

70 See Marie Kaiser, Philipp Kuwert and Heide Glaesmer, "Aufwachsen als Besatzungschild des Zweiten Weltkrieges in Deutschland – Hintergründe und Vorgehen einer Befragung deutscher Besatzungskinder," *Z Psychosom Med Psychother* 61 (2015): 195. For a critical discussion of the questionnaires see Elke Kleinau and Christoph Piske, "Normalitätskonstruktionen von Familie in einer Befragung niederländischer Children Born of War," in *Familie und Normalität: Diskurse, Praxen und Aushandlungsprozesse*, ed. Anne-Christin Schondelmayer, Christine Riegel and Sebastian Fitz-Klausner (Opladen/Berlin/Toronto: Barbara Budrich, 2021).

71 Welzer, "Verdrängen, abspalten, aufarbeiten," 48.

72 Lu Seegers, "Fernsehbilder und innere Bilder. Überlegungen zum Zusammenhang von Geschichtsfernsehen und biografischer Sinnstiftung," in *Es gilt das gesprochene Wort: Oral History und Zeitgeschichte heute*, ed. Knud Andresen, Linde Apel and Kirsten Heinsohn (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2015), 162.

73 Seegers, "Fernsehbilder und innere Bilder," 177.

74 Lee, "Kinder amerikanischer Soldaten in Europa," 342.

75 Hartmut Radebold, "Entwicklungspsychologische Aspekte," in *Söhne ohne Väter: Erfahrungen der Kriegsgeneration*, ed. Hermann Schulz, Hartmut Radebold and Jürgen Reulecke (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung, 2005), 138.

76 See Welzer, "Verdrängen, abspalten, aufarbeiten," 48.

77 Welzer, "Verdrängen, abspalten, aufarbeiten," 48.

cially from a discourse on fatherhood shaped by psychology and psychoanalysis –<sup>78</sup> “and now function as means of construction for narratively represented biographies”.<sup>79</sup> With regard to growing up without a father, supposedly psychological and psychoanalytical explanations seem to function in the narratives, as they are presented by experts as ‘authentic’ and thus ‘true’. In turn, the ‘psychological problems’ reported by those affected are eventually reformulated in the literature on ‘occupation children’ by those outside the field as ‘identity crises’ and ‘psychological and psychosomatic disorders’. However, the transcripts of conversations and interviews are not sufficient as the “only diagnostic basis”, which is why such an approach remains “at least questionable from a psychological point of view”.<sup>80</sup> But even the psychologists Glaesmer and Kaiser, who have psychiatric, psychological and psychotherapeutic expertise, cannot diagnose post-traumatic stress disorder or depression solely on the basis of a questionnaire survey that is based on the subjects’ self-assessments. In order to make a diagnosis, in addition to questionnaire surveys, discussions between the patient and the doctor or therapist are required, i.e. a biographical anamnesis. However, this does not stop the researchers from creating clinical pictures for a proportion of the interviewees in their articles, which were published in interdisciplinary anthologies, without explaining the limitations of their validity.<sup>81</sup> It could be assumed that the story of the ‘fatherless’ ‘occupation children’ – just like that of the ‘fatherless’ ‘Kriegskinder’ – is to be told as a story of suffering “in which the victim as an individual is at the centre”,<sup>82</sup> whereby presumptions about growing up without a biological father, which is unfavourable for psychological development, determine both the research and the stories of those affected.

The self-victimisation of those affected is based on and at the same time leads to victimisation within the ‘discourse on fatherlessness’. Only those who present

---

78 See Barbara Frieberthshäuser, Michael Matzner and Ninette Rothmüller, “Familie: Mütter und Väter,” in *Handbuch Familie*, ed. Jutta Ecarius (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2007), 184–185.

79 Welzer, “Verdrängen, abspalten, aufarbeiten,” 48.

80 Welzer, “Verdrängen, abspalten, aufarbeiten,” 46.

81 See Marie Kaiser et al., “Psychosoziale Konsequenzen des Aufwachsens als Besatzungskind in Deutschland: Psychologische Hintergründe eines quantitativen Forschungsprojektes,” in *Besatzungskinder: Die Nachkommen alliierter Soldaten in Österreich und Deutschland*, ed. Barbara Stelzl-Marx and Silke Satjukow (Cologne: Böhlau, 2015); Marie Kaiser and Heide Glaesmer, “Risiko- und Schutzfaktoren beim Aufwachsen als Besatzungskind des Zweiten Weltkrieges: Eine Langzeitperspektive,” in *Kinder des Zweiten Weltkrieges: Stigmatisierung, Ausgrenzung, Bewältigungsstrategien*, ed. Elke Kleinau and Ingvill C. Mochmann (Frankfurt a.M.: Campus, 2016).

82 Knud Andresen, Linde Apel and Kirsten Heinsohn, eds., *Es gilt das gesprochene Wort: Oral History und Zeitgeschichte heute* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2015), 13.

themselves as 'victims of their circumstances' and of growing up 'fatherless' are recognised in the research literature as 'real occupation children' and thereby, as it were, fixed on their victim status.<sup>83</sup> The fact that (oral history) research on 'occupation children' is glorified as "impulse[s] for 'empowerment'",<sup>84</sup> because those affected can 'finally' talk about their 'fate' or organise themselves in networks triggered by the research, does not hide the fact that those affected nevertheless remain trapped in their passive victim status.<sup>85</sup> For visibility in the research discourse as well as 'completeness' and 'health' are, according to the 'discourse on fatherlessness', ultimately only possible through dependence on the absent biological father and can never be achieved by those affected themselves.

## Possibilities for critical research on Children Born of War

Using the example of the 'discourse on the fatherlessness' of 'occupation children', this chapter has made it clear that their story is told as a kind of 'victim story'. On the one hand, the statements of those affected serve as a basis, which are usually not interpreted by the researchers but function as 'truths'. On the other hand, previous psychological and psychoanalytical research on 'fatherlessness' seems to contribute, at least implicitly, to psychologising and pathologising the 'fatherlessness' of 'occupation children', which in turn contributes to the production of a 'victim

---

**83** To put it with Judith Butler's words: "[...] within subjection the price of existence is subordination. Precisely at the moment in which choice is impossible, the subject pursues subordination as the promise of existence." Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 20.

**84** Ingrid Bauer, "Ich bin stolz, ein Besatzungskind zu sein": Zeitgeschichtliche Forschungen als Impulse für Empowerment? Befunde mit Blick auf die einstige US-Zone in Österreich," in *Besatzungskinder: Die Nachkommen alliierter Soldaten in Österreich und Deutschland*, ed. Barbara Stelzl-Marx and Silke Satjukow (Cologne: Böhlau, 2015), 202.

**85** Following Mai-Anh Boger's arguments about the meanings of the term empowerment, the one used by Bauer can be read as a "depoliticised" and psychologised one; Mai-Anh Boger, *Theorien der Inklusion: Die Theorie der trilemmatischen Inklusion zum Mitdenken*, vol. 4 (Münster: edition assemblage, 2018), 54. I base this on the fact that it is more about the (possible) empowerment of those affected who identify with the status of 'occupation child' and 'feel' powerless themselves. However, the 'group' of all 'occupation children' does not have a collective history of oppression in Germany and Austria. A distinction must be made here between those 'occupation children' who were perceived as 'others' in a *white* society because of their skin colour and who were affected by racism and discrimination, and still are today.

narrative' and a story of suffering. What is significant about this is that researchers and those affected find themselves in a reciprocal conditionality: The biographical creation of meaning for those affected is based on research about them, which in the case of one-sided research contributes to the constant reproduction of the same story. If one uses the explanatory approach of psychologising, one could assume that those affected as well as researchers want to create order through this procedure by understanding 'fatherlessness' as a 'psychological-emotional deficiency' according to common ideas, instead of making contradictions visible through critical reflection or at least enabling further interpretations of the 'fatherlessness' of 'occupation children'. Another explanation for the rather uncritical handling of the statements of those affected could be the fact that it is more difficult to admit contradictions in research projects that work with participatory approaches. At least for the psychological research project in which Glaesmer and Kaiser were active, it is known that they follow such an approach in that those affected were already involved in the research process during the conception of the questionnaires and functioned as experts of themselves.<sup>86</sup> In this way, affected persons should participate in the process as "co-researchers", which could contribute to "the individual and collective self-empowerment and empowerment<sup>87</sup> of the partners".<sup>88</sup> On the one hand, however, the biographical entanglements of the researchers, but even more the subjective biographical entanglements of the co-researchers, should be made conscious when jointly designing questionnaires. This should be done in order to avoid making the (life) issues of individual persons the (one-sided) focus of research and thus possibly leading to pre-assumptions about those affected. On the other hand, co-researchers can serve as a correcting agent to scientists in the interpretation process. However, this should not lead to a situation where interpretations perceived by the co-researchers as "socially undesirable results" are not published, if they are considered important by the researchers.<sup>89</sup> The social scientist Hella von Unger points out that participatory research is characterised by joint critical reflection and that in the case of conflicts within the research group, different interpretative approaches can also be published.<sup>90</sup> The question must be asked whether this corresponds to common practice or represents an ideal.

---

<sup>86</sup> See Kaiser et al., "Psychosoziale Konsequenzen des Aufwachsens als Besatzungschild," 57.

<sup>87</sup> In the German quote, the term 'empowerment' is not used. It is a translation of the terms 'Selbstbefähigung und Ermächtigung'.

<sup>88</sup> Hella v. Unger, *Partizipative Forschung: Einführung in die Forschungspraxis* (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2014), 1.

<sup>89</sup> Unger, *Partizipative Forschung*, 90.

<sup>90</sup> See Unger, *Partizipative Forschung*, 90.

With regard to the historical studies that work with statements by those affected and partly also with oral history interviews, it can be stated that the cause-effect relationship established by some of those affected, through which all problems in childhood and adulthood can be attributed to 'fatherlessness', should not simply be repeated by researchers. For those affected, this may offer a way to make sense of biographical events. However, researchers dealing with biographical sources should critically examine the background of such attributions of meaning.

Against this backdrop, Dorothee Wierling looks at the problem of dealing with the testimonies of contemporary witnesses in public, for example in memorial work, at workshops and conferences. Their stories usually "deeply touch and impress" listeners, which can lead to the situation that critical questions appear impossible due to the "undeniable suffering" of those affected.<sup>91</sup> "The 20th century contemporary witness promises authenticity and is surrounded by the aura that owes itself to the idea that he directly embodies the historical drama he witnesses."<sup>92</sup> In researching 'occupation children', it almost seems as if the personal contact between researcher and researched corresponds exactly to this schema, which means and leads to their statements being repeated uninterpreted by the researchers. With regard to conducting interviews, Wierling advocates establishing closeness to the interviewees in order to approach them empathetically and to be able to respond to the narration with appropriate follow-up questions.<sup>93</sup> However, when analysing the interview material, researchers are required to distance themselves from what is said and from the interview situation: For "[w]e 'professionals' know that the narratives of contemporary witnesses by no means depict what happened, that their story has rather been socially shaped and constructed in a sense-related way in a complex process."<sup>94</sup> Since the narrative of the contemporary witness cannot be equated with his or her entire memory, and since memories, as Aleida Assmann aptly points out, "are among the most unreliable things that exist",<sup>95</sup> it should be clear to us as researchers that "we only have access to a tiny section of the subjective history of experience".<sup>96</sup> What is important for the research of CBOW is that Wierling refers to the subjectivity of narratives. Accord-

---

91 Dorothee Wierling, "Zeitgeschichte ohne Zeitzeugen. Vom kommunikativen zum kulturellen Gedächtnis – Drei Geschichten und zwölf These," *BIOS* 21, no. 1 (2008): 29.

92 Wierling, "Zeitgeschichte ohne Zeitzeugen," 30.

93 See Dorothee Wierling, "Oral History," in *Neue Themen und Methoden der Geschichtswissenschaft*, ed. Michael Maurer (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2003), 130.

94 Wierling, "Zeitgeschichte ohne Zeitzeugen," 30.

95 Aleida Assmann, "Wie wahr sind Erinnerungen?," in *Das soziale Gedächtnis: Geschichte, Erinnerung, Tradierung*; ed. Harald Welzer (Hamburg: Hamburger Ed, 2001), 103.

96 See Wierling, "Zeitgeschichte ohne Zeitzeugen," 32.



ing to this, every story told is unique and not transferable to a general unit, which should already be considered in the conception of the research design. The narrower the framework in which contemporary witnesses have their say, the less they can tell complex stories of experience. A narrow framework could rather lead to the fact that “the contemporary witness does not talk about what he himself has experienced”, but adheres to certain “scripts, because the narrators were selected and approached precisely from the point of view of which role they can fill, i. e. which script text they promise to produce”.<sup>97</sup> However, in an oral history interview – and this also applies to conducting life history interviews in other disciplines – a broad framework should be made possible that allows interviewees space and time to deviate from prefabricated stories.<sup>98</sup> However, there are challenges above all in the interpretation process, “through the systematic questioning of the text from the stance of a critical historical science.”<sup>99</sup> What I would like to emphasise in particular with regard to the multidisciplinary research on CBOW is that Wierling is not so much concerned with a specific methodology or a specific analytical procedure, “but only with the basic attitude of critical questioning”.<sup>100</sup> This does not mean that the emotional side of the stories told by those affected should not and will not be recognised by researchers as their subjective experience. For the critical attitude and the corresponding contextualisation in the analysis of the interview material does not serve to verify subjective experience, and thus does not throw into question the ‘truthfulness’ and credibility of the interviewee. Rather, a critical attitude in the interpretation process serves to reveal the “complexity, constructedness, contradictoriness and ambiguity” of a narrative.<sup>101</sup> This ultimately helps – and would be desirable for further research on CBOW – to make different voices heard and visible, so that stories are not only told that follow a pre-existing script, as seems to be the case for ‘fatherlessness’.

---

97 Wierling, “Zeitgeschichte ohne Zeitzeugen,” 32.

98 On the transformation of a life history narrative in different contexts, see Elke Kleinau and Rafaela Schmid, “‘Ich bin nicht ehemaliges Besatzungskind, sondern ich bin es immer noch’. Brüche und Inkonsistenzen in Erzählungen von ‘professionellen’ Zeitzeug\_innen,” *BIOS* 29, no. 2 (2016).

99 Wierling, “Zeitgeschichte ohne Zeitzeugen,” 34.

100 Wierling, “Zeitgeschichte ohne Zeitzeugen,” 34.

101 Wierling, “Zeitgeschichte ohne Zeitzeugen,” 34–35.



## References

- Andresen, Knud, Linde Apel, and Kirsten Heinsöhn, eds. *Es gilt das gesprochene Wort: Oral History und Zeitgeschichte heute*. Göttingen: Wallstein, 2015.
- Assmann, Aleida. "Wie wahr sind Erinnerungen?" In *Das soziale Gedächtnis: Geschichte, Erinnerung, Tradierung*, edited by Harald Welzer, 103–122. Hamburg: Hamburger Ed, 2001.
- Bauer, Ingrid. *Welcome Ami Go Home: Die amerikanische Besatzung in Salzburg, 1945–1955. Erinnerungslandschaften aus einem Oral-History-Projekt*. Salzburg/Munich: Pustet, 1998.
- Bauer, Ingrid. "'Ich bin stolz, ein Besatzungskind zu sein': Zeitgeschichtliche Forschungen als Impulse für Empowerment? Befunde mit Blick auf die einstige US-Zone in Österreich." In *Besatzungskinder: Die Nachkommen alliierter Soldaten in Österreich und Deutschland*, edited by Barbara Stelzl-Marx and Silke Satjukow, 184–206. Cologne: Böhlau, 2015.
- Boger, Mai-Anh. *Theorien der Inklusion: Die Theorie der trilemmatischen Inklusion zum Mitdenken*. Vol. 4. Münster: edition assemblage, 2018.
- Bruner, Jerome S. *Sinn, Kultur und Ich-Identität*. Heidelberg: Carl Auer, 1997.
- Buske, Sybille. *Fräulein Mutter und ihr Bastard: Eine Geschichte der Unehelichkeit in Deutschland 1900 bis 1970*. Göttingen: Wallstein, 2004.
- Butler, Judith. *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997.
- Drolshagen, Ebba d. *Wehrmachtskinder: Auf der Suche nach dem nie gekannten Vater*. Munich: Droemer, 2005.
- Flick, Uwe. *Psychologie des technisierten Alltags: Soziale Konstruktion und Repräsentation technischen Wandels in verschiedenen kulturellen Kontexten*. Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1996.
- Friebertshäuser, Barbara, Michael Matzner, and Ninette Rothmüller. "Familie: Mütter und Väter." In *Handbuch Familie*, edited by Jutta Ecarius, 179–198. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2007.
- Frizzoni, Brigitte. "Freud in der Populärkultur." *Schweizerisches Archiv für Volkskunde* 110, no. 1 (2014): 69–87.
- Gadamer, Hans-Georg. "Vom Zirkel des Verstehens." In *Gesammelte Werke*, 57–65. Tübingen: Mohr, 1993.
- Glaesmer, Heide, Marie Kaiser, Harald J. Freyberger, Elmar Braehler, and Philipp Kuwert. "Die Kinder des Zweiten Weltkrieges in Deutschland." *Trauma & Gewalt* 6, no. 4 (2012): 318–328.
- Herrmann, Theo. "Das Psychische: Der Stein im Schuh der Psychologie." In *Psychologie, Psychologisierung, Psychologismus*, 115–132. Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1985.
- Illouz, Eva. *Saving the Modern Soul: Therapy, Emotions, and the Culture of Self-Help*. Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 2008.
- Kaiser, Marie, Svenja Eichhorn, Philipp Kuwert, and Heide Glaesmer. "Psychosoziale Konsequenzen des Aufwachsens als Besatzungskind in Deutschland: Psychologische Hintergründe eines quantitativen Forschungsprojektes." In *Besatzungskinder: Die Nachkommen alliierter Soldaten in Österreich und Deutschland*, edited by Barbara Stelzl-Marx and Silke Satjukow, 39–61. Cologne: Böhlau, 2015.
- Kaiser, Marie, and Heide Glaesmer. "Risiko- und Schutzfaktoren beim Aufwachsen als Besatzungskind des Zweiten Weltkrieges: Eine Langzeitperspektive." In *Kinder des Zweiten Weltkrieges: Stigmatisierung, Ausgrenzung, Bewältigungsstrategien*, edited by Elke Kleinau and Ingvill C. Mochmann, 140–155. Frankfurt a. M.: Campus, 2016.

- Kaiser, Marie, Philipp Kuwert, Elmar Braehler, and Heide Glaesmer. "Depression, Somatization, and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder in Children Born of Occupation After World War II in Comparison with a General Population." *The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease* 203, no. 10 (2015): 742–748.
- Kaiser, Marie, Philipp Kuwert, and Heide Glaesmer. "Aufwachsen als Besatzungskind des Zweiten Weltkrieges in Deutschland – Hintergründe und Vorgehen einer Befragung deutscher Besatzungskinder." *Z Psychosom Med Psychother* 61 (2015): 191–205.
- Kleinau, Elke, and Christoph Piske. "Normalitätskonstruktionen von Familie in einer Befragung niederländischer Children Born of War." In *Familie und Normalität: Diskurse, Praxen und Aushandlungsprozesse*, edited by Anne-Christin Schondelmayer, Christine Riegel, and Sebastian Fitz-Klausner, 225–244. Opladen/Berlin/Toronto: Barbara Budrich, 2021.
- Kleinau, Elke, and Rafaela Schmid. "Aufwachsen ohne Eltern – ein Risikofaktor für Besatzungskinder?" In *Kinder des Zweiten Weltkrieges: Stigmatisierung, Ausgrenzung, Bewältigungsstrategien*, edited by Elke Kleinau and Ingvill C. Mochmann, 187–205. Frankfurt a. M.: Campus, 2016.
- Kleinau, Elke, and Rafaela Schmid. "'Ich bin nicht ehemaliges Besatzungskind, sondern ich bin es immer noch'. Brüche und Inkonsistenzen in Erzählungen von 'professionellen' Zeitzeug\_innen." *BIOS* 29, no. 2 (2016): 241–252.
- Kleinau, Elke, and Rafaela Schmid. "'Occupation Children' in Germany After World War II – Problems and Coping Strategies." *Children & Society* 33, no. 3 (2019): 239–252.
- Lee, Sabine. "Kinder Amerikanischer Soldaten in Europa. Ein Vergleich der Situation britischer und deutscher Kinder." *Historical Social Research* 34, no. 3 (2009): 321–351.
- Lee, Sabine. *Children Born of War in the Twentieth Century*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017.
- Lee, Sabine, Heide Glaesmer, and Barbara Stelzl-Marx, eds. *Children Born of War: Past, Present and Future*. London/New York: Routledge, 2022.
- Marquard, Odo. "Wirklichkeitshunger und Alibibedarf: Psychologisierung zwischen Psychologie und Psychologismus." In *Psychologie, Psychologisierung, Psychologismus*, edited by Heinz Gumin and Armin Mohler, 1–16. Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1985.
- Mitreuter, Saskia, Marie Kaiser, Sophie Roupetz, Barbara Stelzl-Marx, Philipp Kuwert, and Heide Glaesmer. "Questions of Identity in Children Born of War – Embarking on a Search for the Unknown Soldier Father." *Journal of Child and Family Studies* 28, no. 2 (2019): 3220–3229.
- Mochmann, Ingvill C., and Stein U. Larsen. "Kriegskinder in Europa." *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 18–19 (2005): 34–38.
- Nave-Herz, Rosemarie. *Familie heute: Wandel der Familienstrukturen und Folgen für die Erziehung*. Darmstadt: Primus-Verlag, 2007.
- Radebold, Hartmut. "Entwicklungspsychologische Aspekte." In *Söhne ohne Väter: Erfahrungen der Kriegsgeneration*, edited by Hermann Schulz, Hartmut Radebold, and Jürgen Reulecke, 120–43. Bonn: Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung, 2005.
- Satjukow, Silke. "'Besatzungskinder'. Nachkommen deutscher Frauen und alliierter Soldaten seit 1945." *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 37, no. 4 (2011): 559–591.
- Satjukow, Silke, and Rainer Gries. *"Bankerte!": Besatzungskinder in Deutschland nach 1945*. Frankfurt a. M./New York: Campus, 2015.
- Satjukow, Silke, and Barbara Stelzl-Marx. "Besatzungskinder in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart." In *Besatzungskinder: Die Nachkommen alliierter Soldaten in Österreich und Deutschland*, edited by Barbara Stelzl-Marx and Silke Satjukow, 11–14. Cologne: Böhlau, 2015.

- Schadendorf, Barbara. *Uneheliche Kinder: Untersuchungen zur Entwicklung und Situation in der Grundschule*. Munich: Johann Ambrosius Barth, 1964.
- Schmid, Rafaela. *Vaterdezentrierungen: Psychoanalytische Entgegnungen zum Fachdiskurs über 'Besatzungskinder'*. Weilerswist: Velbrück, 2022.
- Schulze, Theodor. "Zur Interpretation autobiographischer Texte in der Erziehungswissenschaftlichen Biographieforschung." In *Handbuch Qualitative Forschungsmethoden in der Erziehungswissenschaft*, edited by Barbara Friebertshäuser, Antje Langer, and Annedore Prengel, 413–36. Weinheim/Basel: Beltz Juventa, 2013.
- Seegers, Lu. "Fernsehbilder und innere Bilder. Überlegungen zum Zusammenhang von Geschichtsfernsehen und biografischer Sinnstiftung." In *Es gilt das gesprochene Wort: Oral History und Zeitgeschichte heute*, edited by Knud Andresen, Linde Apel, and Kirsten Heinsohn, 161–80. Göttingen: Wallstein, 2015.
- Senne, Stefan, and Alexander Hesse. *Genealogie der Selbstführung: Zur Historizität von Selbsttechnologien in Lebensratgebern*. Bielefeld: transcript, 2019.
- Statistisches Bundesamt, Wiesbaden. *Statistische Berichte: Die unehelichen Kinder von Besatzungsangehörigen im Bundesgebiet und Berlin (West)*. Wiesbaden, 1956.
- Stelzl-Marx, Barbara. "Freier Und Befreier. Zum Beziehungsgeflecht zwischen sowjetischen Besatzungssoldaten und österreichischen Frauen." In *Die Rote Armee in Österreich*, edited by Stefan Karner and Barbara Stelzl-Marx, 421–447. Graz: Verein zur Förderung von Folgen nach Konflikten und Kriegen, 2005.
- Stelzl-Marx, Barbara. "Die Unsichtbare Generation. Kinder Sowjetischer Besatzungssoldaten in Österreich und Deutschland." *Historical Social Research* 34, no. 3 (2009): 352–372.
- Thommen, Beat. *Alltagspsychologie von Lehrern über verhaltensauffällige Schüler*. Bern: Hans Huber, 1985.
- Unger, Hella v. *Partizipative Forschung: Einführung in die Forschungspraxis*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2014.
- Weber, Dagmar. *'Freud lebt!': Kulturpsychologische Untersuchungen zum Verständnis FREUDScher Begriffe im Alltag der Gegenwart*. Paderborn: Snayder, 1997.
- Welzer, Harald. "Verdrängen, abspalten, aufarbeiten – Zur Psychologisierung biographischer Erzählungen von NS-Zeitzeugen." *Journal für Psychologie* 7, no. 3 (1999): 44–54.
- Wierling, Dorothee. "Oral History." In *Neue Themen und Methoden der Geschichtswissenschaft*, edited by Michael Maurer, 81–151. Stuttgart: Reclam, 2003.
- Wierling, Dorothee. "Zeitgeschichte ohne Zeitzeugen. Vom kommunikativen zum kulturellen Gedächtnis – Drei Geschichten und zwölf These." *BIOS* 21, no. 1 (2008): 28–36.
- Willmann, Marc. *De-Psychologisierung und Professionalisierung der Sonderpädagogik: Kritik und Perspektiven einer Pädagogik für "schwierige" Kinder*. Munich: Ernst Reinhardt, 2012.



---

**Part IV: Learning from the Past: Dealing with  
Present Day Challenges**



Martina Koegeler-Abdi

# Liminal Children, Liminal Rights? Media Representations of Scandinavian Children Born of War after World War II and after the Fall of the Islamic State

## Introduction

In today's world, it is often said that children should not pay for the crimes of their parents. Politicians across the Nordics frequently express this sentiment when talking about the Scandinavian children born to ISIS foreign fighters. Nonetheless, this is what has happened to children who were taken to the so-called "Islamic State" (ISIS) with their parents or were born there. When ISIS lost its last military stronghold in March 2019, thousands of international ISIS followers and their underage children were detained in Kurdish camps in northern Syria without trial, some 200 Nordic citizens among them.<sup>1</sup> The questions of whether and, if so, how Nordic governments have a responsibility to repatriate the children of their citizens has been discussed controversially in the region.<sup>2</sup> Eventual solutions have differed: Finland decided proactively early on to repatriate families in order to protect the children. Norway, Denmark and Sweden, on the other hand, delayed their decisions and tended to place national security concerns as well as the punishment of the mothers above the children's right to return.<sup>3</sup> Exact numbers are difficult to establish,

---

**Note:** This research has been funded by the Swedish Research Council for Health, Working Life and Welfare (FORTE, project number 2021–00051). I want to further thank the editors and the peer reviewers for their constructive criticism.

1 Joana Cook and Gina Vale, "From Daesh to 'Diaspora' II: The Challenges Posed by Women and Minors After the Fall of the Caliphate," *CTC Sentinel* 12, no. 6 (2019): 36, accessed Jan 07, 2021, <https://ctc.usma.edu/daesh-diaspora-challenges-posed-women-minors-fall-caliphate/>.

2 See, for example, Jan Guillou, "Regeringen vacklar inför pöbeln medan sju svenska barn lider i ett fångläger," *Aftonbladet*, April 14, 2019, accessed May 04, 2022, [https://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/kolumnister/a/jdva3\\_l/regeringen-vacklar-infor-pobeln-medan-sju-svenska-barn-lider-i-ett-fanglagger](https://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/kolumnister/a/jdva3_l/regeringen-vacklar-infor-pobeln-medan-sju-svenska-barn-lider-i-ett-fanglagger); or Nilas Johnsen and Mohammed Hassen, "Kurdisk leder til VG: Ny regjering må hente IS-kvinne," *VG*, 25 September, 2021, accessed Aug 17, 2022 <https://www.vg.no/nyheter/utenriks/i/z74mWv/kurdisk-leder-til-vg-ny-regjering-maa-hente-is-kvinne>.

3 Herbert Maack, "How Nordic Countries Are Handling the Question of Repatriating Islamic State Women," *Terrorism Monitor: In-depth Analysis of the War on Terror* XIX 12 (2021): 7–10, accessed

but among the remaining detainees in the spring of 2021 there were still around eighty-five children with Nordic citizenship living in these brutal camp conditions after three years.<sup>4</sup>

This chapter addresses the question of why Norwegian, Danish and Swedish politicians readily acknowledged the dire situation of the interned children in the camps as a humanitarian emergency but did not act upon this recognition. I argue that this reluctance is not just tied to a fear of terrorism and security concerns, but also to specific discursive notions of liminal childhood that make it harder in practice for the children of foreign fighters to access their rights as Scandinavian citizens. I further argue that the reluctance has a clear historical parallel with the way a previous generation of “children of the enemy,” i.e. the children of Danish and Norwegian women and German occupation soldiers during World War II (WWII), were seen in the region.

The emerging scholarship on the children of ISIS foreign fighters often addresses questions of the children’s rights, well-being and citizenship, their potential radicalisation, and current repatriation politics within terrorism and security paradigms.<sup>5</sup> The following example from March 2021 illustrates the need for further perspectives. When Danish prime minister Mette Frederiksen came under increasing pressure to justify why she would not repatriate Danish children with their ISIS-affiliated mothers, she first emphasised her commitment to helping the children, saying that she did “not turn her back on any children.” However, she then immediately reiterated Denmark’s unwillingness to repatriate the children if this also meant helping mothers and openly framed this as a punishment

---

Feb 14, 2022, <https://jamestown.org/program/how-nordic-countries-are-handling-the-question-of-repatriating-islamic-state-women/>.

4 “Nordic Countries: Repatriate Nationals from Northeast Syria,” Human Rights Watch, News Release, May 26, 2021, accessed April 13, 2022, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/05/26/nordic-countries-repatriate-nationals-northeast-syria>.

5 See, among others, Felix Aguetant, “A Turn of the Tide in the Extraterritorial Application of Child Rights: On the French Approach towards ISIS” Child Returnees,” *Journal of Politics and Law* 14, no. 3 (2021): 51–59, accessed April 13, 2022, <https://heinonline-org.ludwig.lub.lu.se/HOL/Page?handle=hein.journals/jpola14&div=38>; Conrad Nyamutata, “Young Terrorists or Child Soldiers? ISIS Children, International Law and Victimhood,” *Journal of Conflict and Security Law* 25, no. 2 (2020): 237–261, accessed April 14, 2022, doi:10.1093/jcsl/krz034; Ian MacVicar, “What About the Camp Followers – and their Children?” *Journal for Deradicalization* 22 (2020): 319–378, accessed January 8, 2021, <https://doaj.org/article/3a31307d37524e7f8961a831d2919016>; Nadim Houry, “The ‘Unreturned’: Dealing with the Foreign Fighters and Their Families who Remain in Syria and Iraq,” in *Militant Jihadism: Today and Tomorrow*, ed. Serafettin Pektas and Johan Leman (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2019), 59–82; Christopher Baker-Beall, “The threat of the ‘returning foreign fighter’: The securitization of EU migration and border control policy,” *Security Dialogue* 50, no. 5 (2019), 437–453, accessed January 8, 2021, doi:10.1177/0967010619857048.



of the mothers, “a political decision, about people, who are in my eyes traitors [...]. The foreign fighters cannot come home to Denmark. Denmark is not their home. They have turned their back on us.”<sup>6</sup> The perception of treason refers here to acts of joining or marrying into ISIS, but Fredriksen also uses it as part of her justification for why the Danish state could not meet its responsibilities toward the children.

In a contemporary reading, Fredriksen’s rhetorical framing is an example of what Wendy Hesford describes as liminal humanitarian recognition. The prime minister recognises the children as Danish citizens and as “children-in-peril,” a dominant trope Hesford identifies in the selective construction of which children receive attention in humanitarian discourses.<sup>7</sup> Unlike the many children of other nationalities who are detained in the Al-Hol camp in northern Syria, the fairly small number of Danish and other Scandinavian children have been highly visible. And yet, this is a liminal recognition, a threshold state of simultaneous inclusion and exclusion. The children may be seen as Scandinavian citizens, but they are not treated as such. A recent study of political media debates around the repatriations of the children of ISIS-affiliated mothers to Belgium describes this liminal suspension as a “condition of virtual innocence,” a state of exception where children are not explicitly banned from returning but kept in a loop of indecision and pending inclusion.<sup>8</sup> The Swedish government’s approach is another example of this suspension. The Swedish foreign minister, Margot Wallström, emphasised that there “should be no doubt that the government is doing everything we can for the children and to bring them to Sweden”, while adding the important caveat “if possible” and stating that “every case has to be processed individually.”<sup>9</sup> With the exception of seven orphans in the spring of 2019, the Swedish authorities delayed repatriating Swedish IS-affiliated mothers and their children for nearly three years, until the autumn of 2021.<sup>10</sup>

---

6 Bo Søndergaard, “Ligesom alle andre børn,” *Politiken*, March 22, 2021, accessed June 13, 2022, <https://politiken.dk/kultur/art8122818/Ligesom-alle-andre-b%C3%B8rn>.

7 Wendy Hesford, *Violent Exceptions: Children’s Human Rights and Humanitarian Rhetorics* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2021), 5.

8 Nadia Fadi, Marijke Van Buggenhout and Els Dumortier, “Virtual Innocence: On the Status of the Children of European Departees in Northeast Syria,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* (2022) e-publication ahead of print, accessed October 28, 2022, doi:10.1080/01419870.2022.2089536.

9 Anette Holmqvist, “Margot Wallström: Om möjligt ska barnen föras till Sverige,” *Aftonbladet*, April 12, 2019, accessed May 7, 2022, <https://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/samhalle/a/2GV1e4/margot-wallstrom-om-mojligt-ska-barnen-foras-till-sverige>.

10 Åsa Linderborg, “Hjärtlösheten känns fullständigt osvensk,” *Aftonbladet*, 10 September, 2021, accessed May 7, 2022, <https://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/kolumnister/a/V9Qy91/hjartlosheten-kanns-fullstandigt-osvensk>.

However, from a historical perspective, Mette Frederiksen's reasoning contains another discursive layer. Her reference to the parents' treason against Denmark and the prioritisation of the mothers' punishment over the children's needs echoes the ways children born to Danish and Norwegian women and German soldiers were seen in Scandinavia after WWII. Women who had had relations with occupying German soldiers were considered traitors, with fraternisation framed as an act of both national and sexual treason.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, the children born to such unions, the so-called "children born of war" (CBOW), could face stigma and pay a high price due to their parents' actions.<sup>12</sup> Eva Simonsen has aptly described the public perception of World War II Scandinavian-German children as being liminal "children in danger/dangerous children".<sup>13</sup> While this conception of war-affected childhood was projected onto millions of children who were displaced by WWII, as children who might not become "good" future citizens if their needs were left unmet, this fear took on a distinct shape for Norwegian and Danish children born to German soldiers. The children represented the past shame of their mothers' treason through fraternisation and the national-socialist legacy, and sometimes even the threat, inherited from their fathers. The post-WWII Norwegian government, for example, recognized that it had a degree of humanitarian responsibility for these children as their citizens, but would have preferred not to repatriate displaced Norwegian CBOW and to deport CBOW from Norway, to de-nationalise them or to send them for adoption abroad to dispose of any visible trace of "German children."<sup>14</sup>

The region's experiences with Scandinavian German children born during and shortly after WWII offer important historical perspectives on the ongoing controversies surrounding the repatriation of children from Syria today. Based on a qualitative media analysis of how politicians, journalists and humanitarian organisations have represented the children in their respective contexts, I show that the specific constructions of the children as CBOW have shaped how society has perceived them in both generations. Media reports represent neither historical truths

---

11 Anette Warring, *Tyskerpiger: Under besættelse og retsopgør*, third edition (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 2017), 224–225.

12 Ingvill C. Mochmann, "Children Born of War," *OBETS – Revista de Ciencias Sociales* 2 (2008): 53–61, accessed October 28, 2022, <https://doaj.org/article/1dcfe38c6fb048bbaa2b8113bf5389a0>.

13 Eva Simonsen, "Children in Danger: Dangerous Children" in *Children of World War II: The Hidden Enemy Legacy*, ed. Kjersti Ericsson and Eva Simonsen (Oxford: Berg, 2005): 269–287.

14 Lars Borgersrud, "Meant to be Deported," in *Children of World War II: The Hidden Enemy Legacy*, ed. Kjersti Ericsson and Eva Simonsen (Oxford: Berg, 2005), 71–92.

nor empirical evidence of their parents' potential war crimes.<sup>15</sup> In making this point I am not seeking to equate Nazism with ISIS ideology in any way. However, I am arguing that it is the terms of children's media representations as CBOW that enables a meaningful comparison here despite the evident contextual differences. By documenting how the Scandinavian children of German soldiers and ISIS foreign fighters were constructed as "children in danger/dangerous children" in relation to their parents, this chapter highlights changes but also continuities in the region's views of children born of war.

Recognising the children of ISIS foreign fighters as Scandinavian CBOW, rather than just seeing them as the children of terrorists, may offer new avenues of advocacy and help move past the problematic liminal recognition of the children's right to return. After decades of secrecy, self-organised CBOW associations from the Norwegian and Danish WWII generation and emerging CBOW scholarship have challenged both their past stigmatisation and the erasure of their histories in the 1990s. Norway issued a formal apology in 2001, and Denmark has opened its archives to CBOW searching for their fathers.<sup>16</sup> The existence of a more neutral subject position as Scandinavian children born of war makes it possible to include the children of ISIS foreign fighters in this subject position and in regional history too. At the same time, the comparison also points to new scholarly perspectives. Conceptions of childhood and children's rights in 2019 have changed significantly since 1945. Tracing the similarities and differences in perceptions of both generations shows that these changes have not been applied to the Scandinavian children of ISIS foreign fighters in the same way due to their CBOW background.

## Children of ISIS foreign fighters and CBOW studies

The Norwegian and Danish WWII histories are part of a larger field of study of the specific challenges and stigmatisation faced by children born of war in conflicts

---

<sup>15</sup> For a first review of the available empirical research on the cases of returned Scandinavian "IS women" see Henriette Frees Esholdt, "Har de skandinaviske ISIS-kvinder indtaget operative militære roller i Kalifatet?" *Tidsskrift for islamforskning* 16, no. 1 (2022): 99 and 105–106, accessed October 27, 2022, doi:10.7146/tifo.v16i1.132559.

<sup>16</sup> See "Om DKBF," Homepage of the Danish War Child Association, accessed January 22, 2021, <http://www.krigsboern.dk/index.php/da/om-dkbf#historie> or "Norska tyskebarn får compensation," *Dagens Nyheter*, 2 July, 2004, <https://www.dn.se/nyheter/varlden/norska-tyskebarn-far-kompensation/>.

around the world – the field of CBOW studies.<sup>17</sup> Norwegian-German CBOW activists and scholars were among the first to note rhetorical parallels between the framing of the WWII generation and the children of ISIS followers, as well as in asking whether the Norwegian authorities had learned from their past mistakes to ensure a better reception and integration of children today.<sup>18</sup> However, there are also many ways in which the situations of children born to German soldiers differed from those of the children of ISIS foreign fighters today. The abbreviation “CBOW” is an umbrella term that refers to children born to enemy soldiers, occupying soldiers, UN peacekeepers or (female) child soldiers.<sup>19</sup> The so-called “ISIS children” do not always fit into the terms of this CBOW definition as children born to local women and “foreign soldiers who are perceived as enemies in the mothers’ home community.”<sup>20</sup> Not all Scandinavian children detained with their ISIS-affiliated mothers have been born in Syria, and in some cases their fathers could be Scandinavian citizens too – enemy soldiers, but not foreigners.<sup>21</sup> This is not least because the transnational recruitment of ISIS and its desired status as a “caliphate” challenges the traditional conceptions of warfare, statehood and citizenship, which build the foundation of current CBOW definitions.<sup>22</sup> The limit of the standard CBOW definition itself have been a matter of debate in the field in recent years as well. Some scholars have called for a broader definition that could apply to more, if not all, conflict settings and include, for example, children of trafficked mothers and of local enemy soldiers in civil wars.<sup>23</sup> Others have ac-

---

17 For an overview, see Ingvill C. Mochmann, “Children Born of War – A Decade of International and Interdisciplinary Research,” *Historical Social Research/Historische Sozialforschung* 42, no. 1 (2017): 320–346, accessed January 22, 2021, doi:10.12759/hsr.42.20171.320–346 or Sabine Lee, *Children Born of War in the Twentieth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017).

18 Stian Eisenträger, “Gerd Fleischer vokste opp som ‘tyskerunge’: Ikke begå de samme feilene mot barna til IS-kvinnene,” *VG*, April 18, 2019, accessed August 13, 2022, <https://www.vg.no/nyheter/innenriks/i/b5804v/gerd-fleischer-vokste-opp-som-tyskerunge-ikke-begaa-de-samme-feilene-mot-barna-til-is-kvinnene>; Ingvill C. Mochmann, “Krever ombud for IS-barn,” *VL*, June 14, 2018, accessed August 13, 2022, <https://www.vl.no/nyhet/krever-ombud-for-is-barn-1.1158834?paywall=true>.

19 Mochmann, “Children Born of War – A Decade of International and Interdisciplinary Research,” (2017): 323.

20 Lee, *Children*, 26.

21 See, for example, Patricio Galvez and Joakim Medin, *Amanda: min dotters resa till IS* (Stockholm: Verbal Förlag, 2022), on the case of the Swedish-Norwegian Skråmo family. The parents took four children born in Sweden with them to the ISIS, where three more children were born.

22 Egdūnas Raciū, “Caliphate Citizens: Revisiting the Concept of ‘Foreign Fighters,’” in *Not Only Syria? The Phenomenon of Foreign Fighters in a Comparative Perspective*, ed. Kacper Rekawek (Amsterdam: IOS Press, 2016), 52–59.

23 Amra Delić, Philipp Kuwert, and Heide Glaesmer, “Should the definition of the term ‘children born of war’ and vulnerabilities of children from recent conflict and post-conflict settings be

knowledgeled the importance of continually probing the validity of the concept with the changing face of warfare but argue that it is analytically necessary to maintain the specificity of how CBOW are affected by their relation to the military position and enemy status of their fathers.<sup>24</sup>

The scholarly debates around CBOW definitions, their origins and their applications are ongoing. In their 2021 critical appraisal of the terminology, Heide Glaesmer and Sabine Lee suggested including children at the margins of the concept while keeping CBOW's specific relation to "enemy fathers" and towards "distrusted mothers" as an analytical criterion to distinguish CBOW from other war-affected children.<sup>25</sup> Elke Kleinau critically notes that Glaesmer and Lee's appraisal departs from children born of war as a result of sexual violence in the Balkan wars without acknowledging WWII Scandinavian CBOW histories – a context that also shaped the terminology and further reflects that children born through consensual relationships in conflicts face similar risks and are CBOW too.<sup>26</sup> Despite the different points of departure and disciplinary perspectives in this debate, there is a conceptual consensus that children's association with parents' enemy status is a root cause for the stigma that may be attached to them. This common conceptual ground is important because it enables a comparative analysis of CBOW generations across different contexts, kinds of conflict and circumstances of birth.

Many legal, political and historical relations between the WWII CBOW generations and children of ISIS foreign fighters today remain to be explored. Based on my media analysis here, I argue that the Scandinavian children of ISIS foreign fighters can be understood as CBOW in the way society perceives them vis-à-vis their relation to enemy soldiers and distrusted mothers. Their respective constructions as CBOW are not identical, but comparable. For example, the WWII "German child" label uses the fathers' national background to denote the status of a foreign

---

broadened?" *Acta Medica Academica* 46, no.1 (2017): 67–69, accessed October 17, 2022, doi:10.5644/ama2006–124.191; Tatjana Takševa, "Response to whether the definition of the term 'children born of war' and vulnerabilities of children from recent conflict and post-conflict settings should be broadened," *Acta Medica Academica* 46, no. 2 (2017): 177–179, accessed October 17, 2022, doi:10.5644/ama2006–124.206.

<sup>24</sup> Ingvill C. Mochmann, "Reflections on the Definition and Categorization of 'Children Born of War,'" *Acta Medica Academica* 46, no. 2 (2017): 180–181, accessed October 17, 2022, doi:10.5644/ama2006–124.207.

<sup>25</sup> Sabine Lee and Heide Glaesmer, "Children Born of War: A Critical Appraisal of the Terminology," In *Children Born of War: Past, Present and Future*, ed. Sabine Lee, Heide Glaesmer, and Barbara Stelzl-Marx (New York: Routledge, 2021): 27.

<sup>26</sup> Elke Kleinau, review of *Children Born of War: Past, Present and Future*, by Sabine Lee, Heide Glaesmer, and Barbara Stelzl-Marx (ed.), *Erziehungswissenschaftliche Revue (EWR)* 21, no. 4 (2022), accessed November 23, 2022, <http://www.klinkhardt.de/ewr/978036719013.html>.

enemy. The reference to the threat of the “Islamic State” in the derogatory term “ISIS child” has a similar function in the construction of the children as a problem category, even though ISIS is not tied to a particular nationality as such. In my reading, the physical and ideological departure of parents from Scandinavia to ISIS in the middle of a conflict added a spectre of militarised foreignness to the parents’ enemy status, even if they both came from Scandinavia, with a sense of treason attached to mothers and fathers. And whether children had been born prior to or after their parents’ departure to the “caliphate” made little difference in how negative media discourses framed their right to return and the future danger their presence could pose.

Drawing on Johanna Sköld and Ingrid Söderlind, I approach media as a forum that “both reflected and influenced peoples’ thoughts and acts”<sup>27</sup> in the war-related politicisation of children – their innocence, agency, or, as here, possible threat. Representations of childhood in the media generally reflect normative perceptions of childhood ideals in a certain moment, as well as how the very idea of childhood is historically situated, evolving and continually changing over time.<sup>28</sup> The social construction of childhood is a complex process, “produced and reproduced through government policy, media representations, historical and philosophical influences, and individual experiences of childhood and family.”<sup>29</sup> As Mhairi Cowden has noted, the often contradictory depictions of childhood in a given context play an important role in how not just the conception of children, but also the idea of children’s rights itself materialises in practice.<sup>30</sup> For example, childhood innocence is a problematic concept that can bar vulnerable children who fall outside certain racial, gendered, ableist or national norms from access to rights or care. Accordingly, Miriam Ticktin emphasises the need to move beyond conceptions of childhood innocence altogether.<sup>31</sup> And yet, Hesford cautions, it is important to address the fact that dominant ideas around innocence continue to shape social perceptions and political decisions that constitute some children as more worthy subjects than others.<sup>32</sup> The persistence of references to “innocence” and “threat” in the rhetorical framing of CBOW across significantly different conceptions of childhood

---

27 Johanna Sköld and Ingrid Söderlind, “Finska barn i svenska hem,” *Scandia* 82, no. 1 (2016): 28.

28 Debbie Olson and Giselle Rampaul, “Representations of Childhood in the Media,” in *The Routledge International Handbook of Children, Adolescents and Media*, ed. Dafna Lemish (New York: Routledge, 2013), 23.

29 Mhairi Cowden, *Children’s Rights: From Philosophy to Public Policy* (London: Palgrave 2016), 19.

30 Cowden, *Children’s Rights*, 4–19.

31 Miriam Ticktin, “A World Without Innocence,” *American Ethnologist* 44, no. 4 (2017): 577–590, accessed May 8, 2022, doi:10.1111/amet.12558.

32 Hesford, *Violent*, 13–16 and 50.

and children's rights in 1945 and 2019 calls for an analysis of the functions these dominant, recurring tropes have fulfilled in their respective contexts.

## Methodology

My methodological approach is based on a close reading and interpretation of a manual qualitative coding of how the liminal “children in danger/dangerous children” trope, with CBOW-specific references to enemy fathers and distrusted mothers, constructed perceptions of CBOW childhood in Scandinavian media representations between 1945 and 1950 and between 2019 and the spring of 2022. While sharing elements with a qualitative content analysis common in social sciences in identifying textual patterns, close readings of media come from a literary and cultural studies tradition.<sup>33</sup> As such, the analytical focus rests on identifying rhetorical elements and on unpacking the functions of representations, that is, “the meanings embedded or encoded in mediated content,” in their contexts.<sup>34</sup> This approach is well-suited to building foundations for comparative and future quantitative analysis across composite media collections.<sup>35</sup> My individual close reading here does not aim to offer a comprehensive picture of all kinds and functions of CBOW media representations, but to establish meaningful terms of comparison between Scandinavian children born to German soldiers and ISIS foreign fighters as CBOW. In developing my analytical categories, I first sorted the selected examples into representations of “dangerous children” and “children in danger,” with sub-categories for the related themes of “threat” and “innocence,” within the respective national media and period. During the analysis, references to “enemy fathers” and “distrusted mothers” emerged as another comparable category in the children's media representation in both historical contexts.

For my source selection, I used key-word searches in the e-archives of major national newspapers in Sweden, Denmark and Norway, with variations of the search terms “ISIS child/woman” and “German child/woman” in the respective lan-

---

<sup>33</sup> See Margrit Schreier, *Qualitative Content Analysis in Practice* (London: SAGE, 2012) and Jonathan Culler, “The closeness of close reading,” *ADE Bulletin* 149 (2010): 20–25, accessed August 21, 2022, doi:10.1632/ade.149.20.

<sup>34</sup> Sarah Stang, “Too close, too intimate, and too vulnerable: close reading methodology and the future of feminist game studies,” *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 39, no. 3 (2022): 231, accessed August 24, 2022, doi:10.1080/15295036.2022.2080851.

<sup>35</sup> Yanni Alexander Loukissas, “Taking Big Data apart: local readings of composite media collections,” *Information, Communication & Society* 20, no. 5 (2017): 652–653, accessed August 24, 2022, doi:10.1080/1369118X.2016.121172.



guages, to identify relevant articles.<sup>36</sup> The coverage of the children of ISIS foreign fighters in the contemporary Scandinavian media is extensive. I chose here about 50 relevant articles per newspaper for a close reading and focused my selection on CBOW representations at distinct moments of public controversy in the respective national contexts. Contexts include the contested repatriations of seven orphans to Sweden in 2019, the collapse of the Norwegian coalition government over a humanitarian repatriation in early 2020, and the widely debated Danish U-turn in repatriation strategy for national security reasons in the spring of 2021.

For post-WWII media representations of CBOW, I had to choose a slightly different selection process. Norwegian politicians and humanitarian organisations publicly discussed the fate of children born to German soldiers, and the e-archive of the Norwegian newspaper *Aftenposten* had 79 articles on “German children”/“German girls” between 1945 and 1950. Danish and Swedish national newspapers addressed the issue of the children much less openly: for example, the Danish *Politiken*’s e-archive had only three articles at that time, and the Swedish *Aftonbladet* only six. This indicates a degree of national interest in letting Danish and Swedish CBOW histories fall away rather than the absence of controversy. For the Danish and Swedish post-war contexts, I then used the national electronic newspaper databases, the Danish *mediestream* and the Swedish *svenska dagstidningar*, for key word searches in all the registered newspapers of that period. In this way, I was able to find and include articles from regional newspapers that addressed local conflicts around alimony, punishments for fraternising women and questions over whether “German children” should receive aid in the Danish and Swedish media as well.

## Constructions of the problem category “German children”

Across Scandinavia, children born to German soldiers during World War II were seen as a potential future threat due to their heritage.<sup>37</sup> Norway openly stigmatised its CBOW, attempted their deportation, and temporarily retracted some of the

---

<sup>36</sup> From 2019 to June 2022, I selected 48 articles from *Aftonbladet*, 42 from *Expressen* and 63 from the *Svenska Dagbladet* for Sweden, 62 articles from *Politiken* and 32 from *Ekstra Bladet* for Denmark and 45 articles from *Aftenposten* and 37 from *VG* for Norway. For 1945–1950 I analysed 50 articles from the Swedish newspaper database *Svenska dagstidningar*, 18 articles from Danish historical newspapers via *mediestream* and 79 articles from the Norwegian *Aftenposten*.

<sup>37</sup> Kjersti Ericsson and Eva Simonsen, “Introduction,” in *Children of World War II: The Hidden Enemy Legacy*, ed. Kjersti Ericsson and Eva Simonsen, (Oxford: Berg, 2005), 1–6.



mother's as well as their children's citizenship, while Swedish officials resisted adoptions or resettlements of displaced Norwegian-German CBOW in the post-war years.<sup>38</sup> Denmark chose to downplay and ultimately bury the visible links of its CBOW to German paternity.<sup>39</sup> After a few years, Norway, Denmark and Sweden settled on adoptions and strategic silences about the presence of the children of enemy soldiers so as to resolve the "German child" problem officially.<sup>40</sup> However, the consequences of having been labelled a "German child" could last a lifetime for the affected children.<sup>41</sup> Comparative empirical studies on the impact of discrimination on Norwegian versus Danish CBOW have shown that Norway's harsher measures also resulted in more negative experiences for these children compared to Denmark. Nonetheless Danish CBOW were impacted by specific forms of discrimination (not just by the state, but also in families, schools and communities) tied to their CBOW status.<sup>42</sup> The violation of Norwegian-German children's rights and welfare is by now well-documented, but it is worth re-visiting the media discussions at the time to understand better how dominant elements in past constructions of CBOW as a problem category cut across different national contexts and kinds of conflict. This then enables new perspectives on CBOW constructions in the lesser studied Danish and Swedish contexts too.

## Distrusted mothers and enemy fathers

In post-WWII media representations of Scandinavian CBOW, German fathers figured as a vague ideological threat, the mothers' treason being the main focal point. In June 1945 the Norwegian government began to intern thousands of women who had fraternised to assure its citizens that they would have to "account for the disgrace and shame" they brought to the nation. *Aftenposten* describes the women as "human material" divided into three categories, the worst of which was seen as "capable of everything. [...] They are masters of disguise. They love to turn

---

<sup>38</sup> Borgersrud, "Meant to," 71, 88–92.

<sup>39</sup> Arne Øland, *Horeunger Og Helligdage – Tyskerbørns Beretninger*. (Århus: Schönbergske Forlag, 2001), 41–43.

<sup>40</sup> Simonsen, "Children," 279.

<sup>41</sup> See, among others, Kjersti Ericsson and Dag Ellingsen (2005), "Life Stories of Norwegian War Children," In *Children of World War II: The Hidden Enemy Legacy*, ed. Kjersti Ericsson and Eva Simonsen, (Oxford: Berg, 2005), 93–112.

<sup>42</sup> Ingvill C. Mochmann and Stein Ugelvik Larsen, "Children Born of War": The Life Course of Children Fathered by German Soldiers in Norway and Denmark during WWII – Some Empirical Results," *Historical Social Research/Historische Sozialforschung* 33, no. 1 (2008): 360, accessed January 12, 2021, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20762268>.

black into white and present themselves as persecuted innocent women [...] There is no use in being naive here.”<sup>43</sup> Norwegian media discourses framed these women as hopeless cases, as arrogant, German-friendly women who had now fallen from their high horse but were still dangerous, not least due to their alleged promiscuity, which threatened to spread sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) from German soldiers to the Norwegian and Danish public.<sup>44</sup> Even though some voices cautioned against the retroactive punishment of these women<sup>45</sup> or cited mitigating circumstances for naïve young girls who may have succumbed to “evil” due to the war,<sup>46</sup> most coverage in Norway and Denmark represented them as national traitors on par with Gestapo officials and collaborators.<sup>47</sup> There was a widespread sentiment that the women should be punished regardless of any past crime or future danger they might pose. In Denmark, one judge ruled that “it is a healthy reaction for young people to shave girls who had had relations with the occupation force”<sup>48</sup> when a father tried to get compensation for his daughter having been shorn. And even though fraternisation itself was not a legal offense, some Danish-German girls were also sentenced to prison terms after liberation, not only if they had collaborated with the German forces, but also for instances of simply trying to conceal a German father’s identity when giving birth.<sup>49</sup>

## Dangerous children

Children born to Norwegian women and German soldiers were constructed as a problem category on all levels of society: the state framed them as a burden on public finances, their mothers were constructed as loose and/or traitors, while the children themselves were either seen as mentally inferior and/or a fifth col-

---

43 “Tyskertøsene i leir. I første omgang opprettes leirer for 1400 fra Oslo og omegn. Men hvor finner man kvinner som er skikket til å ta seg av dem?” *Aftenposten*, June 13, 1945, no. 253, 2.

44 “Sædelighedspolitiet paa Jagt efter løsagtige Piger,” *B.T.*, October 1, 1945; “Da Finn Kaas og 32 andre Gestapo-folket ble arrestert. Dramatiske omstendigheter,” *Aftenposten*, 5 June, 1945, no. 242, 5.

45 “Kvinner som giftet seg med fiendtlig lands statsborger. Fra Norske Kvinners Nasjonalråd,” *Aftenposten*, December 2, 1946, no. 555, 2.

46 “Over 22.000 norske barn har fått fadderhjelp i krigsårene,” *Aftenposten*, September 7, 1945, no. 402, 1–2.

47 “Kun virkeligt uskyldige skal have erstatning for internering,” *Berlinske*, September 5, 1945, 3.

48 “Sund reaktion at klippe Haaret for Tyskerpiger,” *Jydske Tidende*, February 14, 1946, 1.

49 “Slem Tyskertøs i Kalundborg,” *Sorø Amts-Tidende*, May 24, 1945, 6; “Millionbeløb til Tysker-Børnene,” *Morsø Folkeblad*, August 6, 1946, 3.

umn that would pose a future biological and/or cultural threat to the nation.<sup>50</sup> In the media coverage, the children's perceived danger to national security blurred the then still prevalent thinking on eugenics – the children being dangerous because they had “German blood” – with indignation at the children as the embodied result of their mother's shameful treason: “It's not enough that we have German girls that disgraced the nation, and who morally and economically are a heavy burden on society. The ‘Herrefolk’<sup>51</sup> has also left behind a high number of German children who, with their Germanic heritage, may come to cause the country a lot of trouble.”<sup>52</sup> Initially, Norwegian officials thought they had to deal with 6,000 “German children” in Norway (research today puts the estimate closer to 12,000), and CBOW were seen as a distinctly domestic problem. However, there were also a few hundred Norwegian-German children who had been displaced or left behind in Germany that the government should have repatriated but did not want to.<sup>53</sup> The media discourses helped justify this rejection by explicitly framing the children as potentially radicalised in former Nationalist-Socialist Germany and repatriation as a gateway for future threats:

It was humanly understandable that they now found better conditions in Norway than Germany. [...] There may now be many heart-wrenching tragedies, but we have to stick to the rules – for the sake of principle. [...] Let in first the women and the small children, so soon older children – Hitlerjugend [Hitler Youth] – will follow, and in the end the households father is sure to show up.<sup>54</sup>

Denmark did not publicly question its CBOWs' citizenship or mental health. However, outrage was targeted at the fraternising mothers for their treason, and many of their children also suffered from stigma, discrimination and secrecy as “German children” across the nation.<sup>55</sup> The few explicit references to the children in post-WWII Danish media mostly constructed them as an unfair, unnational economic burden that forced the state to be the “carer of the German occupiers' illegitimate offspring”, who had been left behind by the Germans, and “young, naïve girls.”<sup>56</sup> In

---

50 Ericsson and Ellingsen, “Life Stories,” 93.

51 Reference to German Nationalist-Socialists as a “self-proclaimed master race”.

52 “Har ‘herrefolket’ etterlatt seg 6000 barn?” *Aftenposten*, June 2, 1945, no. 238, 5.

53 Kåre Olsen, “Under the Care of Lebensborn: Norwegian War Children and their Mothers,” in *Children of World War II: The Hidden Enemy Legacy*, ed. Kjersti Ericsson and Eva Simonsen, (Oxford: Berg, 2005), 15–34.

54 “Rikspolisjefen redegjør for de nye spesielle landssvikavdelingene,” *Aftenposten*, August 9, 1945, no. 352, 1–2.

55 See Warring, *Tyskerpiger*, 112–125 and Øland, *Horeunger*, 227–233.

56 “Millionbeløb til Tysker-Bornene,” *Morsø Folkeblad*, 6 August, 1946, 3.

*Politiken*'s review of the first major post-war study of "German girls" in Denmark, Grethe Hartmann's 1946 study *The girls they left behind*, the newspaper echoed common refrains of Danish "German girls" as dirty, treacherous, semi-prostitutes whose children would suffer from a "hereditary burden."<sup>57</sup> Unlike Norway, however, the review expressed more optimism about the potential integration of what they assumed to be 5000 "German children" (more likely close to 10,000 according to current research).<sup>58</sup> Danish society was deemed likely to assimilate the children even if they inherited "the unlucky characteristics of their German fathers," preferably through their grandparents or also adoptions, as their mothers were presumed not to care about the children "as a rule."<sup>59</sup> While Denmark was quicker to resort to strategic silences around their CBOW's existence than Norway, both nations proclaimed the problem solved once questions of alimony and adoptions appeared to be settled.<sup>60</sup>

## Children in danger

Despite the common emphasis on these children as dangerous burdens, politicians and NGOs back then also voiced degrees of recognition that the children should not pay for their parents' deeds and that there was a humanitarian need to protect them from stigmatisation. For a brief moment in September 1945, Nordic social workers at a conference in Oslo defined "the care of the so-called war children and the many young girls who have betrayed their country and their honour" as one of the "most pressing tasks" of post-war Norway.<sup>61</sup> The rhetoric of the dedicated war-child commission, installed by the government to resolve the "war-child" problem in the summer of 1945, also recognised and framed the protection of CBOW as a national responsibility. The commission positioned itself in the press against suggestions that the children be relocated to Germany, as Norway would then lose control over their fate, and against the fear that their "German blood" might be contagious. To ensure that these children will become "good Norwegian citizens," the commission suggested different ways of anonymising or reducing the

---

57 "Tysker-Pigerne i Statistikens Lys. Deres Børn lever under triste Kaar, men betyder ingen Samfundsfare. Nazisterne prøvede at lave Bordeller i København i Krigens sidste Aar." *Politiken*, September 28, 1946, no. 358, 6.

58 "Vi har faaet 5000 Tyskerbørn," *B.T.*, May 19, 1945, 9 and Warring, *Tyskerpiger*, 16.

59 "Tysker-Pigerne i Statistikens Lys," 6.

60 "Paternitetsager mod tyske Soldater opgives," *Lolland-Falster Social-Demokrat*, Juli 30, 1948, 2.

61 "Over 22.000 norske barn har fått fadderhjelp i krigsårene. Skal tyskerbarn kalles krigsbarn? 8020 tyskerbarn registrert," *Aftenposten*, 7 September, 1945, no. 402, 1–2.

visibility of their German paternity in Norway. However, the recommendations nevertheless end with the hope that it would be best for Norway and the children if other democratic countries would adopt the children to protect them from discrimination in Norway and allow them to grow up as good citizens elsewhere.<sup>62</sup> The commission's recommendations were never implemented, but they reflect how this rhetoric of humanitarian recognition liminalised the children's national belonging and served to rationalise their different treatment compared to other Norwegian children.

The plight of "German children," more broadly conceived, had also been a prominent theme in post-war Swedish media. As a neutral country during World War II, Sweden had viewed its humanitarian aid for war-affected children as the nation's contribution to the war effort, especially in caring for Finnish "war children" in Swedish foster families.<sup>63</sup> After the liberation, media debates ensued around whether Sweden should help "German children", that is, children in Germany, either by sending aid there or via temporary placements with Swedish foster families. Opponents of bringing children from Germany to Sweden noted that "the German mentality never fails to materialise,"<sup>64</sup> while supporters of the plan described Germany as a hellish "pest-hole" and Sweden as the ideal place to ensure their development into democratic citizens.<sup>65</sup>

Anna Lenah Elgström, the co-founder of the Swedish branch of the NGO *Save the Children, Rädde Barnen*, explicitly included Norwegian CBOW in her advocacy for "German children" in the name of children's rights. In 1946 she argued in *Aftenposten* that the principle that children should not be held accountable for the "faults of their leaders" was a children's rights issue and a problem for the nation's future: "If the children of 'German girls' in Denmark and Norway are forced to grow up as predestined pariahs or young Germans are formed by need and hunger into a pack of werewolves, then not only they are punished, but so are the country and society they belong to."<sup>66</sup> Conceptions of children's rights in *Rädde Barnen's* humanitarian advocacy at the time, as Lina Sturfelt highlights, were still very much tied to notions of saving humanity by saving suffering children and safe-

---

62 "Ikke tale om å sende tyskerbarna til Tyskland. De kan kanskje bli gode norske statsborgere," *Aftenposten*, November 12, 1945, no. 512, 2.

63 Sköld and Söderlind, "Finska," 28.

64 "Tyska barn till Sverige," *Aftonbladet*, 19 November, 1946, 8.

65 Ebba Bonde, "Från allmenheten: Opprop Till Svenska Folket," *Sölvesborgs-Tidningen*, 7 January, 1947, 5.

66 "Aftenpostens Kronik 13.8.1946, "Barnas Menneskelige Rettigheter" av Anna Lenah Elgström," *Aftenposten*, August 13, 1946, Nr. 367, 2–3.

guarding children's rights as a contribution to nation-building.<sup>67</sup> Elgström's transnational advocacy in Norway, where CBOW's needs and rights had been discussed in the context of their welfare at best, nevertheless introduced the emerging international human rights discourse in local media debates.

Swedish humanitarianism thus played a role in shaping the terms of the visibility of Norwegian CBOW after World War II, but it is also important to note here that the prominent place of humanitarianism in Swedish post-war media – not least around “German children” – is likely to have helped keep Sweden's own CBOW histories under wraps. For example, the so-called SS wives, Swedish women who had travelled to Germany to marry SS officers, returned in secret with their children after the war.<sup>68</sup> Ingrid Lomfors has identified the inclusion of these women and children on Folke Bernadotte's “white buses” rescue scheme for Scandinavian prisoners of war in 1945 as part of a “blind spot” in Swedish humanitarian war narratives, but little is still known about the children themselves.<sup>69</sup> Another example comes from Lars Borgersrud's research, where he showed that the Swedish authorities erased Norwegian-German CBOW adoptees' backgrounds to enable their adoptions as stateless, “innocent children” in Sweden, presenting them in the media as children found in a former concentration camp (rather than a German *Lebensborn* home).<sup>70</sup> Swedish humanitarian discourse may have recognised CBOW, but domestically the Swedish authorities cooperated with Norwegian and Danish interests in making German paternity invisible.

## Liminal conceptions of “ISIS children”

As a hidden population, previous generations of CBOW have commonly faced marginalisation, stigma and secrecy.<sup>71</sup> This invisibility has also contributed to a limited

---

67 Lina Sturfelt, “Rädda Barnens århundrade: Mänskliga rättigheter i en motsägelsefull historiskrivning,” in *Mänskliga rättigheter i samhället*, ed. Malin Arvidsson, Lena Halldenius and Lina Sturfelt (Malmö: Bokbox, 2018), 68.

68 For a first history of the mothers here, see Christoph Andersson, *Svenska SS-Frua. Med Uppdrag att Föda Ariska Barn* (Stockholm: Nordstedts, 2021).

69 Ingrid Lomfors, *Blind Fläck: Minne Och Glömska Kring Svenska Röda Korsets Hjälpinsats i Nazityskland 1945* (Stockholm: Atlantis, 2005), 29–39.

70 Lars Borgersrud, *Staten og krigsbarna: en historisk undersøkelse av statsmyndighetenes behandling av krigsbarna i de første etterkrigsårene* (Oslo: Institutt for kulturstudier, Universitetet i Oslo, 2004), 83–128.

71 See Mochmann, “Children born of war” (2017) or Martina Koegeler-Abdi, “Family Secrecy: Experiences of Danish German Children Born of War, 1940–2019,” *Journal of Family History* 46, no. 1 (2021): 62–76, accessed January 7, 2021, doi:10.1177/0363199020967234.

humanitarian recognition and a belated acknowledgment of their distinct needs under children's rights.<sup>72</sup> The Scandinavian children of ISIS's followers, by contrast, have been hyper-visible – not as individual children, but as “dangerous children in danger” in the abstract on the front page. As the Danish journalist Frank Hvilsom noted in October 2021: “Alongside the corona pandemic, the evacuation of the three women and their total of fourteen children was one of the most discussed and highly charged political issues of the last few years.”<sup>73</sup> And international as well as national human rights organisations have explicitly spoken out in favour of the children's right to return.<sup>74</sup> In terms of advocacy, this is an improvement, but the picture regarding the children's access to rights remains complicated. In a study from 2010 based on five international cases studies from across the twentieth century, Ingvill C. Mochmann and Sabine Lee conclude that “there has been no noticeable improvement in the application of these rights [children's rights] to children born of war.”<sup>75</sup> This is the case even though awareness that children should have human rights increased after both World Wars, despite the codification of children's rights in the 1989 Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC) and despite the passage of two Optional Protocols to the Convention that recognised the special needs of children in armed conflicts in 2000. At the same time, Mochmann and Lee express the hope that this can and will change when societies accord more “cultural legitimacy” to children's rights.<sup>76</sup>

Despite advances and the wide-spread ratification of the CRC, the implementation of children's rights – internationally but also in Scandinavia – remains contested and uneven.<sup>77</sup> Children of ISIS foreign fighters who have returned from Syria to Scandinavian jurisdiction one way or another do have greater access to

---

72 Donna Seto, *No Place for a War Baby: The Global Politics of Children Born of Wartime Sexual Violence* (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2013), 211–214. See also Charli Carpenter, *Forgetting Children Born of War: Setting the Human Rights Agenda in Bosnia and Beyond* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010) for more on the relations of media, humanitarian recognition and rights in the cases of Bosnian CBOW.

73 Frank Hvilsom, “Mødre og børn adskilles efter sigtelser for at fremme terror,” *Politiken*, 15 Oktober, 2021, accessed June 16, 2022, <https://politiken.dk/indland/art8413688/M%C3%B8dre-og-b%C3%B8rn-adskilles-efter-sigtelser-for-at-fremme-terror>.

74 See, for example, Jon Bergå, “Rädda Barnen kommenterar Sveriges svar på FN-kritiken om barnen i Syrien,” 27 March, 2021, accessed March 23, 2022, <https://press.raddabarnen.se/pressreleases/raedda-barnen-kommenterar-sveriges-svar-paa-fn-kritiken-om-barnen-i-syrien-3085907>.

75 Ingvill C. Mochmann and Sabine Lee, “The Human Rights of Children Born of War: Case Analyses of Past and Present Conflicts,” *Historical Social Research/Historische Sozialforschung* 35, no. 3 (2010): 268, accessed March 5, 2022, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25758846>.

76 Mochmann and Lee, “The Human Rights of Children Born of War,” 293.

77 Cowden, *Children's Rights*, 3.



rights today than the World War II CBOW generation.<sup>78</sup> However, the uses of children's rights discourses in the repatriation debates have been highly ambivalent. For example, the recognition that returning Scandinavian children from Syria would have a *right* to come with their mothers has arguably contributed to the political decision *not* to return the 85 children in question for three years or more.<sup>79</sup> Finland's decision to conduct family repatriations to protect and ensure the children's access to rights shows that different political decisions and interpretations would have been possible.<sup>80</sup> However, the Norwegian government took a step in the opposite direction and attempted to change the legal framework instead. In June 2021, the Norwegian government sent a legal intervention to the European Court of Human Rights to argue that nations that signed the European Convention on Human Rights had no obligation to apply the Convention outside their jurisdiction to repatriate children from Syria.<sup>81</sup> These legal disputes over jurisdiction reflect a continuing controversy over cultural legitimacy in Scandinavian CBOW's access to children's rights – a controversy tied to terrorism paradigms, but also to the stigma the children inherited as CBOW from their parents.

## Distrusted mothers and enemy fathers

In light of the atrocities fathers may have committed while serving ISIS and the unclear role of the mothers in the “caliphate,” any repatriation that prioritised the children's best interests could have a high political cost, especially when saving a child means bringing their mothers with them (reluctantly). The most prominent example here was when then Norwegian prime minister Erna Solberg decided to repatriate a sick five-year-old Norwegian child with his mother and sister early in January 2020, stating that “regard for the child was the most important” aspect<sup>82</sup> – a decision that led to the implosion of her conservative-right wing coalition. Kari

---

78 “Many Children Returned from Syria Detention Doing Well,” Human Rights Watch, 21 November, 2022, accessed December 12, 2022, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/11/21/many-children-returned-syria-detention-doing-well>.

79 Søndergaard, “Ligesom alle andre børn.”

80 Kristian Klarskov, “Børnenes statsminister bor i Finland,” *Politiken*, 28th March, 2021, accessed June 16, 2022, <https://politiken.dk/indland/art8147921/B%C3%B8rnenes-statsminister-bor-i-Finland>

81 Nilas Johnsen, “Refses Norges syn på IS-kvinner,” *VG*, June 11, 2021, accessed August 17, 2022, <https://www.vg.no/nyheter/utenriks/i/1EBno7/refser-norges-syn-paa-is-kvinner>.

82 Martin Hall Larsen, “Erna Solberg: – For flertallet av regjeringen var hensynet til barnet det viktigste,” *Aftenposten*, January 16, 2020, accessed August 17, 2022, <https://www.aftenposten.no/norge/politikk/i/4qgzEe/erna-solberg-for-flertallet-av-regjeringen-var-hensynet-til-barnet-det-viktigste>.



Kjønaas Kjos, a Member of Parliament for the junior coalition partner, called the woman “a terrorist” and proclaimed: “It’s absolutely terrible that we’re getting her. [...] I am ashamed to sit in a government that does that.”<sup>83</sup> The woman, who returned with her two children, was put on trial in Norway a year later. She argued that her journey to ISIS was a decision born of love for her husband and that, once there, she was unable to leave.<sup>84</sup> Her defense presented her as a victim of human trafficking, while the prosecution argued she had deliberately joined a terrorist organisation. The prosecutor claimed that she had asked for weapons as soon as she arrived in Syria and that, even if she had “only” taken care of her husband and children, she had still enabled the ISIS’s operations.<sup>85</sup>

In this court case, as well as in Scandinavian media coverage on the contested repatriations more broadly, it is again the mothers who feature prominently. The nexus of fathers, radical Islam and ISIS appear as a threatening background, while the mothers tend to be presented as either naïve, young girls or dangerous traitors – in similar terms to post-WWII media representations of “German girls.”<sup>86</sup> For example, reports may emphasise how an innocent, typically Swedish “horse girl” has become a dangerous, calculating “IS woman”<sup>87</sup> or frame the waiting women as still closeted terrorists who just want to use their children as “tickets home.”<sup>88</sup> Some comments also present the women as young girls seeking an adventure, who took “the chance for experiences and a wild life when they travelled to the Islamic

---

**83** Solveig Ruud, Kjetil Magne Sørenes, and Alf Ole AskJo, “Frp i opprør etter at regjeringen henter hjem IS-kvinne med sykt barn,” *Aftenposten*, January 15, 2020, accessed August 17, 2022, <https://www.aftenposten.no/norge/politikk/i/dOBdwj/frp-i-opproer-etter-at-regjeringen-henter-hjem-is-kvinne-med-sykt-barn>.

**84** Harald Stolt-Nielsen, Olga Stokke, and Afshin Ismaeli, “Reiste på ’kjærlighetstur’ til den norske IS-krigeren,” *Aftenposten*, March 1, 2021, accessed August 17, 2022, <https://www.aftenposten.no/norge/i/IE9zre/reiste-paa-kjaerlighetstur-til-den-norske-is-krigeren-jeg-elsket-ham-veldig-hoeyt-jeg-elsker-ham-ennaa>.

**85** Harald Stolt-Nielsen, Olga Stokke and Afshin Ismaeli, “Aktor mener IS-tiltalt kvinne ønsket våpen da hun kom til Syria,” *Aftenposten*, March 1, 2021, accessed August 17, 2022, <https://www.aftenposten.no/norge/i/bn7A4e/aktor-mener-is-tiltalt-kvinne-oensket-vaapen-da-hun-kom-til-syria>.

**86** Andreas Selset, “Mediernes fremstilling af kvinderne i Islamisk Stat er ekstremt stereotyp. Enten er de supernaive tøsere, eller også er de dødsensfarlige ekstremister,” *Politiken*, 23 March, 2021, accessed June 20, 2022, <https://politiken.dk/debat/kroniken/art8078943/Mediernes-fremstilling-af-kvinderne-i-Islamisk-Stat-er-ekstremt-stereotyp.-Enten-er-de-supernaive-t%C3%B8ser-eller-ogs%C3%A5-er-de-d%C3%B8dsensfarlige-ekstremister>.

**87** Linda Jerneck, “IS-kvinnor är inga bimbos – de är farligare än så,” *Expressen*, December 5, 2019, accessed May 10, 2022, <https://www.expressen.se/ledare/linda-jerneck/is-kvinnor-ar-inga-bimbos-de-ar-farligare-an-sa/>.

**88** “Sverige ska inte hämta hem IS anhängare från Syrien,” *Expressen*, 26 June, 2020, accessed May 10, 2022, <https://www.expressen.se/ledare/sverige-ska-inte-hamta-hem-is-anhangare/>

State”, but who cannot be trusted: “now we see them making use of their children as hostages to advance their own cause.”<sup>89</sup> And when Swedish terrorism expert Magnus Ranstrop commented on the ongoing humanitarian repatriation in the Norwegian media in January 2020, his remark about the mother was that “[i]t does not matter what she did: everyone who had been in contact with the IS is dangerous.”<sup>90</sup> To what extent this “everyone” extends to the children in public perception is crucial for their CBOW status.

## Dangerous children

Danish media discourses in the spring of 2021 exemplify how a focus on the children’s potential threat as future terrorists could overshadow both humanitarian and children’s rights concerns. The government initially refused family repatriations but changed course when the national security service recommended them as a terrorism prevention measure in May 2021.<sup>91</sup> In the build-up to this decision, the Danish tabloid *Ekstra Bladet* pushed future threat scenarios of how ISIS could kidnap and radicalise Danish boys from the Kurdish camps.<sup>92</sup> And the comments in this section did not mince their words when readers rejected the repatriation of “brainwashed Islamic State-younglings and their mothers”<sup>93</sup> to Denmark or complained about the “colossal” expected costs of having to care for the children of ISIS’s foreign fighters.<sup>94</sup> The image of children as “as ticking time bombs” also cir-

89 Veber Finnedal, “Loven må da kunne gradbøjes,” *Ekstra Bladet*, May 16, 2021, 23, accessed June 28, 2022, <https://www.e-pages.dk/ekstrabladet/38912/?gatokey=dXNlcl9pZD1jZTI1MDZmZi00NGNjLTQ0NzAtOTA3Zi1lYjNiOWYxNjJkYWQmdXNlcl9pZF90eXBIPWN1c3RvbQ%3D%3D>.

90 Hilde Kristine Misjenilas and Johansen Anne Stine Saether, “Terrorrekspert om IS-kvinnen (29): – Det spiller ingen rolle hva hun har gjort,” *VG*, January 19, 2020, accessed August 17, 2022, <https://www.vg.no/nyheter/innenriks/i/VbBzB4/terrorrekspert-om-is-kvinnen-29-det-spiller-ingen-rolle-hva-hun-har-gjort>

91 “Mette Frederiksen går i tv og forklarer kovending,” *Politiken*, 19th May, 2021, accessed June 20, 2022, <https://politiken.dk/indland/politik/art8216109/Mette-Frederiksen-g%C3%A5r-i-tv-og-forklarer-kovending>.

92 Magnus Mio et al., “Kofod nægter at svare,” *Ekstra Bladet*, April 11, 2021, 11, accessed June 28, 2022, <https://www.e-pages.dk/ekstrabladet/38842/?gatokey=dXNlcl9pZD1jZTI1MDZmZi00NGNjLTQ0NzAtOTA3Zi1lYjNiOWYxNjJkYWQmdXNlcl9pZF90eXBIPWN1c3RvbQ%3D%3D>.

93 Niels Christensen, “En af disse bonderøve,” *Ekstra Bladet*, May 10, 2021, 15, accessed June 28, 2022, <https://www.e-pages.dk/ekstrabladet/38900/?gatokey=dXNlcl9pZD1jZTI1MDZmZi00NGNjLTQ0NzAtOTA3Zi1lYjNiOWYxNjJkYWQmdXNlcl9pZF90eXBIPWN1c3RvbQ%3D%3D>.

94 Michael Thestrup, “Dyrt for Underdanmark,” *Ekstra Bladet*, March 23, 2021, 15, accessed June 28, 2022, <https://www.e-pages.dk/ekstrabladet/38804/?gatokey=dXNlcl9pZD1jZTI1MDZmZi00NGNjLTQ0NzAtOTA3Zi1lYjNiOWYxNjJkYWQmdXNlcl9pZF90eXBIPWN1c3RvbQ%3D%3D>.

culated in Danish media discussions more generally.<sup>95</sup> Taken together, this rhetoric echoes the historical framings of CBOW as unfair national burdens and dangerous children, who may bring nationalist-socialist and ISIS influences with them if they return. The contexts differ, but the underlying threat perceptions in their relationships with enemy fathers is comparable. The old-fashioned choice of words – “youngling”, in the construction of an Islamic State youngling – may even be a direct rhetorical parallel meant to evoke the “Nazi youngling” term used to insult CBOW in post-WWII Denmark in such instances.<sup>96</sup> However, threat perceptions could also be articulated in much more subtle ways than that.

The first major controversy surrounding repatriations of ISIS followers’ children in the Scandinavian media played out around the cases of seven Swedish orphans, the children of the Swedish-Norwegian ISIS foreign fighter Michael Skråmo and his Swedish wife Amanda in the spring of 2019. Both parents died during the final retreat of ISIS forces in the beginning of that year. Their children’s Swedish-Chilean maternal grandfather, Patricio Galvez, then set off on a private search for his grandchildren in Syria. Galvez used media coverage of his rescue mission strategically to force the Swedish authorities into action.<sup>97</sup> He succeeded in this, but the fact that the repatriations of orphans to Sweden had not been clear or uncontested reflects how the parents’ stigma could extend to the children themselves as CBOW. Despite significant support from some journalists, others produced or re-produced an also circulating sense of unease about the children’s repatriation. The Swedish tabloid *Aftonbladet* notes in this context that “The Skråmo-Children are treated as royalty, with their choice of pyjamas being of general interest at one moment, and then as three-year-old criminals who have no right to integrity in the next”,<sup>98</sup> while its rival tabloid *Expressen* claimed that “[t]he children of the IS-terrorist Skråmo have not come home. Their home was, unfortunately, IS. Now they are in a land

---

95 Morten Skaerbaeck, “Advokat tror ikke, kvinderne er tikkende bomber, men: Hvis de har tilsluttet sig kalifatet, så har de været dårlige mødre, det er jeg enig i,” *Politiken*, March 25, 2021, accessed June 13, 2022, <https://politiken.dk/indland/art8147491/Advokat-tror-ikke-kvinderne-er-tikkende-bomber-men-%C2%BBHvis-de-har-tilsluttet-sig-kalifatet-s%C3%A5-har-de-v%C3%A6ret-d%C3%A5rlige-m%C3%B8dre-det-er-jeg-enig-i%C2%AB>.

96 See, for example, the testimony of Erik E. Jensen in Arne Øland, *Horeunger og helligdage—ty-skerbørns beretninger* (Schønberg, Denmark: Schønbergske Forl, 2001), 60, where he remembers being insulted as “Nazi yngel.”

97 Galvez and Medin, *Amanda*, 200.

98 Natalia Kazmierska, “Vad kommer härnäst – liverapport när barnen går till förskolan?” *Aftonbladet*, May 15, 2019, accessed May 7, 2022, <https://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/a/8mOx12/vad-kommer-harnast-liverapport-nar-barnen-gar-till-forskolan>.

that many of them have never been in and that the others can barely remember.”<sup>99</sup> Here the spectre of danger tied to their CBOW status remains embedded in the representations of childhood innocence.

## Children in danger

In contemporary media coverage, the children of ISIS foreign fighters are widely recognised as children in danger. Within this construction, references to the children’s innocence stand in sharp relief to parental guilt, and journalists have also used this hegemonic trope ironically to reproach government inaction: “All of Sweden talks about innocent children who are sick, starving and at risk of dying. They exist in a camp in Syria. The government says that it cannot do anything because there is no bus stop close by [...]”<sup>100</sup> Media perceptions of the young children’s innocence may also blend into fear of them becoming dangerous, potentially radicalised youths as they get older, especially regarding the boys, who could be recruited into ISIS training.<sup>101</sup> Politicians’ humanitarian references, however, have tended to frame the children in rather generic (gender- and age-less) terms that stress dangers to the “the children’s life and health” and/or their physical suffering in the Al-Hol camp in northeast Syria.<sup>102</sup> This political rhetorical recognition of the children’s innocence and humanitarian needs may have functions here that have little to do with the actual children. For example, when Swedish foreign minister Ann Linde expressed her relief that “the children may finally come home” in the autumn of 2021, three years after the defeat of ISIS, she emphasised her humanitarian commitment to the children, but obscured and deflected attention from the

---

**99** Britta Svensson, “IS terroristen Skråmos barn har inte kommit hem,” *Expressen*, May 17, 2019, accessed May 10, 2022, <https://www.expressen.se/kronikoror/britta-svensson/is-terroristen-skramos-barn-har-inte-kommit-hem>.

**100** Peter Kadhammar, “Sverige straffar barn som riskerar att dö,” *Aftonbladet*, April 17, 2019, accessed May 7, 2022, <https://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/kolumnister/a/6j4q1W/sverige-straffar-barn-som-riskerar-att-do>.

**101** Magnus Mio, et.al., “Mettes uønskede børn,” *Ekstra Bladet*, March 23, 2021, accessed June 28, 2022, <https://www.e-pages.dk/ekstrabladet/38804/?gatoken=dXNlcl9pZD1jZTI1MDZmZi00NGNjLTQ0NzAtOTA3Zi1lYjNiOWYxNjJkYWQmdXNlcl9pZl90eXBIPWN1c3RvbQ%3D%3D>.

**102** Olga Stokke and Afshin Ismaeli, “UD: Nå vil ingen av de norske IS-kvinnene i Syria hjem til Norge,” *Aftenposten*, April 25, 2022, accessed August 17, 2022, <https://www.aftenposten.no/norge/i/5GgXdO/ud-naa-vil-ingen-av-de-norske-is-kvinnene-i-syria-hjem-til-norge>.

Swedish government's role in prolonging their internment.<sup>103</sup> Similarly, in the case of Denmark's controversial decision to leave the five Danish children of three denationalized ISIS-affiliated mothers behind, foreign minister Jeppe Kofod stated: "It's a bit harsh, but you can say that it's on these mothers who have joined the Islamic State [...] It is on their shoulders whether we as Denmark can be allowed to help those children, so they can receive the treatment that they should of course have."<sup>104</sup> This framing not only deflects all responsibility onto the mothers, to some degree it also facilitates Denmark's harsh political measures because the professed humanitarian concern for the children upholds the image of the politician's good intentions.

Politicians are not the only actors who use conceptions of "innocent children in danger" to present the children in the media. This is also an important trope in the advocacy of humanitarian organisations for the children's repatriation, and it also appears in general-interest reports about Scandinavian "IS women's" lives in the Kurdish camps. Such framings can be problematic when they use representations of the children to bolster notions of Scandinavian exceptionalism.<sup>105</sup> In his report from the camp, the journalist Bo Søndergaard catches sight of a young Danish girl, "her long blonde hair shining back into the sun," and her dancing in the "black-and-white landscape." For a moment she "looked like a girl from a green, Danish summer garden with apple trees, juice and a cave built of cotton blankets over low branches. The two worlds, both ours, collided in a flash, then she disappeared among the long black robes and the sound of Arabic voices, and a generator took over."<sup>106</sup> This passage metaphorically elevates the moral status and goodness of Scandinavia as a haven of an ideal childhood these children could have had, but the contrast with their reality in the camps reinforces their exclusion from this very ideal.

In closing, I want to note that at the time of writing most of the Scandinavian mothers and children have been repatriated and the advocacy of humanitarian organisations like *Save the Children*, *Human Rights Watch* and the Swedish and Dan-

---

**103** "Tre IS-kvinnor misstänks för krigsförbrytelse. Har landat på Arlanda," *Aftonbladet*, October 21, 2021, accessed May 7, 2022, <https://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/a/34Ra89/tre-is-kvinnor-misstanks-for-krigsforbrytelse>.

**104** Kristian Corfixen et al., "Det ser ud til, at et politisk flertal i Danmark er klar til at lade de børn dø," *Politiken*, April 8, 2022, accessed June 13, 2022, <https://politiken.dk/indland/art8716146/%C2%BBDet-ser-ud-til-at-et-politisk-flertal-i-Danmark-er-klar-til-at-lade-de-b%C3%B8rn-d%C3%B8%C2%AB>.

**105** William Banks, "Scandinavian Exceptionalisms: "Culture, Society, Discourse," *Scandinavian Studies* 94, no. 3 (2022): 382–385, accessed Aug 28, 2022, doi: 10.5406/21638195.94.3.05

**106** Søndergaard, "Ligesom alle andre børn."

ish branches of the NGO *Repatriate the Children* has played a crucial role in pushing reluctant governments to heed the children's right of return. A comparative perspective on the echoes with Anna Lenah Elgström's advocacy for children's rights after WWII throws both the advances and the continuing controversies around applications of children's rights, especially for children who are CBOW, into sharp relief. For example, as noted above, Elgström framed children as the future of civilization/the nation and called for the specific protection of CBOW to prevent them from becoming poor citizens or outright 'dangerous children', while children's rights advocacy today focuses much more on children as right-bearing subjects in their own right. However, faced with perceptions of threat and the danger of children's radicalization in the camps, NGOs today at times also revive these past ideas of saving the children, not just to ward off radicalisation, but also, and more specifically, to raise them as democratic citizens:

And what should the children learn, if they only see the toxic IS ideology? The children must be protected from indoctrination [...] Sweden's actions must aim to protect people from senseless violence and take all necessary actions to prevent radicalization and extremism. It is an important step in this work to bring Swedish children home and let them grow up with democratic values.<sup>107</sup>

Without question it is crucial to protect the children from radicalization, but the rhetorical impact of a humanitarian argument that links childhood, civilization and nation may cut both ways: it may be an effective argument for the children's repatriations from Syria in a context that places national security concerns above children's rights. However, it may contribute to the continued construction of CBOW as liminal children, as dangerous children in danger, too. Finally, this historical echo between humanitarian arguments can be significant in itself. It points beyond threat and terrorism paradigms toward a different reference frame that understands the children of ISIS foreign fighters as part of the region's history with children born of war – a history of a previous generation of contested children who received belated national recognition that can hold lessons for today.

---

**107** Beatrice Eriksson and Gorki Glaser-Müller, "Farligt spel om barn till IS-föräldrar. Debattörerna: Inte försvarbart att låta oskyldiga barn straffas för sina föräldrars handlingar. Sverige måste ta hem barnen från al-Hol," *Aftonbladet*, Juni 27, 2020, accessed May 4, 2022, <https://www.aftonbladet.se/debatt/a/K3djlE/farligt-spel-om-barn-till-is-foraldrar>.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that the Scandinavian reluctance to facilitate the repatriations of the children of ISIS foreign fighters from Syria with their mothers is not just tied to terrorism paradigms, but also to their socio-cultural construction as CBOW – as children born of war – whose national belonging and right to rights are recognised but not implemented due to the children’s relationships with enemy fathers and distrusted mothers. The results of the media analysis have shown that both WWII CBOW and the children of ISIS foreign fighters are framed as “children in danger/dangerous children,” even if the shape and emphasis in their relation to enemy fathers and distrusted mothers in these perceptions differs. Contemporary uses of the trope refer more often to perceptions of childhood innocence, while post-WWII media focused more on the potential danger the children may represent. And yet, the coverage of both refers to both elements. I read these differences as variations within a spectrum of how the trope of “children in danger/dangerous children” can materialise in media representations for children born of war. This shared liminal status, and its discursive persistence, nevertheless connects the children of ISIS foreign fighters to the children of German soldiers in a historical frame of reference – a perspective that asks us to pay more attention to governments’ potential complicity in co-creating CBOW’s precarity as well as to the possibilities and limits of humanitarian rhetoric and rights discourses in these contexts.

## References

### Sources

- “Aftenpostens Kronik 13. 8. 1946, ‘Barnas Menneskelige Rettigheter’ av Anna Lenah Elgström.” *Aftenposten*, August 13, 1946, Nr. 367, 2–3.
- Bergå, Jon. “Rädda Barnen kommenterar Sveriges svar på FN-kritiken om barnen i Syrien.” *Rädda Barnen*, March 27, 2021. Accessed March 23, 2022. <https://press.raddabarnen.se/pressreleases/raedda-barnen-kommenterar-sveriges-svar-paa-fn-kritiken-om-barnen-i-syrien-3085907>.
- Bonde, Edda. “Från allmenheten: Opprop Till Svenska Folket.” *Sölvesborgs-Tidningen*, January 7, 1947.
- Christensen, Niels. “En af disse bonderove,” *Ekstra Bladet*, May 10, 2021. Accessed June 28, 2022. <https://www.e-pages.dk/ekstrabladet/38900/?gatoken=dXNlcl9pZD1jZTI1MDZmZi00NGNjLTQONzAtOTA3Zi1lYjNiOWYxNjkkYWQmdXNlcl9pZl90eXBIPWN1c3RvbQ%3D%3D>.
- Corfixen, Kristian, Johan Blem Larsen, Michael Thykier, and Max Wulff. “Det ser ud til, at et politisk flertal i Danmark er klar til at lade de børn dø.” *Politiken*, April 8, 2022. Accessed June 13, 2022. <https://politiken.dk/indland/art8716146/%C2%BBDet-ser-ud-til-at-et-politisk-flertal-i-Danmark-er-klar-til-at-lade-de-b%C3%B8rn-d%C3%B8%C2%AB>.



- “Da Finn Kaas og 32 andre Gestapo-folket ble arrestert. Dramatiske omstendigheter.” *Aftenposten*, 5 June, 1945, no. 242, 5.
- DKBF website/Homepage of the Danish War Child Association, Webmaster: Henny Granum, <http://www.krigsboern.dk/index.php/da/om-dkbf#historie>. Accessed January 22, 2021.
- Eisenräger, Stian. “Gerd Fleischer vokste opp som ‘tyskerunge’: Ikke begå de samme feilene mot barna til IS-kvinnene.” *VG*, April, 18 2019. Accessed Aug 13, 2022. <https://www.vg.no/nyheter/innenriks/i/b5804v/gerd-fleischer-vokste-opp-som-tyskerunge-ikke-begaa-de-samme-feilene-mot-barna-til-is-kvinnene>.
- Eriksson, Beatrice, and Gorki Glaser-Müller. “Farligt spel om barn till IS-föräldrar. Debattörerna: Inte försvarbart att låta oskyldiga barn straffas för sina föräldrars handlingar. Sverige måste ta hem barnen från al-Hol.” *Aftonbladet*, June 27, 2020. Accessed May 4, 2022. <https://www.aftonbladet.se/debatt/a/K3djlE/farligt-spel-om-barn-till-is-foraldrar>.
- Finnedal, Veber, “Loven må da kunne gradbøjes.” *Ekstra Bladet*, May 16, 2021. Accessed June 28, 2022. <https://www.e-pages.dk/ekstrabladet/38912/?gatoken=dXNlc9pZD1jZTI1MDZmZi00NGNjLTQ0NzAtOTA3Zi1lYjNiOWYxNjkjYkYwQmdXNlc9pZl90eXBIPWN1c3RvbQ%3D%3D>.
- Guillou, Jan. “Regeringen vacklar inför pöbeln medan sju svenska barn lider i ett fångläger.” *Aftonbladet*, April 14, 2019. Accessed May 04, 2022. <https://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/kolumnister/a/jdva3L/regeringen-vacklar-infor-pobel-n-medan-sju-svenska-barn-lider-i-ett-fanglager>.
- “Har ‘herrefolket’ etterlatt seg 6000 barn?” *Aftenposten*, June 2, 1945, no. 238, 5.
- Holmqvist, Anette, “Margot Wallström: Om möjligt ska barnen föras till Sverige.” *Aftonbladet*, April 12, 2019. Accessed May 7, 2022. <https://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/samhalle/a/2GV1e4/margot-wallstrom-om-mojligt-ska-barnen-foras-till-sverige>.
- Hvilsom, Frank. “Mødre og børn adskilles efter sigtelse for at fremme terror.” *Politiken*, Oktober 15, 2021. Accessed June 16, 2022. <https://politiken.dk/indland/art8413688/M%C3%B8dre-og-b%C3%B8rn-adskilles-efter-sigtelse-for-at-fremme-terror>.
- “Ikke tale om å sende tyskerbarna til Tyskland. De kan kanskje bli gode norske statsborgere.” *Aftenposten*, November 12, 1945, no. 512, 2.
- Jerneck, Linda. “IS-kvinnor är inga bimbos – de är farligare än så.” *Expressen*, December 5, 2019. Accessed May 10, 2022. <https://www.expressen.se/ledare/linda-jerneck/is-kvinnor-ar-inga-bimbos-de-ar-farligare-an-sa/>.
- Johnsen, Nilas, and Mohammed Hassen. “Kurdisk leder til VG: Ny regjering må hente IS-kvinner.” *VG*, September 25, 2021. Accessed August 17, 2022. <https://www.vg.no/nyheter/utenriks/i/z74mWw/kurdisk-leder-til-vg-ny-regjering-maa-hente-is-kvinner>.
- Johnsen, Nilas. “Refser Norges syn på IS-kvinner.” *VG*, June 11, 2021. Accessed August 17, 2022. <https://www.vg.no/nyheter/utenriks/i/EBno7/refser-norges-syn-paa-is-kvinner>.
- Kadhammar, Peter. “Sverige straffar barn som riskerar att dö.” *Aftonbladet*, April 17, 2019. Accessed May 7, 2022. <https://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/kolumnister/a/6j4q1W/sverige-straffar-barn-som-riskerar-att-do>
- Kazmierska, Natalia. “Vad kommer härnäst – liverapport när barnen går till förskolan?” *Aftonbladet*, May 15, 2019. Accessed May 7, 2022. <https://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/a/8mOx12/vad-kommer-harnast-liverapport-nar-barnen-gar-till-forskolan>.
- Klarskov, Kristian. “Børnernes statsminister bor i Finland.” *Politiken*, March 28, 2021. Accessed June 16, 2022. <https://politiken.dk/indland/art8147921/B%C3%B8rnerne-statsminister-bor-i-Finland>.
- “Kun virkeligt uskyldige skal have erstatning for internering.” *Berlinske*, September 5, 1945, 3.
- “Kvinner som giftet seg med fiendtlig lands statsborger. Fra Norske Kvinners Nasjonalråd.” *Aftenposten*, December 2, 1946, no. 555, 2.



- Larsen, Martin. "Erna Solberg: – For flertallet av regjeringen var hensynet til barnet det viktigste." *Aftenposten*, January 16, 2020. Accessed August 17, 2022. <https://www.aftenposten.no/norge/politikk/i/4qqzEe/erna-solberg-for-flertallet-av-regjeringen-var-hensynet-til-barnet-det-viktigste>.
- Linderborg, Åsa. "Hjärtlösheten känns fullständigt osvensk." *Aftonbladet*, September 10, 2021. Accessed May 7, 2022. <https://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/kolumnister/a/V9Qy91/hjartlosheten-kanns-fullstandigt-osvensk>.
- "Mette Frederiksen går i tv og forklarer kovending." *Politiken*, 19th May, 2021. Accessed June 20, 2022. <https://politiken.dk/indland/politik/art8216109/Mette-Frederiksen-g%C3%A5r-i-tv-og-forklarer-koending>.
- "Millionbeløb til Tysker-Bornene." *Morsø Folkeblad*, 6 August, 1946, 3.
- Mio, Magnus, Nagieb Khaja, Jeppe Findalen and Thomas Foght "Kofod nægter att svare." *Ekstra Bladet*, April 11, 2021. Accessed June 28, 2022. <https://www.e-pages.dk/ekstrabladet/38842/?gato ken=dXNlcl9pZD1jZTI1MDZmZi00NGNjLTQ0NzAtOTA3Zi1lYjNiO WYxNjkYWQmdXNlcl9pZl90eXBIPWN1c3RvbQ%3D%3D>.
- Mio, Magnus, Nagieb Khaja, Jeppe Findalen and Thomas Foght. "Mettes uønskede børn." *Ekstra Bladet*, March 23, 2021. Accessed June 28, 2022. <https://www.e-pages.dk/ekstrabladet/38804/? gatoken=dXNlcl9pZD1jZTI1MDZmZi00NGNjLTQ0NzAtOTA3Zi1lYjNiO WYxNjkYWQmdXNlcl9pZl90eXBIPWN1c3RvbQ%3D%3D>.
- Misjenilas, Hilde Kristine, and Johansen Anne Stine Saether. "Terrorreksper om IS-kvinnen (29): – Det spiller ingen rolle hva hun har gjort." *VG*, January 19, 2020. Accessed August 17, 2022. <https://www.vg.no/nyheter/innenriks/i/VbZB4/terrorreksper-om-is-kvinnen-29-det-spiller-ingen-rolle-hva-hun-har-gjort>.
- Mochmann, Ingvill C. "Krever ombud for IS-barn." *VL*, June 14, 2018. Accessed August 13, 2022. <https://www.vl.no/nyhet/krever-ombud-for-is-barn-1.1158834?paywall=true>.
- "Over 22.000 norske barn har fått fadderhjelp i krigsårene." *Aftenposten*, September 7, 1945, no. 402, 1–2.
- "Paternitetsager mod tyske Soldater opgives." *Lolland-Falster Social-Demokrat*, Juli 30, 1948, 2.
- "Rikspolisjefen redegjør for de nye spesielle landssvikavdelingene." *Aftenposten*, August 9, 1945, no. 352, 1–2.
- Ruud, Solveig, Kjetil Magne Sørenes, and Alf Ole AskJo, "Frp i opprør etter at regjeringen henter hjem IS-kvinne med sykt barn." *Aftenposten*, January 15, 2020. Accessed August 17, 2022. <https://www.aftenposten.no/norge/politikk/i/dOBdwj/frp-i-opproer-etter-at-regjeringen-henter-hjem-is-kvinne-med-sykt-barn>.
- Selset, Andreas. "Mediernes fremstilling af kvinderne i Islamisk Stat er ekstremt stereotyp. Enten er de supernaive tøsere, eller også er de dødsensfarlige ekstremister." *Politiken*, March 23, 2021. Accessed June 20, 2022. <https://politiken.dk/debat/kroniken/art8078943/Mediernes-fremstilling-af-kvinderne-i-Islamisk-Stat-er-ekstremt-stereotyp.-Enten-er-de-supernaive-t%C3%B8ser-eller-ogs%C3%A5-er-de-d%C3%B8dsensfarlige-ekstremister>.
- Skaerbaeck, Morten. "Advokat tror ikke, kvinderne er tikkende bomber, men: "Hvis de har tilsluttet sig kalifatet, så har de været dårlige mødre, det er jeg enig i." *Politiken*, March 25, 2021. Accessed June 13, 2022. <https://politiken.dk/indland/art8147491/Advokat-tror-ikke-kvinderne-er-tikkende-bomber-men-%C2%BBhvis-de-har-tilsluttet-sig-kalifatet-s%C3%A5-har-de-v%C3%A6ret-d%C3%A5rlige-m%C3%B8dre-det-er-jeg-enig-i%C2%AB>.
- "Slem Tyskertøs i Kalundborg." *Sorø Amts-Tidende*, May 24, 1945, 6.

- Stokke, Olga and Afshin Ismaeli. "UD: Nå vil ingen av de norske IS-kvinnene i Syria hjem til Norge." *Aftenposten*, April 25, 2022. Accessed August 17, 2022. <https://www.aftenposten.no/norge/i/5GgXdO/ud-naa-vil-ingen-av-de-norske-is-kvinnene-i-syria-hjem-til-norge>.
- Stolt-Nielsen, Harald, Olga Stokke, and Afshin Ismaeli. "Aktor mener IS-tiltalt kvinne ønsket våpen da hun kom til Syria." *Aftenposten*, March 1, 2021. Accessed August 17, 2022. <https://www.aftenposten.no/norge/i/bn7A4e/aktor-mene-is-tiltalt-kvinne-oensket-vaapen-da-hun-kom-til-syria>.
- Stolt-Nielsen, Harald, Olga Stokke, and Afshin Ismaeli. "Reiste på 'kjærlighetstur' til den norske IS-krigeren." *Aftenposten*, March 1, 2021. Accessed August 17, 2022. <https://www.aftenposten.no/norge/i/IE9zre/reiste-paa-kjaerlighetstur-til-den-norske-is-krigeren-jeg-elsket-ham-veldig-hoeyt-jeg-elsker-ham-ennaa>.
- "Sund reaktion at klippe Haaret for Tyskerpiger." *Jydske Tidende*, February 14, 1946, 1.
- Svensson, Britta. "IS terroristen Skråmos barn har inte kommit hem," *Expressen*, May 17, 2019. Accessed May 10, 2022. <https://www.expressen.se/kronikorer/britta-svensson/is-terroristen-skra-mos-barn-har-inte-kommit-hem>.
- "Sverige ska inte hämta hem IS anhängare från Syrien." *Expressen*, 26 June, 2020. Accessed May 10, 2022. <https://www.expressen.se/ledare/sverige-ska-inte-hamta-hem-is-anhangare/>
- "Sædelighedspolitiet paa Jagt efter løstgætte Piger." *B.T.*, October 1, 1945.
- Søndergaard, Bo. "Ligesom alle andre børn." *Politiken*, March 22, 2021. Accessed June 13, 2022. <https://politiken.dk/kultur/art8122818/Ligesom-alle-andre-b%C3%B8rn>.
- Thestrup, Michael. "Dyrt for Underdanmark." *Ekstra Bladet*, March 23, 2021. Accessed June 28, 2022. <https://www.e-pages.dk/ekstrabladet/38804/?gatoken=dXNlcl9pZD1jZTI1MDZmZi00NGNjLTQ0NzAtOTA3Zi1YjNiOWYxNjkjYwQmdXNlcl9pZl90eXBIPWN1c3RvbQ%3D%3D>.
- "Tre IS-kvinnor misstänks för krigsförbrytelse. Har landat på Arlanda." *Aftonbladet*, October 21, 2021. Accessed May 7, 2022. <https://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/a/34Ra89/tre-is-kvinnor-misstanks-for-krigsforbrytelse>.
- "Tyska barn till Sverige." *Aftonbladet*, November 19, 1946, 8.
- "Tysker-Pigerne i Statistikens Lys. Deres Børn lever under triste Kaar, men betyder ingen Samfundsfare. Nazisterne prøvede at lave Bordeller i København i Krigens sidste Aar." *Politiken*, September 28, 1946, no. 358, 6.
- "Tyskertøsene i leir. I første omgang opprettes leirer for 1400 fra Oslo og omegn. Men hvor finner man kvinner som er skikket til å ta seg av dem?" *Aftenposten*, June 13, 1945, no. 253, 2.
- "Vi har faaet 5000 Tyskerbørn." *B.T.*, May 19, 1945, 9.

## Literature

- Aguettant, Felix. "A Turn of the Tide in the Extraterritorial Application of Child Rights: On the French Approach towards ISIS' Child Returnees." *Journal of Politics and Law* 14, no. 3 (2021): 51–59. Accessed April 13, 2022. <https://heinonline-org.ludwig.lub.lu.se/HOL/Page?handle=hein.journals/jpola14&div=38>.
- Andersson, Christoph. *Svenska SS-Frua. Med Uppdrag att Föda Ariska Barn*. Stockholm: Nordstedts, 2021.
- Baker-Beall, Christopher. "The threat of the 'returning foreign fighter': The securitization of EU migration and border control policy." *Security Dialogue* 50, no. 5 (2019), 437–453. Accessed January 8, 2021. doi:10.1177/0967010619857048.

- Banks, William. "Scandinavian Exceptionalisms: Culture, Society, Discourse." *Scandinavian Studies* 94, no. 3 (2022): 382–385. Accessed August 28, 2022. doi: 10.5406/21638195.94.3.05.
- Borgersrud, Lars. *Staten og krigsbarna: en historisk undersøkelse av statsmyndighetenes behandling av krigsbarna i de første etterkrigsårene*. Oslo: Institutt for kulturstudier, Universitetet i Oslo, 2004.
- Borgersrud, Lars. "Meant to be Deported." In *Children of World War II: The Hidden Enemy Legacy*, edited by Kjersti Ericsson and Eva Simonsen, 71–92. Oxford: Berg, 2005.
- Carpenter, Charli. *Forgetting children born of war: Setting the human rights agenda in Bosnia and beyond*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2010.
- Cook, Joana, and Gina Vale. "From Daesh to 'Diaspora' II: The Challenges Posed by Women and Minors After the Fall of the Caliphate." *CTC Sentinel* 12, no. 6 (2019): 30–46. Accessed Jan 07, 2021. <https://ctc.usma.edu/daesh-diaspora-challenges-posed-women-minors-fall-caliphate/>.
- Cowden, Mhairi. *Children's Rights: From Philosophy to Public Policy*. London: Palgrave, 2016.
- Culler, Jonathan. "The closeness of close reading." *ADE Bulletin* 149 (2010): 20–25. Accessed August 21, 2022. doi:10.1632/ade.149.20.
- Delić, Amra, Philipp Kuwert, and Heide Glaesmer. "Should the definition of the term 'children born of war' and vulnerabilities of children from recent conflict and post-conflict settings be broadened?" *Acta Medica Academica* 46, no. 1 (2017): 67–69. Accessed October 17, 2022. doi:10.5644/ama2006–124.191.
- Ericsson, Kjersti, and Eva Simonsen. "Introduction." In *Children of World War II: The Hidden Enemy Legacy*, edited by Kjersti Ericsson and Eva Simonsen, 1–12. Oxford: Berg, 2005.
- Ericsson, Kjersti, and Dag Ellingsen. "Life Stories of Norwegian War Children." In *Children of World War II: The Hidden Enemy Legacy*, edited by Kjersti Ericsson and Eva Simonsen, 93–112. Oxford: Berg, 2005.
- Fadil, Nadia, Marijke Van Buggenhout, and Els Dumortier. "Virtual innocence. On the status of the children of European deportees in northeast Syria." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* (2022) e-publication ahead of print. Accessed October 28, 2022. doi:10.1080/01419870.2022.2089536.
- Frees Esholdt, Henrietta. "Har de skandinaviske ISIS-kvinder indtaget operative militære roller i Kalifatet?" *Tidsskrift for islamforskning* 16, no. 1 (2022): 84–109. Accessed October 27, 2022. doi:10.7146/tifo.v16i1.132559.
- Galvez, Patricio, and Joakim Medin. *Amanda: min dotters resa till IS*. Stockholm: Verbal Förlag, 2022.
- Hesford, Wendy. *Violent Exceptions: Children's Human Rights and Humanitarian Rhetorics*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2021.
- Houry, Nadim. "The 'Unreturned': Dealing with the Foreign Fighters and Their Families who Remain in Syria and Iraq." In *Militant Jihadism: Today and Tomorrow*, edited by Serafettin Pektaş and Johan Leman, 59–82. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2019. January 8, 2021. doi:10.1177/0967010619857048.
- Human Rights Watch. "Nordic Countries: Repatriate Nationals from Northeast Syria." News Release, May 26, 2021. Accessed April 13, 2022. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/05/26/nordic-countries-repatriate-nationals-northeast-syria>.
- Human Rights Watch. "Many Children Returned from Syria Detention Doing Well." November 21, 2022. Accessed Dec 12, 2022. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/11/21/many-children-returned-syria-detention-doing-well>.
- Jensen, Erik E. "Erik E. Jensen, født 19. marts 1944." In *Horeunger og helligdage—tyskerbørns beretninger*, edited by Arne Øland, 59–74. Schønberg, Denmark: Schønberg'ske Forl, 2001.

- Kleinau, Elke. Review of *Children Born of War: Past, Present and Future*, by Sabine Lee, Heide Glaesmer, Barbara Stelzl-Marx (ed.). *Erziehungswissenschaftliche Revue* 21, no. 4 (2022). Accessed Nov 23, 2022. <http://www.klinkhardt.de/ewr/978036719013.html>.
- Koegeler-Abdi, Martina. "Family Secrecy: Experiences of Danish German Children Born of War, 1940–2019." *Journal of Family History* 46, no. 1 (2021): 62–76. Accessed Jan 7, 2021. doi:10.1177/0363199020967234.
- Lee, Sabine. *Children born of war in the twentieth century*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017.
- Lee, Sabine, and Heide Glaesmer. "Children Born of War: A Critical Appraisal of the Terminology," In *Children Born of War: Past, Present and Future*, edited by Sabine Lee, Heide Glaesmer, and Barbara Stelzl-Marx, 12–34. London and New York: Routledge, 2021.
- Lomfors, Ingrid. *Blind Fläck: Minne Och Glömska Kring Svenska Röda Korsets Hjälpinsats i Nazityskland 1945*. Stockholm: Atlantis, 2005.
- Loukissas, Yanni Alexander. "Taking Big Data apart: local readings of composite media collections." *Information, Communication & Society* 20, no. 5 (2017): 651–664. Accessed Aug 24, 2022. doi:10.1080/1369118X.2016.121172.
- Maack, Herbert. "How Nordic Countries Are Handling the Question of Repatriating Islamic State Women." *Terrorism Monitor: In-depth Analysis of the War on Terror* XIX 12 (2021): 7–10. Accessed Feb 14, 2022. <https://jamestown.org/program/how-nordic-countries-are-handling-the-question-of-repatriating-islamic-state-women/>.
- MacVicar, Ian. "What About the Camp Followers – and their Children?" *Journal for deradicalization* 22 (2020): 319–378. Accessed Jan 8, 2021. <https://doaj.org/article/3a31307d37524e7f8961a831d2919016>.
- Mochmann, Ingvill C. "Children Born of War." *OBETS – Revista de Ciencias Sociales* 2 (2008): 53–61. Accessed Oct 28, 2022. <https://doaj.org/article/1dcfe38c6fb048bbaa2b8113bf5389a0>.
- Mochmann, Ingvill C., and Stein Ugelvik Larsen. "'Children born of war': The life course of children fathered by German soldiers in Norway and Denmark during WWII– Some empirical results." *Historical Social Research/Historische Sozialforschung* 33, no. 1 (2008): 347–363. Accessed Jan 12, 2021. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20762268>.
- Mochmann, Ingvill C., and Sabine Lee. "The Human Rights of Children Born of War: Case Analyses of Past and Present Conflicts." *Historical Social Research/Historische Sozialforschung* 35, no. 3 (2010): 268–298. Accessed March 5, 2022. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25758846>.
- Mochmann, Ingvill C. "Reflections on the Definition and Categorization of 'Children Born of War,'" *Acta Medica Academica* 46, no. 2 (2017): 180–181. Accessed Oct 17, 2022. doi:10.5644/ama2006–124.207.
- Mochmann, Ingvill C. "Children Born of War – A Decade of International and Interdisciplinary Research." *Historical Social Research/Historische Sozialforschung* 42, no. 1 (2017): 320–346. Accessed January 22, 2021. doi:10.12759/hsr.42.2017.1.320–346.
- Nyamutata, Conrad. "Young Terrorists or Child Soldiers? ISIS Children, International Law and Victimhood." *Journal of Conflict and Security Law* 25, no. 2 (2020): 237–261. Accessed April 14, 2022. doi:10.1093/jcsl/krz034.
- Øland, Arne. *Horeunger Og Helligdage – Tyskerbørns Beretninger*. Schönberg, Denmark: Schönbergske Forlag, 2001.
- Olsen, Kåre. "Under the Care of Lebensborn: Norwegian War Children and their Mothers." In *Children of World War II: The Hidden Enemy Legacy*, edited by Kjersti Ericsson and Eva Simonsen, 15–34. Oxford: Berg, 2005.

- Olson, Debbie, and Giselle Rampaul. "Representations of Childhood in the Media." In *The Routledge International Handbook of Children, Adolescents and Media*, edited by Dafna Lemish, 23–30. New York: Routledge, 2013.
- Racius, Egdūnas. "Caliphate Citizens: Revisiting the Concept of 'Foreign Fighters'." In *Not Only Syria? The Phenomenon of Foreign Fighters in a Comparative Perspective*, edited by Kacper Rekawek, 52–59. Amsterdam: IOS Press, 2016.
- Schreier, Margrit. *Qualitative Content Analysis in Practice*. London: SAGE, 2012. Aug 21, 2022. doi:10.1632/ade.149.20.
- Seto, Donna. *No Place for a War Baby: The Global Politics of Children Born of Wartime Sexual Violence*. London: Taylor & Francis, 2013.
- Simonsen, Eva. "Children in Danger: Dangerous Children." In *Children of World War II: The Hidden Enemy Legacy*, edited by Kjersti Ericsson and Eva Simonsen, 269–287. Oxford: Berg, 2005.
- Sköld, Johanna and Ingrid Söderlind. "Finska barn i svenska hem." *Scandia* 82, no.1 (2016): 35–65.
- Stang, Sarah. "Too close, too intimate, and too vulnerable: close reading methodology and the future of feminist game studies." *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 39, no. 3 (2022): 230–238. Accessed August 24, 2022. doi:10.1080/15295036.2022.2080851.
- Sturfelt, Lina. "Rädda Barnens århundrade: Mänskliga rättigheter i en motsägelsefull historieskrivning." In *Mänskliga rättigheter i samhället*, edited by Malin Arvidsson, Lena Halldenius and Lina Sturfelt, 55–76. Malmö: Bokbox, 2018.
- Takševa, Tatjana. "Response to whether the definition of the term 'children born of war' and vulnerabilities of children from recent conflict and post-conflict settings should be broadened." *Acta Medica Academica* 46 no. 2 (2017): 177–179. Accessed October 17, 2022. doi:10.5644/ama2006–124.206.
- Ticktin, Miriam. "A world without innocence." *American ethnologist* 44, no. 4 (2017): 577–590. Accessed May 8, 2022. doi:10.1111/amet.12558.
- Warring, Anette. *Tyskerpiger: Under besættelse og retsopgør*, 3rd Edition. Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 2017.



Lina Stotz

# The Evolution of Child Soldiers from ‘Villains to Victims’ in Law and Policy and its Significance for Children Born of War

## Introduction

Child soldiers and children born of war (CBOW) – children typically born to civilian mothers and combatant fathers in times of war – are two groups of minors closely linked to and heavily affected by armed conflicts today and throughout history. As this chapter will discuss, both groups have experienced similar public narratives: both have traditionally been demonised and portrayed as dangerous and corrupted, allegedly unable to (re-)integrate into their communities due to their perceived links to the military enemy. This started to change for child soldiers in the 1990s, however, with increasing international attention paid to their vulnerable situation.<sup>1</sup> New narratives emerged describing child soldiers as innocent rather than dangerous and international courts started to recognise child soldiers as victims of war.<sup>2</sup> Today, child soldiers are generally no longer seen as a threat to communities and nations; instead, child recruitment is seen as a danger to the global order and is an international crime.<sup>3</sup> CBOW, further defined in section 2, however, are still often overlooked by policy makers and still often become the object harmful narratives in policy and law. Some legal scholars have taken a renewed interest in CBOW, as will be further discussed in section 3, but agreement on what legal recognition should look like or even if it should occur at all has not yet been found.

The central question to be answered in this chapter is: How can the experiences with legal and policy recognition of child soldiers be applied to CBOW? This question will be answered by looking at the following sub-questions: How did public narratives around child soldiers shift over time, what was the relevance of international criminal justice in this change, and what inferences can be drawn from

---

<sup>1</sup> Leonie Steinl, *Child Soldiers as Agents of War and Peace: A Restorative Transitional Justice Approach to Accountability for Crimes Under International Law* (The Hague: T.M.C. Asser Press, 2017), 2.

<sup>2</sup> Steinl, *Child Soldiers as Agents of War and Peace*, 3.

<sup>3</sup> Iuliia Kononenko, “Prohibiting the Use of Child Soldiers: Contested Norm in Contemporary Human Rights Discourse,” *Nordic Journal of Human Rights* 34, no. 2 (2016): 89–103.

the narrative shift on child soldiers and applied to address CBOW in international policy and law?

This chapter will dissect how a prioritisation of the interests of war-affected children comes about and where and how legal actors come into play in establishing these children as victims instead of villains. Specifically, it will be examined how narratives of victimhood and perpetratorship applied to war-affected children have influenced developments in policy and law towards them. Building on Securitisation Theory, this chapter will address how legal actors have played a significant role in shifting perceptions around child soldiers by recognising them as victims of international crimes. Based on this, key factors for a successful application of international criminal law to the plight of CBOW will be discussed.

The use of Securitisation Theory allows for a demonstration of how a change of perspective is produced on issues that were previously considered irrelevant or extraneous. The term ‘securitisation’ here is used to describe the shift of an issue from ‘business as usual’ to the political agenda. Securitisation can relate to traditional subjects of Securitisation Theory, such as the construction of threats to the nation-state and the justification of military action. But securitisation can also, as in the following, describe processes of turning previously overlooked human rights concerns into political priorities, thereby bringing them to the table of international policy makers. In this chapter, securitisation is understood as a process of prioritisation through language that implies urgency and thereby facilitates novel policy and legal responses. Securitisation Theory will be introduced in more detail in section 4 and applied to map the process towards the securitisation of child recruitment in section 5, deducing relevant implications for law vis-à-vis the reduction of vulnerabilities of CBOW, discussed in section 6.

CBOW and child soldiers have not yet been compared in an application of Securitisation Theory. The obvious overlaps in definition and experiences warrant a comparison of these two groups, especially since approaches to the two groups by the international community have been quite different but are increasingly intertwining.

## **Defining child soldiers and Children Born of War (CBOW)**

Forcibly as well as voluntarily recruited minors will in this chapter be referred to as ‘child soldiers’. The term ‘children associated with armed forces and groups’ sug-



gested in the *Paris Principles*<sup>4</sup> will not be used, as it might create confusing terminological overlaps with the other group of children considered in this chapter – CBOW – which is also associated with armed forces and groups. The term 'children born of war' (CBOW) refers to children conceived in sexual violence, consensual or dependency relationships in the context of an armed conflict with one parent (usually the father) being a member of an armed group, peacekeeping troop or army and the other parent (usually the mother) being a local civilian.<sup>5</sup> It should be noted that while the term 'children born of war' is largely established in academic research – although a few researchers contest it – policy makers and policy sources cited in this chapter often appear to condense the concept and refer only to 'children born of wartime rape' or 'children of survivors of conflict-related sexual violence'. This will be further addressed in section 6.

In some cases, there are overlaps between child soldiers and CBOW. An example is women and girls abducted by armed groups and forced to bear children while in captivity. The babies may grow up to fight as part of the armed group they were born into while also being CBOW. Another instance where the categories of 'child soldier' and 'CBOW' may intertwine are cases where CBOW are joining armed groups or forces as minors. Depending on the circumstances, the increased vulnerability of many CBOW can make them more prone to recruitment by armed groups as minors, as policy makers, mentioned in section 6, have warned. Another instance where the groups can become conceptually intertwined is in securitising narratives linking CBOW to military activity in ways that resemble narratives on child soldiers. Some of these intersections will be discussed in more detail in section 5. Apart from these examples, this chapter regards child soldiers and CBOW as two separate groups. This is warranted, as the approaches to these children by the international community, which will be mapped in this chapter, are largely taking place separately from each other.

---

4 UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), "The Paris Principles: Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups," accessed June 20, 2023, <https://www.unicef.org/reports/paris-principles>.

5 Kai Grieg, "The War Children of the World," *War and Children Identity Project (WCIP)*, Bergen, January 1, 2001, accessed June 20, 2023, [https://www.academia.edu/2189623/The\\_war\\_children\\_of\\_the\\_world](https://www.academia.edu/2189623/The_war_children_of_the_world); Ingvill C. Mochmann, "Consolidating the Evidence Base of Children Born of War," *ZA-Information* 59 (2006): 198–99; R. Charli Carpenter, *Born of War: Protecting Children of Sexual Violence Survivors in Conflict Zones* (Bloomfield: Kumarian Press, 2007); Ingvill C. Mochmann and Stein Ugelvik Larsen, "Children Born of War": The Life Course of Children Fathered by German Soldiers in Norway and Denmark during WWII – Some Empirical Results," *Historical Social Research* 33, no. 1 (2008); Ingvill C. Mochmann, "Children Born of War – A Decade of International and Interdisciplinary Research," *Historical Social Research* 42, no. 1 (2017): 321.

## Background on the realities and rights of child soldiers and Children Born of War (CBOW)

It is estimated that over 200,000 children are being forced, or, more seldomly, volunteer to fight around the world today.<sup>6</sup> Children have been forced to take up arms throughout history.<sup>7</sup> They have been systematically and tactically recruited because they are often particularly easy to train, daring and tenacious, especially when under the influence of drugs.<sup>8</sup> In most cases, recruitment is not voluntary, but the consequence of abduction or other forms of coercion. For many, their experiences in combat have detrimental effects on their physical and mental health.<sup>9</sup> In addition, many child soldiers have faced post-war stigma manifested in societal rejection and social exclusion upon their return to their communities.<sup>10</sup> In some cases, they have been made responsible for violence committed against their own communities and exposed to mistreatment and discrimination as a result.<sup>11</sup> Today, the conscription of children into armed forces is recognised as an international crime and a violation of human rights and international humanitarian law.

Tens of thousands of CBOW have been born in recent conflicts, often as a result of rape used as a weapon of warfare.<sup>12</sup> Scholars have covered the topic in historical perspective, concluding that the phenomenon of conception and rejection of CBOW has been a global occurrence for centuries, but still constitutes an understudied field.<sup>13</sup> Depending on the conflict context, at least some CBOW have been found to be affected by discrimination and stigma, impacting their access to education, healthcare, citizenship and leading to a prevalence of trauma,

---

6 Steinl, *Child Soldiers as Agents of War and Peace*, 2.

7 Laura Benrey, "History of Child Soldier Policies," *End Slavery Now*, February 2, 2016, <https://www.endslaverynow.org/blog/articles/history-of-child-soldier-policies>.

8 Benrey, "History of Child Soldier Policies."

9 See e.g. here: Theresa S. Betancourt et al., "Sierra Leone's Child Soldiers: War Exposures and Mental Health Problems by Gender," *Journal of Adolescent Health* 49, no. 1 (2011): 23.

10 Steinl, *Child Soldiers as Agents of War and Peace*, 23.

11 Steinl, *Child Soldiers as Agents of War and Peace*, 18–22; Mochmann, "Children Born of War – A Decade of International and Interdisciplinary Research," 337–339.

12 Eithne Dowds, "Children Born of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Conflict: The International Criminal Court, Ecological Environments and Human Development," *Children & Society* 33, no. 3 (2019): 226.

13 Sabine Lee, *Children Born of War in the Twentieth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), 1.

abuse, depression, poverty and social exclusion.<sup>14</sup> R. Charli Carpenter concluded that “(a)necdotal evidence points to a general pattern of severe discrimination against children born of war”.<sup>15</sup> In many cases, this entails exclusion and rejection by their families and communities.<sup>16</sup> Some of these children appear to consider themselves victims of war and rights violations due to these circumstances, but so far, this group has not attained formal recognition to that end at the international level.<sup>17</sup>

“(T)here is no specific crime of fathering a child through sexual violence”<sup>18</sup> at the international level, and to date there is no international legal document that specifically recognises CBOW as having rights.<sup>19</sup> Multiple scholars and experts such as Joanne Neenan have contended that there is an incompatibility between the legal interests of sexual violence survivors and those of CBOW. Neenan suggests that the *Rome Statute* – the most comprehensive code on international criminal law, applied by the International Criminal Court (ICC) – is not fit to respond to the needs of both sexual violence survivors and CBOW. According to her, the definition of the crime of forced pregnancy exemplifies this. This crime is naturally closely linked to CBOW, but its definition in Article 7(2)(f) of the *Rome Statute* does not mention these children.<sup>20</sup> As Neenan discusses, this charge was drafted against the backdrop of the Bosnian war, where women were being raped repeatedly by Serbian forces, held in make-shift detention camps, and prevented from aborting their pregnancies, with the intention of creating babies of supposed Serb ethnicity. She argues that CBOW have been ‘othered’ in the drafting process

---

14 Ingvill C. Mochmann and Inger Skjelsbæk, “Children Born of War (CBOW),” *GPS Policy Brief 3* (PRIO 2018), accessed June 20, 2023, <https://www.prio.org/utility/DownloadFile.ashx?id=1703&type=publicationfile>.

15 R. Charli Carpenter, “Gender, Ethnicity, and Children’s Human Rights: Theorizing Babies Born of Wartime Rape and Sexual Exploitation,” in *Born of War: Protecting Children of Sexual Violence Survivors in Conflict Zones*, ed. R. Charli Carpenter (Bloomfield: Kumarian Press, 2007), 4.

16 Mochmann, “Children Born of War – A Decade of International and Interdisciplinary Research,” 338–39.

17 Myriam Denov and Sara Kahn, “‘They Should See Us as a Symbol of Reconciliation’: Youth Born of Genocidal Rape in Rwanda and the Implications for Transitional Justice,” *Journal of Human Rights Practice* 11 (2019): 162; Associated Press in Strasbourg, “Norway’s Aryan Children Go to Court over Years of Prejudice,” *The Guardian*, March 8, 2007, accessed June 20, 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2007/mar/08/secondworldwar:international>.

18 Eithne Dowds, “Children Born of Sexual Violence under Islamic State Need Support,” *The Conversation*, November 28, 2017, accessed June 20, 2023, <https://theconversation.com/children-born-of-sexual-violence-under-islamic-state-need-support-87147>.

19 Dowds, “Children Born of Sexual Violence under Islamic State Need Support”.

20 UN General Assembly, *Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (last amended 2010)*, 17 July 1998, art. 7(2)(f).

and interpretation of crimes of sexual violence which, according to her, implicitly adopt the “patriarchal claim that a woman’s genes/identity are erased through her rape by a man of a different ethnicity, and that any children born belong to their ‘enemy’ father.”<sup>21</sup>

Given this complexity, various avenues on how CBOW should or should not be considered under international criminal law have been discussed, a few of which shall be mentioned here. Eithne Dowds proposed that CBOW should receive reparations in international criminal proceedings through their mothers, which has since been made possible at the ICC, as will be further discussed below.<sup>22</sup> Generally, Lohne and Hauge have warned against seeing international criminal law as a panacea for human rights concerns.<sup>23</sup> Debra DeLaet suggested that punitive justice is not what we should turn to for solutions to the suffering of many CBOW.<sup>24</sup> Patricia Sellers and Maxine Marcus, however, have spoken in favour of developing existing international criminal law as it pertains to CBOW so as to accommodate them in specific charges.<sup>25</sup>

## Securitisation Theory and methodology

This chapter aims to trace the evolution of the perception of child soldiers as ‘villains’ to them being increasingly seen as victims of international crimes in order to deduce implications for the successful recognition of CBOW. This will be done using Securitisation Theory, as it provides a lens for understanding how previously overlooked issues can become urgent interests.

Securitisation Theory, which was first introduced by Barry Buzan, Ole Waever and Jaap de Wilde, aims to understand the process of how issues get shifted from the private sphere or regular politics to the realm of security politics, making them

---

21 Joanne Neenan, “The Role of the ICC in Protecting the Rights of Children Born of War,” *EJIL: Talk!*, February 12, 2018, accessed June 20, 2023, <https://www.ejiltalk.org/the-role-of-the-icc-in-protecting-the-rights-of-children-born-of-rape-in-war/>.

22 Dowds, “Children Born of Sexual Violence under Islamic State Need Support.”

23 Anette Bringedal Houge and Kjersti Lohne, “End Impunity! Reducing Conflict-Related Sexual Violence to a Problem of Law,” *Law & Society Review* 51, no. 4 (2017): 757.

24 Debra DeLaet, “Theorizing Justice for Children Born of War,” in *Born of War: Protecting Children of Sexual Violence Survivors in Conflict Zones*, ed. R. Charli Carpenter (Bloomfield: Kumarian Press, 2007), 134.

25 London School of Economics and Political Science Podcasts, “Challenges in Investigating and Prosecuting at the International Level,” accessed June 20, 2023, <https://www.lse.ac.uk/women-peace-security/Podcasts/podcasts.aspx>.

urgent political priorities.<sup>26</sup> Securitisation happens in the face of existential threats, such as terrorism, environmental disasters, or gross human rights violations, to ensure or (re-)establish security. The securitisation of such a context determines policy priorities to combat threats and facilitates unprecedented responses to these issues in order to curb the perceived danger. Securitisation elevates issues from being private or undiscussed to a level of urgency, legitimising political or even military measures that go beyond what would normally or previously have been considered. Once a securitising move is accepted by an audience capable of recognising and responding to the threat, exceptional measures can be adopted in response to the security threat.<sup>27</sup> De-securitisation, on the other hand, describes the removal of an issue from the realm of security through a reverse process.

## Application of the Theory

Securitisation Theory has traditionally focused on national security interests, such as military interests, but has increasingly been applied to substantive issues such as climate change, epidemics, or human rights concerns to understand how the conceptualisation of such issues by securitising actors can lead to perceptions of threat or urgency, provoking policy action in response.<sup>28</sup> Critical feminist security studies especially have challenged the theory's initial focus on national security.<sup>29</sup>

An example of this is the scholarly debate around the securitisation of conflict-related sexual violence. Historically, the use of rape in war – although it has been a common part of wars throughout history – was euphemised and considered inevitable collateral damage. This, however, changed in the last century with the wars in the former Yugoslavia and the genocide in Rwanda in the 1990s.<sup>30</sup> In light of these wars and the widespread sexual violence committed, states and the community of states began to recognise wartime rape as an issue that needed to be addressed, redressed and prevented. Conflict-related sexual violence was elevated from the

---

<sup>26</sup> Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998), 32.

<sup>27</sup> Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde, *Security*, 25.

<sup>28</sup> Thierry Balzacq, "A Theory of Securitization: Origins, Core Assumptions, and Variants," in *Securitization Theory: How Security Problems Emerge and Dissolve*, ed. Thierry Balzacq (London: Routledge, 2010), 19.

<sup>29</sup> Anette Houge and Inger Skjelsbæk, "Securitising Sexual Violence: Transitions from War to Peace," in *Intimate Partner Violence, Risk and Security: Securing Women's Lives in a Global World*, ed. Kate Fitz-Gibbon et al. (New York: Routledge, 2021), 20.

<sup>30</sup> Houge and Skjelsbæk, "Securitising Sexual Violence: Transitions from War to Peace," 24.

private, unspoken realm to being an urgent political issue. Rape in war was no longer considered ‘natural’ but a threat to the global order. This global order, founded on a steadily developing body of norms and rights created by the international community of states since the end of the second World War, had grown increasingly incompatible with simply ignoring gross human rights concerns. Consequently, wartime rape turned into an issue that needed to be addressed. It became a part of the international political agenda and exceptional measures were adopted, such as the establishment of the international criminal tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, which prosecuted sexual violence crimes for the first time in the history of international criminal law.<sup>31</sup> In short, wartime rape was securitised.<sup>32</sup> Scholars have argued that conflict-related sexual violence today “rivals nuclear and biological weapons, terrorism, and arms proliferation for receiving the most attention among security actors”.<sup>33</sup> Leaning on discussions by scholars such as Sabine Hirschauer on the securitisation of rape,<sup>34</sup> this chapter will discuss the processes of securitising the human rights concerns of war-affected children.

According to scholars, there are different purposes for securitisation: securitisation can have the purpose of raising an issue to the agenda, deterring, legitimising past acts, or exerting control.<sup>35</sup> This chapter focuses on the first purpose and examines how previously unseen issues – such as the military recruitment of children – appear on the political agenda of states and the community of states. The resulting collective acknowledgement and effective policy attention has been referred to as ‘successful securitisation’, indicating a positive prominence which can render a previously unseen group and its human rights concerns visible.<sup>36</sup> This increased visibility and attention can contribute to changing attitudes and normative values around the issue in question, thereby reducing the vulnerability of the concerned group of victims.

It should be noted that in 2020, Securitisation Theory was criticised for having Eurocentric underpinnings, arguing among other points that the theory’s focus on speech acts amplifies or takes as a point of departure the voices of a privileged,

---

31 Houge and Skjelsbæk, “Securitising Sexual Violence: Transitions from War to Peace,” 25.

32 Sabine Hirschauer, *The Securitization of Rape: Women, War and Sexual Violence* (Houndmills/Basingstoke/Hampshire/New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

33 Sara Meger, “The Fetishization of Sexual Violence in International Security,” *International Studies Quarterly* 60, no. 1 (2016): 150; Houge and Skjelsbæk, “Securitising Sexual Violence,” 24.

34 Hirschauer, *The Securitization of Rape*.

35 Juha A. Vuori, “Illocutionary Logic and Strands of Securitization: Applying the Theory of Securitization to the Study of Non-Democratic Political Orders,” *European Journal of International Relations* 14, no. 1 (2008): 65–99; Balzacq, “A Theory of Securitization: Origins, Core Assumptions, and Variants,” 6.

36 Hirschauer, *The Securitization of Rape*, 189.

Eurocentric elite, thereby distorting realities and sugar-coating historical injustices.<sup>37</sup> In their reply, Wæver and Buzan characterised this critique as systematically flawed and lacking credible empirical evidence.<sup>38</sup> Regardless, it is relevant to recall that silenced groups do not feature in speech acts.<sup>39</sup> It is especially important to consider this methodological gap when applying the theory to the prioritisation of human rights crises, and particularly when considering the concerns of children – a group with a limited political voice. Some implications of surfacing war-affected children on the terms of policy makers as per Securitisation Theory will be addressed in sections 5 and 6 below.

## Methodology

Since this chapter considers war-affected children in relation to international policy and law, the issues at stake are generally of international nature, and international policy makers, governments, the United Nations (UN) Security Council and the UN General Assembly become the relevant securitising actors and audiences. Media sources can amplify calls for security,<sup>40</sup> and international courts can be functional actors implementing or issuing securitising moves.<sup>41</sup>

The empirical qualitative data on the securitisation moves considered in this chapter is derived from secondary sources and includes documents, reports, resolutions, and statements issued by the UN Security Council, UN treaty bodies and special representatives, government officials, international courts, and international media sources as securitising actors. Treaties and statutes, typically adopted by states and facilitated by or associated with UN organs, as well as jurisprudence by international courts, will also be considered securitisation moves. As this chapter traces the evolution of war-affected children from being a non-issue to becoming subjects of legal recognition in international law, the decisive points of development in speech towards legal recognition will be considered. The referenced ma-

---

37 Alison Howell and Melanie Richter-Montpetit, "Is Securitization Theory Racist? Civilizationism, Methodological Whiteness, and Antiracist Thought in the Copenhagen School," *Security Dialogue* 51, no. 1 (2020): 6–7.

38 Ole Wæver and Barry Buzan, "Racism and Responsibility – The Critical Limits of Deepfake Methodology in Security Studies: A Reply to Howell and Richter-Montpetit," *Security Dialogue* 51, no. 4 (2020): 386–394.

39 Hirschauer, *The Securitization of Rape*, 201.

40 Fred Vultee, "Securitization as a Media Frame: What Happens When the Media 'Speak Security,'" in *Securitization Theory: How Security Problems Emerge and Dissolve*, ed. Thierry Balzacq (London: Routledge, 2010), 78.

41 Balzacq, "A Theory of Securitization: Origins, Core Assumptions, and Variants," 20.

terials were retrieved through keyword searches on child soldiers, children and armed conflict, children born of war and children born of conflict-related sexual violence in the UN archives, ICC court documents and web search engines and pertain to 1945, when international law and specifically international criminal law gained traction up until today. The main focus will be on time periods when reconstructions of norms concerning child soldiers and CBOW took place. In the case of child soldiers, this pertains specifically to the 1990s and early 2000s, and for CBOW the focus is on 2013 until today.

The consideration of law in this process is relevant as international law and especially international criminal law is increasingly being invoked in response to situations of perceived insecurity.<sup>42</sup> References to ‘security’ also feature prominently in public international law and international criminal law as justifications for the existence of these bodies of law.<sup>43</sup> As such, law has a legitimising authority as a normative system and is facilitating the “collectivization of international security.”<sup>44</sup>

## From the securitisation of child soldiers to securitising child recruitment

During World War II, the military mobilisation of children played a critical role. In Germany, for example, the National Socialist Hitler Youth, the Waffen-SS and the so-called Volkssturm all involved or enlisted minors.<sup>45</sup> In the last months of the war, the Volkssturm militia enlisted children of 15 years of age and younger to fight.<sup>46</sup> [“The survivors [child soldiers] felt like victims, but were treated as perpe-

---

<sup>42</sup> Thilo Marauhn and Marie-Christin Stenzel, “Power, Security, and Public International Law – an Intricate Relationship,” in *Conceptualizing Power in Dynamics of Securitization*, ed. Regina Kreide and Andreas Langenohl (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 2019), 286.

<sup>43</sup> Marauhn and Stenzel, “Power, Security, and Public International Law – an Intricate Relationship,” 267.

<sup>44</sup> Marauhn and Stenzel, “Power, Security, and Public International Law – an Intricate Relationship,” 278.

<sup>45</sup> David M. Rosen, *Child Soldiers in the Western Imagination: From Patriots to Victims* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2015), 76–79.

<sup>46</sup> Rosen, *Child Soldiers in the Western Imagination*, 79.



trators”], a German news magazine wrote in an article on the shame many of the young recruits felt about their experiences.<sup>47</sup>

In the late 1970s, the first specific prohibition of the recruitment of child soldiers younger than 15 years old was adopted with the protocols additional to the *Geneva Conventions*.<sup>48</sup> The framework of the four *Geneva Conventions* had up until then only mandated that children should not be enlisted in the political organisations of an occupying power.<sup>49</sup> The prohibition of the use of child soldiers in the additional protocols was a response by the international community to changing conflict dynamics, including a steady increase in the military recruitment of children in the 1960s and the decades after.<sup>50</sup> In 1971, the International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC) called the recruitment of children one of the most contentious issues of the time, noting at the same time that the topic was understudied and not understood well enough.<sup>51</sup> The *Convention on the Rights of the Child* was adopted in 1989, which reiterated the right of children below the age of 15 to not take direct part in hostilities, making the respective article 38 the only provision in the Convention with an age qualifier – all other child rights apply to all minors below 18.<sup>52</sup>

The 1990s saw another wave of military child recruitments, including through abductions, such as during in the civil war in Sierra Leone. International media sources increasingly reported on the topic. Media reports at the time described child soldiers as “damaged, uneducated pariahs”, “drug crazed” people who

---

47 Harald Stutte, “Hitlers Kindersoldaten: Wie die SS Minderjährige rekrutierte,” *DER SPIEGEL*, 4 April, 2014, accessed June 20, 2023, <https://www.spiegel.de/geschichte/hitlers-kindersoldaten-wie-die-ss-minderjaehrige-rekrutierte-a-958278.html>.

48 International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), *Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and Relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I)*, 8 June 1977, Pub. L. No. 1125 UNTS 37, art 77(2); International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), *Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and Relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts (Protocol II)*, 8 June 1977, Pub. L. No. 1125 UNTS 609, art 4(3)(c).

49 International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), *Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War (Fourth Geneva Convention)*, 12 August 1949, Pub. L. No. 75 UNTS 287, art 50.

50 Ann Davison, “Child Soldiers: No Longer a Minor Incident,” *Willamette Journal of International Law and Dispute Resolution* 12, no. 1 (2004): 129.

51 International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), “Protection of the Civilian Population Against Dangers of Hostilities,” 1971, 46, accessed June 20, 2023, [https://library.icrc.org/library/docs/CD/CEG\\_1971\\_DOCUMENTS\\_ENG\\_3.pdf](https://library.icrc.org/library/docs/CD/CEG_1971_DOCUMENTS_ENG_3.pdf); Howard Mann, “International Law and the Child Soldier,” *The International and Comparative Law Quarterly* 36, no. 1 (1987): 32–33.

52 UN General Assembly, *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, 20 November 1989, Pub. L. No. UNTS 1577, vol. 3.

were “kill(ing) like unfeeling robots”.<sup>53</sup> Demonising and heavily securitised narratives were put forward, portraying child soldiers as dangerous and corrupted, unable to reintegrate and safely live within their old communities after their time with armed groups. Such narratives also existed in politics: former U.S. Ambassador to the UN, Madeleine Albright, in her statement to the Security Council in 1996, described child soldiers in Liberia as “toting automatic weapons, slaughtering innocent civilians, and ignoring the rule of law” stating that they “have no identity other than through the weapons they carry.”<sup>54</sup> Media reports and policy makers at the time tended to sensationalise, oversimplify and racialise the issue, constructing a divide between the ‘civilised’ and the ‘savage’,<sup>55</sup> and implied that child soldiers constituted security concerns. But despite these shortcomings, the steady reporting elevated the topic from the shadows to the limelight.<sup>56</sup> By the mid-1990s, the UN started working increasingly on the topic, as perceptions were beginning to change and the concepts of war and childhood began to be seen as incompatible.<sup>57</sup>

Then, in the late 1990s the rights of child soldiers were turned into a distinct policy focus.<sup>58</sup> In 1996, the Mozambiquian politician and historian Graça Machel presented a report on child soldiers at the UN General Assembly.<sup>59</sup> This unprecedented report, researched over several years, described the horrific situation of child soldiers in Sierra Leone and other conflict zones in detail and for the first time brought the humanity of child soldiers to the attention of the world when it was presented to the UN General Assembly. Graça Machel’s appeal to humanity stood in stark contrast to the media narratives around that time. She stressed the centrality of children’s rights to global peace and security, calling for urgent action in response to the suffering of child soldiers, thereby invoking ‘security’ in relation to the forced recruitment and conscription of children.<sup>60</sup> Her speech act used strong rhetorical markers to describe the plight of child soldiers, such as by calling

---

53 Myriam Denov, “Child Soldiers and Iconography: Portrayals and (Mis)Representations,” *Children & Society* 26, no. 4 (2010): 282.

54 Kenneth L. Cain, “The Rape of Dinah: Human Rights, Civil War in Liberia, and Evil Triumphant,” *Human Rights Quarterly* 21, no. 2 (1999): 296.

55 Denov, “Child Soldiers and Iconography: Portrayals and (Mis)Representations,” 282.

56 Myriam Denov, *Child Soldiers: Sierra Leone’s Revolutionary United Front* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 281.

57 Mann, “International Law and the Child Soldier,” 53.

58 Kononenko, “Prohibiting the Use of Child Soldiers: Contested Norm in Contemporary Human Rights Discourse,” 97.

59 Graça Machel, “Impact of Armed Conflict on Children: Note / by the Secretary-General,” August 26, 1996, accessed June 20, 2023, <https://digitalibrary.un.org/record/223213?ln=en#record-files-collapse-header>.

60 Machel, “Impact of Armed Conflict on Children,” 9.

the practice of military child recruitment an “attack on children”.<sup>61</sup> This presented the issue of child recruitment as an existential threat to children and, by extension, to the international community as a whole. The use of inclusive language suggested a collective responsibility, as she warned that if no action were taken, the “world is being sucked into a desolate moral vacuum”.<sup>62</sup>

Extraordinary measures were adopted after this report was published, aimed at combatting the threats presented by Graça Machel. One year after the report was presented, the international community adopted a definition of child soldiers in the *Cape Town Principles*.<sup>63</sup> Other documents followed, such as the *Paris Principles* and the International Labour Organisation’s *Convention 182* of 1999.<sup>64</sup> A first UN Resolution on child soldiers was adopted<sup>65</sup> and a UN Special Representative on Children and Armed Conflict, as well as a special working group on the topic, were introduced. In 2000, the adoption of the *Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child* followed, which raised the minimum age for military recruitment to 18, as Graça Machel had demanded.<sup>66</sup> The 12<sup>th</sup> of February was established as the International Day against the Use of Child Soldiers.

These policy and legal measures had security as an underlying justification and were backed and validated by the most relevant institution when it comes to security, the UN Security Council, which led to a change in perception and approach – instead of child soldiers getting securitised as potentially dangerous, the practice of military child recruitment now became the focus.

In 2002, the Security Council installed the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL), and the international community brought the ICC to life. The institution of these tribunals – both equipped with the tools to prosecute the forced recruitment of children – are further examples of the extraordinary measures adopted in response to the construction of child recruitment as an urgent threat.<sup>67</sup> The fact that child recruitment got recognised as an international crime contributed to

---

61 Machel, “Impact of Armed Conflict on Children,” 9.

62 Machel, “Impact of Armed Conflict on Children,” 9.

63 UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) in cooperation with the NGO Sub-group of the NGO Working Group on the Convention on and the Rights of the Child, “Cape Town Principles and Best Practice on The Prevention of Recruitment of Children into The Armed Forces and Demobilization and Social Reintegration Of Child Soldiers in Africa,” (1997), accessed June 20, 2023, <https://openasia.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Cape-Town-Principles.pdf>.

64 International Labour Organization (ILO), *Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, C182*, 17 June 1999.

65 UN Security Council, *Resolution 1261*, 25 August 1999, Pub. L. No. S/RES/1261 (1999).

66 UN General Assembly, *Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict*, 25 May 2000, A/RES/54/263.

67 Hirschauer, *The Securitization of Rape*, 133.

the institutionalisation of the securitisation or prioritisation of forced child recruitment and arguably, in turn, also de-securitised the children themselves through the new clear legal differentiation between perpetrators and victims.<sup>68</sup> For the first time, these children were essentially and legally framed as victims instead of dangerous threats associated primarily with the perpetrator's side. Through the juridification of the matter, the recognition of child recruitment (as opposed to child soldiers themselves) as a threat no longer relied on the continuous reiteration of the security speech act. Through the legal codification of the new norms on this matter, it became effective in and of itself. This paved the way for further measures aimed at combating military child recruitment, including more comprehensive international justice responses.

The first case of the ICC, the *Lubanga* case, centred around the military recruitment and conscription of children. Former ICC prosecutor Fatou Bensouda later described the judgement as a landmark conviction, "highlighting the need to take urgent and concrete action to curb this scourge" meant to send a "clear message globally that the use of child soldiers is not acceptable".<sup>69</sup> Through these utterances, she linked the judgement to the global agenda on combatting the use of child soldiers, demonstrating the essential part played by international criminal justice in the securitisation of human rights concerns.

The first case of the SCSL against *Brima et al.* also pertained to child soldiers and told a story of the realities and experiences of these children. The Court described the suffering of child soldiers, the involuntary nature of their deeds and the long-term negative impacts on their lives, such as on their education, in great detail.<sup>70</sup> These accounts painted a detailed picture of child soldiers as victims in need of support, firmly denying the demonising 'villain narrative' so often at play in the media in the years leading up to this judgement, marking another important step towards the reconstitution of norms on child soldiers.

The topic of child soldiers and child recruitment thus was framed and re-framed and evolved from a private matter or non-issue (up until the end of World War II) to a sporadically regarded issue (such as through early legislative

---

<sup>68</sup> Lene Hansen, "Gender, Nation, Rape: Bosnia and the Construction of Security," *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 3 (2000): 55; Hirschauer, *The Securitization of Rape*, 62.

<sup>69</sup> Office of the Prosecutor, "Statement of ICC Prosecutor, Fatou Bensouda, on the International Day against the Use of Child Soldiers: 'Children's Voices and Their Stories of Unspeakable Abuses during War and Conflict Must Not Go Unheard,'" February 12, 2021, accessed June 20, 2023, <https://www.icc-cpi.int/news/statement-icc-prosecutor-fatou-bensouda-international-day-against-use-child-soldiers-childrens>.

<sup>70</sup> *The Prosecutor v. Alex Tamba Brima, Brima Bazzy Kamara, Santigie Borbor Kanu (the AFRC accused) (Sentencing Judgment)* (2007) Special Court for Sierra Leone SCSL-2004-16-T [1275].

moves on the international level in the decades after) to a security issue but with child soldiers themselves getting framed as security threats (up until the mid-1990s), when framing shifted and instead of the children, their military recruitment became the focus of securitisation discourses. International law and specifically international criminal law were important in this process.<sup>71</sup> The criminalisation of military child recruitment helped communicate a complex issue in clear terms, delineating the acceptable from the unacceptable, thereby defying previous harmful narratives while appearing to provide a solution for the issue at hand through the punishment of perpetrators and compensation for victims.

## Comparison to Children Born of War (CBOW) and implications

In contrast to child soldiers, CBOW have featured in speech acts at the UN level, by government officials and in international media only in recent years, although it should be noted that CBOW themselves tried to penetrate public discourse much earlier to receive acknowledgement of their struggles. In 2007, for example, a group of Norwegian CBOW with German fathers born during World War II went before the European Court of Human Rights for the mistreatment and discrimination they endured due to the stigma of being related to their fascist fathers; the case was, however, dismissed for procedural reasons.<sup>72</sup>

Securitisating language has been used in both national and international public discourse, describing these children as 'children of the enemy' and portraying them as dangerous extensions of their soldier fathers, suggesting that they constitute a threat to their mothers' communities.<sup>73</sup> In 2017, the president of the German Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution at the time said that children of German mothers who joined the so-called Islamic State and became pregnant

---

<sup>71</sup> Houge and Skjelsbæk, "Securitisating Sexual Violence," 13.

<sup>72</sup> Associated Press in Strasbourg, "Norway's Aryan Children Go to Court over Years of Prejudice." *Thiermann and Others v Norway*, Application no. 18712/03 (2007) European Court of Human Rights.

<sup>73</sup> Syd, "Jesiden verweigern Kindern von IS-Überlebenden die Rückkehr," *DER SPIEGEL*, April 28, 2019, sec. Ausland, accessed June 20, 2023, <https://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/islamischer-staat-jesiden-verweigern-kindern-von-is-ueberlebenden-die-rueckkehr-a-1264828.html>. Society for Threatened Peoples, "A Children's Emergency – Report on children affected by and conceived in the genocide against the Rohingya," August 21, 2020, 7, <https://www.gfbv.de/de/news/a-childrens-emergency-report-on-children-affected-by-and-conceived-in-the-genocide-against-the-rohi/>.

were potential threats, as they could become a “new generation of jihadists”.<sup>74</sup> The Norwegian government collapsed in 2020 following the withdrawal of one of the coalition parties over the repatriation of a mother who had joined the so-called Islamic State in Syria and her two children born of war.<sup>75</sup> Similar to child soldiers, CBOW have thus been confronted with villainising public narratives that hint at security by framing these children as a threat to their communities and even the nation state.

In 2013, CBOW were first mentioned in a discussion on “current and emerging concerns” in a report of the Secretary General to the UN General Assembly as “children born of wartime rape”, stating that there was an “accountability gap” when it came to these children and that there was “little to no information” available on their needs even though the topic had already officially been on the UN’s radar since 2009.<sup>76</sup> But despite this and the fact that occasional media reports, books and films were produced on the topic much earlier, it is only since 2014 that the topic has gained increasing traction at the international level. In 2014, genocide was committed by the so-called Islamic State against the Yazidi community in Northern Iraq in connection with severe sexual violence. Many news sources worldwide wrote about these crimes. Some of the same sources eventually also reported on the children born after the assaults.<sup>77</sup> Around this time, CBOW gained increasing public visibility. A couple of years later the genocide in Myanmar against the Rohingya people began, which also saw highly publicised international media coverage of horrific sexual violence crimes and, incidentally, also on the birth of CBOW.<sup>78</sup>

---

74 Staff Reuters, “Verfassungsschutz warnt vor Minderjährigen Dschihad-Rückkehrern,” *Reuters*, 19 October, 2017, accessed June 20, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/article/deutschland-extremismus-verfassungsschutz-idDEKBN1CO1IB>.

75 Sarah Dean et al., “Norway’s Governing Coalition Collapses over ISIS Repatriation,” *CNN*, January 20, 2020, accessed June 20, 2023, <https://www.cnn.com/2020/01/20/europe/norway-government-collapse-isis-intl/index.html>.

76 Secretary General, “Sexual Violence in Conflict,” A/67/792–S/2013/149, 2013, 2–4, accessed June 20, 2023, <https://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/wp-content/uploads/report/sexual-violence-in-conflict-report-of-the-secretary-general/SG-Report-2013.pdf>.

77 Leila Fadel, “For Yazidi Women, Escaping ISIS Doesn’t Mean The Ordeal Is Over,” *NPR*, December 10, 2014, sec. Parallels, accessed June 20, 2023, <https://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2014/12/10/369636434/for-yazidi-women-escaping-isis-doesnt-mean-the-ordeal-is-over>.

78 Michael Safi and Shaikh Azizur Rahman, “Nine Months after Myanmar Assaults, Rohingya Camps Ready for Spate of Births,” *The Guardian*, April 30, 2018, sec. World news, accessed June 20, 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/may/01/nine-months-after-myanmar-assaults-rohingya-camps-ready-for-spate-of-births>.

In 2018, an Arria Formula meeting – an informal meeting format for members of the UN Security Council on matters that fall into the responsibility of the Council, often introducing new topics – was called, discussing “why more attention should be paid to these children”, meaning CBOW,<sup>79</sup> thereby elevating the topic for the first time to the Security Council level. While this meant that a key securitising actor became involved, albeit in the informal Arria Formula setting, the plight of CBOW was not communicated as a matter of urgent priority yet. Nevertheless, this introduced the consideration of a normative shift. Shortly after, in 2019, the first ever UN Resolution mentioning CBOW or rather “children born of rape”, Resolution 2467, was adopted.<sup>80</sup> It has its focus survivors of conflict-related sexual violence, and only by extension also includes CBOW conceived in rape. A subsequent report mandated by the Resolution refers repeatedly to “survivors and their children”, suggesting a hierarchy of victims and a lack of urgency when it comes to children conceived in wartime rape. It also lacks any mention of CBOW conceived consensually.<sup>81</sup>

The UN released a legislative model in 2021 proposing that CBOW should have access to reparations and receive protection from discrimination, indicating a first consideration of using law to address CBOW.<sup>82</sup> However, since this was merely a model law, it would not constitute a speech act formulating a threat nor an extraordinary measure in response to a threat, and it did not succeed in legally recognising CBOW as an instant priority for policy makers and courts.

Also in 2021, the Committee for the Rights of the Child and the Committee on the Elimination of Violence Against Women issued a joint statement.<sup>83</sup> This state-

---

79 Security Council Report, “Arria-Formula Meeting on Children Born of Sexual Violence in Conflict Zones: What’s In Blue : Security Council Report,” October 25, 2018, accessed June 20, 2023, <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/whatsinblue/2018/10/arria-formula-meeting-on-children-born-of-sexual-violence-in-conflict-zones.php>.

80 UN Security Council, *Resolution 2467*, 23 April 2019, S/RES/2467 (2019).

81 Lina Stotz et al., “Children Born of War Should Be More Than an Afterthought,” *PRIO Blogs*, March 6, 2022, accessed June 20, 2023, <https://blogs.prio.org/2022/03/children-born-of-war-should-be-more-than-an-afterthought/>.

82 Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, “Model Legislative Provisions and Guidance on Investigation and Prosecution of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence,” June 18, 2021, 43–44, accessed June 20, 2023, <https://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/report/auto-draft/OSRSG-SVC-Model-Legislative-Provisions-ENG.pdf>.

83 Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC), “CEDAW-CRC Joint Statement: Ensuring Prevention, Protection and Assistance for Children Born of Conflict Related Rape and Their Mothers,” November 19, 2021, accessed June 20, 2023, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/statements/cedaw-crc-joint-statement-ensuring-prevention-protection-and-assistance>.



ment called for “urgent measures” by all state parties to “accelerate efforts”<sup>84</sup> to help CBOW. This was the first speech act clearly articulating the plight of CBOW as an urgent threat that needed to be taken seriously. It called for the adoption of special measures, which have, however, only ensued sporadically. In 2022, the influential Platform for Action by the United Kingdom’s Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative (PSVI) focused on CBOW and declared as one of the four policy priorities the promotion of effective laws to protect CBOW.<sup>85</sup>

CBOW have not started to play a significant part in international criminal law yet. In the ICC’s *Ntaganda* reparations decision of 2021, CBOW were for the first time recognised as victims of the crimes of rape and sexual slavery for the purpose of reparations, reasoning that “the harm they suffered is a direct result of the commission of the crimes of rape and sexual slavery”.<sup>86</sup> While this was a major development and suggests a step towards the recognition of the plight of CBOW as a collective security concern, considering that their harm is a direct result of rape and sexual slavery overlooks the fact that, without these acts, these children would not have been born in the first place. The considerations of the Court seem overly simplistic in this regard and could be re-stigmatising as they are essentially framing the concerned children as victims of their own conceptions. Moreover, the consideration of CBOW only at the reparations stage, which takes place after the trial, meant that the suffering of the children was not part of the deliberations of the Court at the trial and appeals stage and therefore provided only limited visibility, agency, and acknowledgement to the children.

CBOW have not yet had their ‘Graça Machel moment’, with a securitisation move impactful enough to trigger an institutionalised response to their plight, like the highly visible 1996 report on child soldiers, which ultimately led to legal recognition of child soldiers as victims, manifesting a shift from the demonised image of child soldiers to a perception of innocence. CBOW still experience narratives framing them as potential security risks, even in the above-mentioned UN report of 2022, which speaks of CBOW exhibiting potentially violent behaviour.<sup>87</sup>

---

<sup>84</sup> Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC), “CEDAW-CRC Joint Statement”, 1.

<sup>85</sup> UK’s Preventing Sexual Violence in and Conflict Initiative (PSVI) and others, “Platform for Action: Promoting the Rights and Wellbeing of Children Born of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence,” November 28, 2022, accessed June 20, 2023, [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1120400/platform-for-action-promoting-the-rights-and-wellbeing-of-children-born-of-conflict-related-sexual-violence.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1120400/platform-for-action-promoting-the-rights-and-wellbeing-of-children-born-of-conflict-related-sexual-violence.pdf).

<sup>86</sup> *The Prosecutor v Bosco Ntaganda (Reparations Order)* (2021) International Criminal Court ICC-01/04-02/06 [122].

<sup>87</sup> Secretary General, “Women and Girls Who Become Pregnant as a Result of Sexual Violence in Conflict and Children Born of Sexual Violence in Conflict” (United Nations Security Council, Janu-



Nevertheless, the above examples suggest gradual movement towards increasing recognition of the plight of CBOW as a security concern for the international community. Interestingly, several of these examples link CBOW to child recruitment with several securitising actors explicitly calling for support to CBOW in vulnerable situations, specifically in order to avoid their military recruitment.<sup>88</sup> Linking CBOW to child recruitment – a heavily prioritised and well-recognised human rights concern by now – suggests an attempt to invoke ‘security’ by association. Legal recognition, however, has only played a role on the side-lines.

## Discussion

The above analysis shows that a discourse is taking place that increasingly recognises the humanity and needs of CBOW. When comparing this discourse to the process of the securitisation of military child recruitment, there are parallels: in both instances, specific conflicts and media reporting on those conflicts became pivotal moments for bringing the situation of the salient group of children to the attention of policy makers; both groups of children received acknowledgement in UN resolutions followed by further UN action; both groups thereafter were considered at the international justice level albeit to very different extents. But as the above considerations show, CBOW have not yet fully gained recognition as victims of the multifaceted discriminations they suffer, discussed above in section 3. Recognition at the international justice level has not yet occurred beyond the reparations stage. There are several reasons for this.

Child soldiers were first spoken about as individuals, while CBOW have thus far been brought to prominent public attention only as extensions of their mothers. The response to sexual violence in conflict, such as the ordeal of thousands of abducted Yazidi women, including Nobel Peace Prize winning survivor and activist Nadia Murad, set the tone. Public responses to the children that were born as a result followed. This hierarchy is still visible in recent UN statements.<sup>89</sup> In order to avoid this construction of hierarchy, CBOW need to become recognised as a distinct group of interest, like child soldiers were, in order to prompt policy makers to take their situation seriously and to encourage distinct measures. The normative

---

ary 31, 2022), 7, accessed June 20, 2023, <https://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/report/auto-draft/N2223437.pdf>.

<sup>88</sup> Secretary General, 2. Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC), “CEDAW-CRC Joint Statement”, 1.

<sup>89</sup> Secretary General, “Women and Girls Who Become Pregnant as a Result of Sexual Violence in Conflict and Children Born of Sexual Violence in Conflict,” 3.

framework behind the securitisation of conflict-related sexual and reproductive violence and the subsequent codification and interpretation of international law on this point should be analysed and reflected upon to find ways of reconciling the needs of both the mothers and the children.

The above discussion further shows that the challenges faced by CBOW are not yet familiar enough to the relevant actors to inform effective action. The 2018 Arria Formula meeting demonstrates such a lack of knowledge, as its declared objective was to learn about the challenges of CBOW, and the same goes for the 2022 Platform for Action referenced above, as it called for the commission of a global study to better understand the needs of CBOW.<sup>90</sup> In the case of child soldiers, the comprehensive report by Graça Machel provided detailed information compiled for years as a reference framework for informed measures to be taken up in response. Such foundational knowledge on CBOW has not yet been effectively presented to an international audience like the UN General Assembly, hampering the acceptance of a threat and the adoption of informed measures, including legal recognition. In fact, the above analysis suggests that this lack of foundation may be inducing unhelpful shortcuts.

One of these shortcuts is that policy makers at the UN level have thus far usually only considered CBOW conceived in sexual violence and thereby diverged from the prevailing academic definition of the term, which also includes children with one civilian and one opposing military parent conceived in other ways. The levels of discrimination suffered by children born out of love relationships between a local and an opposing military parent in times of war can be severe, and sometimes even more so than for CBOW conceived in rape, making consideration only of CBOW conceived in rape questionable.<sup>91</sup>

Another shortcut is that CBOW have been linked to child soldiers by several policy makers, who have drawn on the latter group to formulate policy recommendations on the former. While there are similarities and overlaps, as discussed in section 2, there are also critical differences, and far from all CBOW risk being recruited into armed forces as children. Converging the two could create blind spots in political, humanitarian, and legal responses.

Legal recognition has played a significant part in the reconstitution of norms on child soldiers, as the above analysis has shown. Law can be a “norm provider and moral disciplinarian”,<sup>92</sup> and as Durkheim wrote, the criminal process repre-

---

<sup>90</sup> UK's Preventing Sexual Violence in and Conflict Initiative (PSVI) and others, “Platform for Action.”

<sup>91</sup> Ingvill C. Mochmann and Sabine Lee, “The Human Rights of Children Born of War: Case Analyses of Past and Present Conflicts,” *Historical Social Research* 35, no. 3 (2010): 275.

<sup>92</sup> Houge and Skjelsbæk, “Securitisating Sexual Violence,” 32.

sents our collective conscience.<sup>93</sup> As such, law can be a tool to challenge or undo the status quo.<sup>94</sup> However, law should not be seen as a miracle cure.<sup>95</sup> In the case of the two groups of war-affected children considered in this chapter, international criminal law has produced solutions by recognising a previously unseen group and facilitating reparations, but it has also reproduced harmful narratives and images. In the case of CBOW, their construction as victims of their own acts of conception, as in the above-mentioned *Ntaganda* decision, is circular and potentially harmful, as it could re-stigmatise the concerned children. This framing also appears to construct an unhelpful hierarchy between sexual violence survivors and CBOW.

The apparent tension between the needs of sexual violence survivors and CBOW rooted in the drafting history of certain legal provisions appears to have hindered an unbiased approach to CBOW on some occasions, such as in relation to the *Ntaganda* reparations decision. Such close natural links to other groups of victims do not exist for child soldiers, which has arguably made their legal recognition easier. The apparent conceptual tension appears to require a rethinking of sexual and reproductive violence charges in international law and a reflection on judicial biases that may persist regarding CBOW.

Approaching the topic of reducing the vulnerability of CBOW through the lens of securitisation has facilitated a break-down of where we stand in terms of the acknowledgement of their plight at the international level, and comparison to child soldiers has facilitated the deduction of the above implications for a successful prioritisation of CBOW in policy and law. Successful securitisation might mean that CBOW receive more humanitarian and legal support, but that does not come without peril. The speech acts necessary for securitisation can perpetuate a singular narrative.<sup>96</sup> The securitisation of child recruitment, for example, has arguably over-emphasised an image of war-affected children in the global south as passive victims. Criminal proceedings may reproduce these harmful victim narratives.<sup>97</sup> In order to avoid this, scholars are increasingly pushing towards recognising the agency of child soldiers.<sup>98</sup>

---

93 Emile Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society*, trans. George Simpson (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1947, original publication 1893), 80.

94 Hirschauer, *The Securitization of Rape*, 186–187.

95 Houge and Skjelsbæk, "Securitising Sexual Violence," 32.

96 "Securitisation Theory – International Relations (3/7)," 2014, accessed June 20, 2023, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wQ07tW0zE\\_c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wQ07tW0zE_c).

97 Hirschauer, *The Securitization of Rape*, 200.

98 Steinf, *Child Soldiers as Agents of War and Peace*, 28; Denov, "Child Soldiers and Iconography: Portrayals and (Mis)Representations," 283.

## Suggestions for a way forward

The following seven points provide a summary of the above discussion and suggestions for sensible future considerations of CBOW in international policy and law.

1. Children have been born of war throughout history and in many (but not all) cases they have suffered from varying degrees of discrimination and stigmatisation due to their supposed association with a military enemy, usually through their biological fathers, as research has documented. Yet, there appears to be a lack of foundational knowledge on the experiences and needs of CBOW among international policy makers and in international tribunals. In future policy and legal action considering CBOW, salient parties should consider the existing knowledge of researchers and civil society and CBOW activists and interest groups before commissioning new studies, to avoid a reproduction of existing knowledge.
2. Law is for the most part still inconsiderate of CBOW, but some CBOW have considered law to address experiences of discrimination.<sup>99</sup> While there are some examples of legal acknowledgement of CBOW in national jurisdictions and international law, there is no coherent approach yet. Also, scholarship has not reached a uniform conclusion on what legal responses to CBOW should look like. Recognising CBOW's legal consciousness and their own legal mobilisation efforts could provide valuable direction for sensible institutionalised approaches.
3. Bringing CBOW increasingly into the focus of policy and legal initiatives at the international level can have positive implications, such as reducing the vulnerability of CBOW and providing tangible support, but it can also have negative ones. Public narratives on victim groups can have re-stigmatising or stereotyping effects, and legal mechanisms can contribute to constructing such harmful narratives. Recognising CBOW's agency – their ability and right to control and shape their own story – can be key to avoiding singular narratives and to achieving victim-centric policy and legal prioritisation.<sup>100</sup> As an example of this, in

---

<sup>99</sup> Examples of legal mobilisation efforts are the application to the European Court for Human Rights by Norwegian CBOW and the campaigning towards legal and societal recognition by Bosnian CBOW: *Thiermann and Others v Norway*, Application no. 18712/03 (2007) European Court of Human Rights. “Children Born as a Result of Wartime Rape Get Their First Legal Recognition in Bosnia and Herzegovina,” *TRIAL International*, August 4, 2022, accessed June 20, 2023, <https://trialinternational.org/latest-post/children-born-as-a-result-of-wartime-rape-get-their-first-legal-recognition-in-bosnia-and-herzegovina/>.

<sup>100</sup> Steinl, *Child Soldiers as Agents of War and Peace*, 410.

the legal sphere, active participation by CBOW in proceedings, and not only passive consideration at the reparations stage, could be considered.

4. Converging CBOW with other groups, such as child soldiers or victim-survivors of conflict-related sexual violence, as several policy makers have done, as discussed above, has created unhelpful shortcuts misrepresenting CBOW. Instead, a recognition of the autonomy of CBOW's experiences aside from their connectedness with other groups such as survivors of conflict-related sexual violence and child soldiers might be more helpful.
5. Several scholars have discussed the statutory incompatibility of the needs of CBOW and those of survivors of conflict-related violence, and the above analysis has shown that the ICC has produced deliberations affirming this view. The conceptualisation of reproductive violence in international criminal law and the inferences drawn about CBOW on this basis might have to be studied and re-thought in order to accommodate both groups without producing harmful narratives or limitations for the latter.
6. As indicated above, international policy and justice are focusing on children born from conflict-related sexual violence instead of CBOW, which also includes children born from consensual or subsistence relationships between a civilian and an opposing military parent. The focus on survivors of rape and their children has constructed conception by rape as harm. This conceptualisation might be re-stigmatising for the concerned CBOW, and it disregards the source of struggle of many of these children: their treatment after conception. As mentioned above, research has shown that CBOW conceived in consensual relationships can suffer discrimination and stigmatisation as severe or even more severe than children born of rape. It appears that not the mode of conception itself but the patriarchal associations with their conception and parentage lead to their suffering and ostracization. In light of this, an informed discussion on the terminology and scope of the concept of CBOW is needed in international policy and law.
7. The role of international criminal law should be conceptualised in light of all previous points in discussions on whether the law or its application needs to be developed to recognise the humanity of CBOW. Prosecutorial justice should be a complementary step toward other forms of transitional justice and humanitarian measures.

## Conclusion

Child soldiers experienced a re-constitution of norms closely linked to securitising language, framing first themselves and later their recruitment as a threat to com-

munities, nations, and the global conscious. Targeted interventions established the human rights concerns of these children on the international agenda, culminating in the prohibition of the recruitment of children under international criminal law. Today, child soldiers are no longer seen as security threats; instead, *practices of recruiting* child soldiers are.<sup>101</sup> CBOW have faced securitising public narratives of a similarly villainising nature, but as the above discussion showed, at least children born of conflict-related sexual violence have become subject to initial protection attempts in policy and law.

The images put forward of war-affected children influence if and what kind of policy and legal responses are adopted regarding those children.<sup>102</sup> This chapter discussed the role of criminal justice within the process of framing war-affected children, demonstrating in both cases the relevance of careful legal consideration to establish the vulnerabilities of these children as priorities on the international agenda. It is argued that especially for changing attitudes and norms and embedding items on the agenda at the highest levels of global governance, international justice can be invaluable. For child soldiers, legal recognition has contributed to the institutionalisation of a shift in narrative, framing them as victims eligible for protection instead of dangerous villains.

Reducing the debate around the interests of war-affected children to a question of law, however, would be too simple. Juridified responses to human rights crises can be important or even imperative, but they do not come without limitations for the concerned victim-survivors.<sup>103</sup> The comparison of child soldiers and CBOW allowed for a discussion of implications for successfully regarding the latter in policy and law and suggestions for a sustainable way forward.

Successful securitisation – in this case, prioritising the human rights concerns of war-affected children – and the measures adopted in response does not abolish the recruitment of children and the suffering of CBOW altogether. But it can contribute to shaping society's perception of these children and facilitate support. In this process, criminal justice plays an essential role. As such, legal recognition has the potential to surface forgotten groups of war-affected children, thereby reducing their vulnerability, but it is advisable to embark on this journey with care.

---

**101** Kononenko, "Prohibiting the Use of Child Soldiers: Contested Norm in Contemporary Human Rights Discourse," 101.

**102** Steinl, *Child Soldiers as Agents of War and Peace*, 12.

**103** Steinl, *Child Soldiers as Agents of War and Peace*, 9.

## References

- Associated Press in Strasbourg. "Norway's Aryan Children Go to Court over Years of Prejudice." *The Guardian*, March 8, 2007. Accessed June 20, 2023. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2007/mar/08/secondworldwar.international>.
- Balzacq, Thierry. "A Theory of Securitization: Origins, Core Assumptions, and Variants." In *Securitization Theory: How Security Problems Emerge and Dissolve*, edited by Thierry Balzacq, 272. London: Routledge, 2010.
- Benrey, Laura. "History of Child Soldier Policies." *End Slavery Now*, February 2, 2016. <https://www.endslaverynow.org/blog/articles/history-of-child-soldier-policies>.
- Betancourt, Theresa S., Ivelina I. Borisova, Marie de la Soudière, and John Williamson. "Sierra Leone's Child Soldiers: War Exposures and Mental Health Problems by Gender." *Journal of Adolescent Health* 49, no. 1 (2011): 21–28. doi:10.1016/j.jadohealth.2010.09.021.
- Bringedal Houge, Anette, and Kjersti Lohne. "End Impunity! Reducing Conflict-Related Sexual Violence to a Problem of Law." *Law & Society Review* 51, no. 4 (2017): 755–789.
- Buzan, Barry, Ole Wæver, and Jaap de Wilde. *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*. London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998.
- Cain, Kenneth L. "The Rape of Dinah: Human Rights, Civil War in Liberia, and Evil Triumphant." *Human Rights Quarterly* 21, no. 2 (1999): 265–307.
- Carpenter, R. Charli. *Born of War: Protecting Children of Sexual Violence Survivors in Conflict Zones*. Bloomfield: Kumarian Press, 2007.
- Carpenter, R. Charli. "Gender, Ethnicity, and Children's Human Rights: Theorizing Babies Born of Wartime Rape and Sexual Exploitation." In *Born of War: Protecting Children of Sexual Violence Survivors in Conflict Zones*, edited by R. Charli Carpenter. Bloomfield: Kumarian Press, 2007.
- Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC). "CEDAW-CRC Joint Statement: Ensuring Prevention, Protection and Assistance for Children Born of Conflict Related Rape and Their Mothers." November 19, 2021. Accessed June 20, 2023. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/statements/cedaw-crc-joint-statement-ensuring-prevention-protection-and-assistance>.
- Davison, Ann. "Child Soldiers: No Longer a Minor Incident." *Willamette Journal of International Law and Dispute Resolution* 12, no. 1 (2004): 124–157.
- Dean, Sarah, Jack Guy, and James Frater. "Norway's Governing Coalition Collapses over ISIS Repatriation." *CNN*, January 20, 2020. Accessed June 20, 2023. <https://www.cnn.com/2020/01/20/europe/norway-government-collapse-isis-intl/index.html>.
- DeLaet, Debra. "Theorizing Justice for Children Born of War." In *Born of War: Protecting Children of Sexual Violence Survivors in Conflict Zones*, edited by R. Charli Carpenter, 128–148. Bloomfield: Kumarian Press, 2007.
- Denov, Myriam. "Child Soldiers and Iconography: Portrayals and (Mis)Representations." *Children & Society* 26, no. 4 (2010).
- Denov, Myriam. *Child Soldiers: Sierra Leone's Revolutionary United Front*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Denov, Myriam, and Sara Kahn. "'They Should See Us as a Symbol of Reconciliation': Youth Born of Genocidal Rape in Rwanda and the Implications for Transitional Justice." *Journal of Human Rights Practice* 11 (2019): 151–170.

- DER SPIEGEL. "Jesiden verweigern Kindern von IS-Überlebenden die Rückkehr." April 28, 2019, sec. Ausland. Accessed June 20, 2023. <https://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/islamischer-staat-jesiden-verweigern-kindern-von-is-ueberlebenden-die-rueckkehr-a-1264828.html>.
- Dowds, Eithne. "Children Born of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Conflict: The International Criminal Court, Ecological Environments and Human Development." *Children & Society* 33, no. 3 (2019): 226–238.
- Dowds, Eithne. "Children Born of Sexual Violence under Islamic State Need Support." *The Conversation*, November 28, 2017. Accessed June 20, 2023. <https://theconversation.com/children-born-of-sexual-violence-under-islamic-state-need-support-87147>.
- Durkheim, Emile. *The Division of Labor in Society*. Translated by George Simpson. Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1947.
- Fadel, Leila. "For Yazidi Women, Escaping ISIS Doesn't Mean The Ordeal Is Over." *NPR*, December 10, 2014, sec. Parallels. Accessed June 20, 2023. <https://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2014/12/10/369636434/for-yazidi-women-escaping-isis-doesnt-mean-the-ordeal-is-over>.
- Grieg, Kai. "The War Children of the World." *War and Children Identity Project (WCIP)*, Bergen, January 1, 2001. Accessed June 20, 2023. [https://www.academia.edu/2189623/The\\_war\\_children\\_of\\_the\\_world](https://www.academia.edu/2189623/The_war_children_of_the_world).
- Hansen, Lene. "Gender, Nation, Rape: Bosnia and the Construction of Security." *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 3 (2000): 55–75.
- Hirschauer, Sabine. *The Securitization of Rape: Women, War and Sexual Violence*. Houndmills/Basingstoke/Hampshire/New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.
- Houge, Anette, and Inger Skjelsbæk. "Securitising Sexual Violence: Transitions from War to Peace." In *Intimate Partner Violence, Risk and Security: Securing Women's Lives in a Global World*, edited by Kate Fitz-Gibbon, Sandra Walklate, Jude McCulloch, and JaneMaree Maher, 19–33. New York: Routledge, 2021.
- Howell, Alison, and Melanie Richter-Montpetit. "Is Securitization Theory Racist? Civilizationism, Methodological Whiteness, and Antiblack Thought in the Copenhagen School." *Security Dialogue* 51, no. 1 (2020): 3–22.
- International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War (Fourth Geneva Convention), Pub. L. No. 75 UNTS 287 (1949).
- International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). "Protection of the Civilian Population Against Dangers of Hostilities," 1971. Accessed June 20, 2023. [https://library.icrc.org/library/docs/CD/CEG\\_1971\\_DOCUMENTS\\_ENG\\_3.pdf](https://library.icrc.org/library/docs/CD/CEG_1971_DOCUMENTS_ENG_3.pdf).
- International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I), Pub. L. No. 1125 UNTS 37 (1977).
- International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts (Protocol II), Pub. L. No. 1125 UNTS 609 (1977).
- International Labour Organization (ILO). Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, Pub. L. No. C182 (1999).
- Kononenko, Iuliia. "Prohibiting the Use of Child Soldiers: Contested Norm in Contemporary Human Rights Discourse." *Nordic Journal of Human Rights* 34, no. 2 (2016): 89–103.
- Lee, Sabine. *Children Born of War in the Twentieth Century*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017.



- London School of Economics and Political Science Podcasts. "Challenges in Investigating and Prosecuting at the International Level." Accessed June 20, 2023. <https://www.lse.ac.uk/women-peace-security/Podcasts/podcasts.aspx>.
- Machel, Graça. "Impact of Armed Conflict on Children: Note / by the Secretary-General," August 26, 1996. Accessed June 20, 2023. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/223213?ln=en#record-files-collapse-header>.
- Mann, Howard. "International Law and the Child Soldier." *The International and Comparative Law Quarterly* 36, no. 1 (1987): 32–57.
- Maruhn, Thilo, and Marie-Christin Stenzel. "Power, Security, and Public International Law – an Intricate Relationship." In *Conceptualizing Power in Dynamics of Securitization*, edited by Regina Kreide, and Andreas Langenohl, 265–90. Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 2019.
- Meger, Sara. "The Fetishization of Sexual Violence in International Security." *International Studies Quarterly* 60, no. 1 (2016): 149–159.
- Mochmann, Ingvill C. "Children Born of War – A Decade of International and Interdisciplinary Research." *Historical Social Research* 42, no. 1 (2017): 320–46.
- Mochmann, Ingvill C. "Consolidating the Evidence Base of Children Born of War." *ZA-Information* 59 (2006): 198–199.
- Mochmann, Ingvill C., and Stein Ugelvik Larsen. "Children Born of War: The Life Course of Children Fathered by German Soldiers in Norway and Denmark during WWII – Some Empirical Results." *Historical Social Research* 33, no. 1 (2008): 347–363.
- Mochmann, Ingvill C., and Sabine Lee. "The Human Rights of Children Born of War: Case Analyses of Past and Present Conflicts." *Historical Social Research* 35, no. 3 (2010): 268–298.
- Mochmann, Ingvill C., and Inger Skjelsbæk. "Children Born of War (CBOW)." GPS Policy Brief. 3. PRIO, 2018. Accessed June 20, 2023. <https://www.prio.org/utility/DownloadFile.ashx?id=1703&type=publicationfile>.
- Neehan, Joanne. "The Role of the ICC in Protecting the Rights of Children Born of War." *EJIL:Talk!* (blog), February 12, 2018. Accessed June 20, 2023. <https://www.ejiltalk.org/the-role-of-the-icc-in-protecting-the-rights-of-children-born-of-rape-in-war/>.
- Office of the Prosecutor. "Statement of ICC Prosecutor, Fatou Bensouda, on the International Day against the Use of Child Soldiers: 'Children's Voices and Their Stories of Unspeakable Abuses during War and Conflict Must Not Go Unheard.'" February 12, 2021. Accessed June 20, 2023. <https://www.icc-cpi.int/news/statement-icc-prosecutor-fatou-bensouda-international-day-against-use-child-soldiers-childrens>.
- Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. "Model Legislative Provisions and Guidance on Investigation and Prosecution of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence," June 18, 2021. Accessed June 20, 2023. <https://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/report/auto-draft/OSRSG-SVC-Model-Legislative-Provisions-ENG.pdf>.
- Reuters Staff. "Verfassungsschutz Warnt Vor Minderjährigen Dschihad-Rückkehrern." *Reuters*, October 19, 2017. Accessed June 20, 2023. <https://www.reuters.com/article/deutschland-ex-tremismus-verfassungsschutz-idDEKBN1CO1IB>.
- Rosen, David M. *Child Soldiers in the Western Imagination: From Patriots to Victims*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2015.
- Safi, Michael, and Shaikh Azizur Rahman. "Nine Months after Myanmar Assaults, Rohingya Camps Ready for Spate of Births." *The Guardian*, April 30, 2018, sec. World news. Accessed June 20, 2023. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/may/01/nine-months-after-myanmar-assaults-rohingya-camps-ready-for-spate-of-births>.

- Secretary General. "Sexual Violence in Conflict," 2013. Accessed June 20, 2023. <https://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/wp-content/uploads/report/sexual-violence-in-conflict-report-of-the-secretary-general/SG-Report-2013.pdf>.
- Secretary General. "Women and Girls Who Become Pregnant as a Result of Sexual Violence in Conflict and Children Born of Sexual Violence in Conflict." United Nations Security Council, January 31, 2022. Accessed June 20, 2023. <https://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/report/auto-draft/N2223437.pdf>.
- Securitisation Theory – International Relations (3/7)*, 2014. Accessed June 20, 2023. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wQ07tWOzE\\_c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wQ07tWOzE_c).
- Security Council Report. "Arria-Formula Meeting on Children Born of Sexual Violence in Conflict Zones : What's In Blue : Security Council Report," October 25, 2018. <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/whatsinblue/2018/10/arria-formula-meeting-on-children-born-of-sexual-violence-in-conflict-zones.php>.
- Society for Threatened Peoples. "A Children's Emergency – Report on children affected by and conceived in the genocide against the Rohingya," August 21, 2020. <https://www.gfbv.de/de/news/a-children-s-emergency-report-on-children-affected-by-and-conceived-in-the-genocide-against-the-rohi/>.
- Steinl, Leonie. *Child Soldiers as Agents of War and Peace: A Restorative Transitional Justice Approach to Accountability for Crimes Under International Law*. The Hague: T.M.C. Asser Press, 2017.
- Stotz, Lina, Johanne Rokke Elvebakken, Ingvill Constanze Mochmann, Inger Skjelsbæk, Sunniva Arja Tobiasen, and Torunn L. Tryggestad. "Children Born of War Should Be More Than an Afterthought." *PRIO Blogs* (blog), March 6, 2022. <https://blogs.prio.org/2022/03/children-born-of-war-should-be-more-than-an-afterthought/>.
- Stutte, Harald. "Hitlers Kindersoldaten: Wie Die SS Minderjährige Rekrutierte." *DER SPIEGEL*, April 4, 2014. Accessed June 20, 2023. <https://www.spiegel.de/geschichte/hitlers-kindersoldaten-wie-die-ss-minderjaehrige-rekruitierte-a-958278.html>.
- The Prosecutor of the Special Court v. Alex Tamba Brima, Brima Bazzy Kamara, Santigie Borbor Kanu (the AFRC accused) (Sentencing Judgment), No. SCSL-2004-16-T. Special Court for Sierra Leone July 19, 2007.
- The Prosecutor v Bosco Ntaganda (Reparations Order), No. ICC-01/04-02/06. International Criminal Court March 8, 2021.
- Thiermann, Werner Hermann, and Others v. Norway, Application no. 18712/03. European Court of Human Rights March 8, 2007.
- TRIAL International. "Children Born as a Result of Wartime Rape Get Their First Legal Recognition in Bosnia and Herzegovina," August 4, 2022. Accessed June 20, 2023. <https://trialinternational.org/latest-post/children-born-as-a-result-of-wartime-rape-get-their-first-legal-recognition-in-bosnia-and-herzegovina/>.
- UK's Preventing Sexual Violence in and Conflict Initiative (PSVI) and others. "Platform for Action: Promoting the Rights and Wellbeing of Children Born of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence." November 28, 2022. Accessed June 20, 2023. [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1120400/platform-for-action-promoting-the-rights-and-wellbeing-of-children-born-of-conflict-related-sexual-violence.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1120400/platform-for-action-promoting-the-rights-and-wellbeing-of-children-born-of-conflict-related-sexual-violence.pdf).
- UN Children's Fund (UNICEF). *The Paris Principles: Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated With Armed Forces or Armed Groups* (2007). Accessed June 20, 2023. <https://www.unicef.org/reports/paris-principles>.

- UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) in cooperation with the NGO Sub-group of the NGO Working Group on the Convention on and the Rights of the Child. “Cape Town Principles and Best Practice on The Prevention of Recruitment Of Children into The Armed Forces and Demobilization and Social Reintegration Of Child Soldiers in Africa.” April 30, 1997. Accessed June 20, 2023. <https://openasia.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Cape-Town-Principles.pdf>.
- UN General Assembly. Convention on the Rights of the Child, Pub. L. No. UNTS 1577, vol. 3 (1989).
- UN General Assembly. Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, A/RES/54/263 (2000).
- UN General Assembly. Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (last amended 2010), Pub. L. No. ISBN No. 92–9227–227–6, ISBN No. 92–9227–227–6 (1998).
- UN Security Council. Resolution 1261 (1999), Pub. L. No. S/RES/1261 (1999).
- UN Security Council. Resolution 2467 (2019), Pub. L. No. S/RES/2467 (2019).
- Vultee, Fred. “Securitization as a Media Frame: What Happens When the Media ‘Speak Security.’” In *Securitization Theory: How Security Problems Emerge and Dissolve*, edited by Thierry Balzacq, 77–93. London: Routledge, 2010.
- Vuori, Juha A. “Illocutionary Logic and Strands of Securitization: Applying the Theory of Securitization to the Study of Non-Democratic Political Orders.” *European Journal of International Relations* 14, no. 1 (2008): 65–99.
- Wæver, Ole, and Barry Buzan. “Racism and Responsibility – The Critical Limits of Deepfake Methodology in Security Studies: A Reply to Howell and Richter-Montpetit.” *Security Dialogue* 51, no. 4 (August 1, 2020): 386–394.



Sascha Hein, Isabell Schuster, Julie Larran, Barış Altındağ, Maria Schriefer and Shanti D'Sa

# School Transition Expectations of Newcomer Pupils in Germany: A Pilot Evaluation of a Summer Programme

Since 2015, over two million people have sought refuge and asylum in Germany.<sup>1</sup> Between January and August of 2022, the total number of first-time asylum-seeker applicants included close to 50,000 children under 18 years of age, which constitutes 42.9% of the total number of applications submitted to the *German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees* [Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge].<sup>2</sup> About half of those children (21.6%) were under the age of four. As a result of the large scale of this migration, newcomer pupils have faced challenges in accessing quality educational services. There are no reliable estimates of how many newcomer children and youth are enrolled in German schools. The *Expert Council on Integration and Migration* [Sachverständigenrat für Integration und Migration] estimates that about 130,000 refugee children and youth entered the German school system between January 2015 and March 2018.<sup>3</sup> These newcomer pupils will continue to enter the school system in the future, which will significantly impact on the school system's resources and infrastructure. Research has documented challenges and needs related to providing quality education to newcomer pupils in Germany. Differing language backgrounds and related communication difficulties, and the fluctuation of newcomer pupils due to frequent changes of residence or deportation, are challenges in establishing supportive relationships with newcom-

---

**Note:** We are grateful to the pupils and educators who participated in this project. The development and implementation of the *Huckepack* summer programme in 2020 was supported by the *UBS Optimus Foundation*. The implementation in 2022 was supported by the *Auf!Leben* program, funded by the German Children and Youth Foundation.

1 See Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, "Aktuelle Zahlen, August 2022. Tabelle, Diagramme, Erläuterungen," Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge (Berlin), accessed December 19, 2022, <https://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Statistik/AsylinZahlen/aktuelle-zahlen-august-2022.pdf>.

2 See Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, "Aktuelle Zahlen".

3 See Sachverständigenrat Deutscher Stiftungen für Integration und Migration, "Schule als Sackgasse? Jugendliche Flüchtlinge an segregierten Schulen. 2018," accessed December 19, 2022, [https://www.svr-migration.de/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/SVR-FB\\_Bildungsintegration.pdf](https://www.svr-migration.de/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/SVR-FB_Bildungsintegration.pdf).

er pupils and their parents.<sup>4</sup> The high level of commitment of educators and cooperation with organisations offering extracurricular and out-of-school activities are important and beneficial in working with newcomer pupils.<sup>5</sup>

Many newcomer pupils have particular emotional needs due to their stressful journeys.<sup>6</sup> Symptoms such as anxiety, insecurity, attention and concentration problems, aggression, and depression impact everyday school life.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, previous research has framed the process of entering formal education in a host society as a transition process in which children must negotiate multiple intersecting transitions (e.g., in family, friendships, community, and across language settings) that connect their home culture with the culture of the new school environment.<sup>8</sup> Migration, be it voluntarily or involuntarily, can be perceived as a significant geographical but also psychological transition from one's home to another, potentially very foreign one. Moreover, transitions within the rigid structure of the school system pose additional challenges. Children must overcome the segregation between primary and secondary school and adapt to new structures, educational programmes, and social demands. Children may experience the transition from one school level to the next as an important shift, which might cause tension and anxiety.<sup>9</sup> According to research by Nauck and Genoni in schools in the European Union,<sup>10</sup> positive experiences of transition between educational levels, meaning

---

4 See Juliane Karakayali et al., “Forschungsbericht ‘Solidarität im Wandel?’/ein Forschungs-Interventions-Cluster des Berliner Instituts für empirische Integrations- und Migrationsforschung (BIM). Kapitel 12: Die Beschulung neu zugewanderter und geflüchteter Kinder in Berlin. Praxis und Herausforderungen, Humboldt Universität zu Berlin,” accessed December 19, 2022, accessed April 12, 2023, <https://digital.zlb.de/viewer/resolver?urn=urn:nbn:de:kobv:109-1-13840554>.

5 See Karakayali et al., “Forschungsbericht.”

6 See Lutine de Wal Pastoor, “The mediational role of schools in supporting psychosocial transitions among unaccompanied young refugees upon resettlement in Norway,” *International Journal of Educational Development* 41 (2015), accessed December 19, 2022, doi:10.1016/j.ijedudev.2014.10.009.

7 See Lauritz R. F. Müller et al., “1-year follow-up of the mental health and stress factors in asylum-seeking children and adolescents resettled in Germany,” *BMC Public Health* 19 (2019), accessed December 19, 2022, doi:10.1186/s12889-019-7263-6.

8 See Julie Larran, Isabell Schuster and Sascha Hein, “The feasibility of implementing autism intervention methods in formal education settings welcoming refugee and asylum-seeking children: A systematic review of the literature,” *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development* 179 (2021): 7–28, accessed December 19, 2022, doi:10.1002/cad.20449.

9 See Stig Broström, “Communication and continuity in the transition from kindergarten to school,” in *Transitions in the Early Years*, ed. Aline-Wendy Dunlop, and Hilary Fabian (London: Routledge, 2002), 76–87.

10 See Bernhard Nauck and Andreas Genoni, “Status transition in the educational system and well-being of migrant adolescents in cross-national comparison,” *Zeitschrift für Erziehungswissenschaft* 22 (2019): 47–69, accessed December 19, 2022, doi:10.1007/s11618-019-00887-z.

that the child sees the transition challenge as manageable, are critical for children. In contrast, negative experiences of transition can produce lasting adverse effects. This is particularly significant for children from families with migrant backgrounds, putting them at risk, for instance, of dropping out of school.<sup>11</sup> Mackenzie et al. classify the potential challenges encountered in the transition from primary to secondary education into two groups: (1) Academic challenges (e.g., larger schools, different teacher expectations, and increased pressure); and (2) social challenges (e.g., higher need for social acceptance with the onset of adolescence and having to form new social groups).<sup>12</sup> Newcomer pupils arguably face a greater risk of being overwhelmed by the transition because they experience more significant difficulties than their native counterparts and may face additional difficulties such as language barriers, discrimination, and lack of resources.<sup>13</sup> A study conducted with pupils in Berlin during the transition from primary to secondary school found that children will cope better with this critical life event if they can anticipate the new demands and requirements.<sup>14</sup> This knowledge gives them a greater sense of well-being and resilience during the transition experience. Based on these observations, this study aimed to analyse how programmes for newcomer pupils may support their transition from primary to secondary school. Specifically, we conducted a pilot evaluation of a summer programme (Huckepack) aimed at supporting newcomer pupils before their transition from primary to secondary school in Germany.

---

11 See Rimantas Dumčius et al., “Study on the effective use of early childhood education and care in preventing early school leaving. Final report N° EAC/17/2012,” (Publications Office of the European Union: Luxembourg, 2014), accessed December 19, 2022, [http://archive.erisee.org/sites/default/files/Study%20on%20the%20effective%20use%20of%20ECEC%20in%20preventing%20early%20school%20leaving\\_FINAL%20REPORT\\_0.pdf](http://archive.erisee.org/sites/default/files/Study%20on%20the%20effective%20use%20of%20ECEC%20in%20preventing%20early%20school%20leaving_FINAL%20REPORT_0.pdf).

12 See Erin Mackenzie, Anne McMaugh and Kerry-Ann O’Sullivan, “Perceptions of primary to secondary school transitions: challenge or threat,” *Issues in Educational Research* 22 (2012): 298–314, accessed December 19, 2022, <https://search.informit.org/doi/abs/10.3316/aeipt.195502>.

13 See Frances Rice, Norah Frederickson and Joanna Seymour, “Assessing pupil concerns about transition to secondary school,” *British Journal of Educational Psychology* 81 (2011): 244–63, accessed December 19, 2022, doi:10.1348/000709910X519333.

14 See Henrike Knoppick et al., “Das subjektive Erleben des Übergangs in die weiterführende Schule. Die Bedeutung der Antizipation für die Bewältigung dieses kritischen Lebensereignisses,” *Zeitschrift für Entwicklungspsychologie und Pädagogische Psychologie* 48 (2016): 129–143, accessed December 19, 2022, doi:10.1026/0049–8637/a000152.

## The “Huckepack” programme

Huckepack is a summer programme for newcomer pupils developed by the *International Rescue Committee* (IRC) in collaboration with *Teach First Germany* in 2020.<sup>15</sup> The German word Huckepack translates into “piggyback” and underlines the programme’s focus on offering a safe space to learn with and from others. Huckepack is designed to be implemented all day over two weeks during the school break. The programme addresses several gaps pertaining to the transition to secondary school. First, one such gap is the general lack of responsibility of school authorities for pupils after they have completed elementary school and are not yet enrolled in secondary school. There is little to no communication between both schools, particularly over the summer holidays, when pupils are left without support and their parents may not know how to navigate the German education system. Second, because newcomer pupils may benefit from opportunities for social-emotional learning, Huckepack focuses on promoting pupils’ social-emotional skills, such as perspective-taking, self-awareness, and setting personal goals related to the transition to secondary school. This includes mindfulness activities, games, routines, and rituals in which the children experience an environment designed to help them feel safe to practice their skills with peers and caring adults. Huckepack is based on the IRC’s flagship programme, the *Refugee Youth Summer Academy* (RYSA).<sup>16</sup> In an internal evaluation of IRC’s 2018 RYSA, pupils showed gains in academic performance in several school subjects, including social studies (+34%), math (+13%), and English (+9%).

A day in the programme typically looked like this: Children arrived at the school between 8:00 and 8:30 am. Every day started with breakfast in each learning group, and afterwards children participated in an energizer activity or a mindfulness exercise. The focus of the daily activities was on e-learning in 2020 and on physical activity in 2022. The afternoons were dedicated to exploring talents and

---

<sup>15</sup> *Teach First Germany* is a not-for-profit organisation providing education to socio-economically disadvantaged pupils to support their transition into the German education system. To achieve this aim, *Teach First Fellows* are working at schools for two years while receiving supervision and professional development by *Teach First*. Fellows are university graduates from different backgrounds and disciplines. See <https://www.teachfirst.de/ueber-uns/>, accessed April 12, 2023.

<sup>16</sup> The RYSA program is a six-week pop-up school in the United States (US). Students from grades 1 through 12 (high school) are invited to participate. The focus is on English language skills, mathematics, social science, and social-emotional learning. All students who have not previously attended a US school also receive a school readiness curriculum. Compared to RYSA, Huckepack has a stronger emphasis on social-emotional learning and on the transition from primary to secondary school.



building self-confidence. At the end of the afternoon, the children and adults came together for a final activity where everyone could share their feedback before the children headed home. One day a week was reserved for trips to the children's immediate surroundings so that they could explore their neighbourhood.

Huckepack is based on a theory of change, a set of methodological standards for conducting a theory-driven evaluation of the links between programme activities and intended outcomes.<sup>17</sup> The programme developers created the theory of change and it outlines the key inputs, outputs (i. e., immediate results of the programme activities needed to achieve the program outcomes), and outcomes (i. e., intended and unintended changes arising from the programme outputs) as they relate to the overarching goal to promote social-emotional skills of newcomer pupils in preparation for the transition into secondary school. Outcomes include pupils' study skills (e. g., improved German language skills; age-appropriate/skill-sensitive input), social-emotional skills (e. g., coping with stress; perseverance/self-confidence), and school readiness (e. g., self-regulated learning). Importance was placed on ensuring that children were able and motivated to attend the program and that caregivers understood the programme's benefits and were both supportive and involved in the programme (e. g., arranging for transportation). Primary schools were informed about the goals of the program as well. Pupils were encouraged to form positive relationships with adults and peers to improve their self-esteem and self-confidence to cope with the challenges and opportunities of transitioning to secondary school. In 2022, the programme developers refined and expanded this theory of change to focus more specifically on physical activity, healthy habits, and mindfulness. These areas emerged as particularly requested by pupils according to anecdotal evidence during the implementation phase in 2020. Including these areas is, therefore, sought to enhance the pupils' acceptance of Huckepack. Expectations related to school transition remained a key aspect of the programme, as did self-esteem and peer relations. Huckepack encompasses various activities that allow pupils to reflect on their self-perceptions relating to the transition to secondary school, such as routinely reflecting on one's progressive achievements. Appreciating all participating pupils' strengths is a crucial component of the programme. Pupils were also encouraged to reflect on their educational aspirations and to discuss their goals with older pupils and educators/mentors. The scope and content of the Huckepack curriculum are similar to other summer enrichment programmes for newcomer pupils, particularly with programmes devel-

---

17 See Erica Breuer et al., "Using theory of change to design and evaluate public health interventions: A systematic review," *Implementation Science* 11 (2016): 1–17, accessed December 19, 2022, doi:10.1186/s13012-016-0422-6.

oped in the United States. The literature on summer enrichment programmes for newcomer children and youth in general (not specifically focusing on the school transition), while based only on qualitative studies, generally has described positive results. For instance, the *Gateway Summer Enrichment Academy* is a four-week programme for refugee youth and other English learners and their families.<sup>19</sup> The programme comprises an academic component and an enrichment component that includes activities in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, sports activities like Zumba, music, and a drama programme. Attention is paid to parent outreach (e.g., by calling them once a week) and offering parent training sessions to provide information about the school system. Another qualitative study in Massachusetts reported that the programme helped to form trusting relationships with the parents.<sup>20</sup> The pupils expressed their desire to feel like they were part of something, and the programme created a sense of community and connectedness among the participants.

Another study implemented a summer enrichment programme with 218 secondary newcomer pupils with limited or interrupted formal education in 20 districts of New England in the USA.<sup>21</sup> The four-week programme included an academic component (science and math, projects and presentations, English, science, and social studies classes) and an enrichment component (drama, dance, taekwondo, and science, implemented with another local non-profit partner). The qualitative analysis of focus groups with teachers, parents, and programme and district leaders, as well as academic and enrichment class observations, indicated that the programme served as a bridge between families and their district. The authors found stronger relationships between English language learners, teachers, and community-based organisations. Moreover, the authors concluded that the programme supported gains in English proficiency and, in addition to the academic component, addressed the socio-emotional needs of secondary newcomer students.<sup>22</sup>

Although the studies cited above all claim to have recorded positive effects, this rather optimistic picture has yet to be substantiated by quantitative data in which measurable characteristics preferably of a large sample of pupils can be systematically compared before and after the completion of such a programme. To our knowledge, Huckepack is the first summer programme focusing on supporting newcomer pupils in the transition from primary to secondary school. Compared to other programmes, which focus on promoting language proficiency and academic skills, Huckepack emphasises supporting newcomer pupils' social-emotional needs.

## The present evaluation of Huckepack

There needs to be more research on evidence-based programmes and approaches to providing supportive structures for newcomer children and their families as they transition from primary to secondary school. Therefore, we sought to answer the following research question: To what extent can a summer programme support newcomer pupils' transition from primary to secondary school? To answer that question, we had pupils fill in a questionnaire before and after participating in the programme. Here, we report on two pilot evaluations conducted in 2020 and 2022. Both implementations of the programme took place in Germany. The 2020 programme was implemented in a comprehensive school in Essen, a city in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia. In Essen, pupils transition from primary to secondary school after the 4<sup>th</sup> grade. In 2022, the programme was implemented in Essen and Cottbus, a city in the state of Brandenburg. In Cottbus, secondary school starts after the 6<sup>th</sup> grade. The analysis showed no significant correlations between the outcome variables and pupils' age. Therefore, the analysis combined samples from both locations. Both evaluations used a pre-post-test design in which children in the intervention group completed self-report measures before (first time point, T1) and after (second time point, T2) the programme. Based on the available literature and the goals of the theory of change, we expected significant changes in pupils' school transition expectations and, due to the focus on social-emotional learning, secondary effects on pupils' empathy, intercultural competence, motivation to learn, self-esteem, and well-being. Specifically, after participating in Huckepack, we expected that children, would perceive the transition to a new school as something to look forward to as it offered opportunities for personal, social, and academic growth. There was no control group in either 2020 or 2022 because no similar groups of pupils were available during the summer break.

## Sample and measures used in the study

In 2020, 66 children (33 girls) attended Huckepack alongside 16 trained educators. Four groups were divided into two cohorts (eight groups in total). The first cohort participated in weeks one and two; the second participated in weeks three and four. Each of the eight groups consisted of six to ten children. All children took part at in least seven out of ten days. Thirty-four children (52%) attended on all days of the two-week programme; 16 children took part for four weeks. Thirty-one children were not born in Germany, and German was not their primary family language. Parents indicated 16 different countries of birth for their children and 17

different home languages. The main spoken languages besides German were Arabic, Turkish, and Farsi. The sample for this study comprised 50 pupils (23 girls) between nine and twelve years of age (average 10.37 years) whose parents provided their permission to participate in the research project. Of those, 48 pupils participated in T1, and 43 in T2. In 2022, 47 children participated in the evaluation, of which only 16 (eight girls) had data available at T1 and T2. Thus, while in 2020, a total of 43 pupils provided data we could use to probe mean changes over time, in 2022, the corresponding number was only 16.

Several self-report questionnaires were used to assess the children's outcomes before and after participating in Huckepack. Detailed information about all measures is presented in Table 1.

## The implementation of Huckepack and data collection procedures

Huckepack was implemented twice – in 2020 as well as in 2022. The school boards and the local youth welfare offices supported the programme. In 2020, the IRC implemented the programme with “Fellows” from *Teach First Germany*. *Teach First Germany* is an organisation that supports teachers (“Fellows”) in working with newcomer pupils in German schools. To ensure that the pupils could easily understand the items, the measures used in this study were reviewed and pre-tested by professionals of *Teach First Germany*, who teach German as a second language. The questionnaires were administered online using individual tablet devices (in 2020) or paper-pencil surveys (in 2022). For participation in the summer programme, pupils were recruited using flyers and brochures with information about Huckepack, which were disseminated with the help of local partners. In 2020, parents could access a registration form (through a QR code of an internet link) that could be filled out in nine different languages. In 2022, parents registered using an online form they received over email. Parental permission was obtained once parents had filled in the registration form. The study protocol was approved by the ethics review committee at the Freie Universität Berlin.

## Findings of the pilot evaluation of the Huckepack programme

Data were analysed using SPSS 29. At the end of the programme in 2020, 81% (34 out of 42) of the 2020 pupils and 62.5% (10 out of 16) of the 2022 pupils agreed or

strongly agreed that they had positive views on the social challenges related to the transition to secondary school, with a mean score  $\geq 4$  on expectations regarding social challenges. What's more, a total of 92.9% (39 out of 42) of the 2020 pupils, and 75% (12 out of 16) of the 2022 pupils agreed or strongly agreed that they had positive views on the academic challenges, with a mean score  $\geq 4$  on expectations regarding academic challenges. This finding indicates that the pupils had a positive expectation of the transition to secondary school and, on average, positive views of the challenges associated with this transition. In addition, at the closing session in 2020, 91.1% (41 out of 45) of the pupils agreed or strongly agreed that the adults in Huckepack took care of them and were responsive to their needs. Also, 70.5% (31 out of 44) of the pupils agreed or strongly agreed that they could talk about their problems with adults, and 84.4% (38 out of 45) agreed or strongly agreed that they know who can help when they have problems at school. While the percentages cited above may indicate that the programme was perceived as a safe and responsive place, they do not provide conclusive information about its effects.

We then analysed descriptive statistics of the main outcome measures. There were no statistically significant gender differences. In both 2020 and 2022, pupils generally reported high mean scores (i. e., above 4) across all outcomes at T1 except for extrinsic motivation to learn and social awareness, both of which are, however, over the response scale's midpoint of three. Following descriptive/preliminary analyses, the main aim of our study was to probe mean changes over time in the outcome measures using a total of 14 paired *t*-tests, respectively eight tests in 2020 and six in 2022. As shown in Table 2, the *t*-test generally did not indicate that participation in the Huckepack programme had the effects that we anticipated. In 2020, out of the eight changes in means between T1 and T2 that we expected, only one was statistically significant, in 2022 zero out of six.

Regarding the significant change over time, in 2020 the participating pupils reported higher levels of perceived academic challenges at T2 compared to T1, i. e., they were looking forward to the new academic demands. However, the magnitude of this effect was small. No significant effects were found for perceived social challenges, self-esteem, intercultural competence, empathy subscales, and extrinsic learning motivation. In 2022, none of the six outcomes significantly changed from T1 to T2. For example, neither of the two school transition expectations changed substantially.

Table 3 shows bivariate correlations between school transition expectations and social-emotional outcomes. In both years, perceived social and academic challenges were highly correlated. Moreover, social and academic challenges showed positive and statistically significant correlations with most outcomes. Extrinsic mo-

tivation to learn was the only construct unrelated to both aspects of school transition expectations.

## Anticipation, strengths and concerns related to school transition

The analysis of answers to the three open-ended questions in 2022 provided qualitative data that indicated that newcomer pupils were mostly looking forward to meeting new peers and making new friends in their new school (21 answers). They also anticipated engaging with new teachers (5 answers) and school subjects (10 answers). Four pupils mentioned that they hoped not to be involved in conflicts at the new school. Other answers pertained to working with new schoolbooks, having fun, and going on school trips. When asked about their strengths that they could use in their new school, the majority of pupils (27 answers) referred to school subjects (e.g., mathematics) and related skills. Few children highlighted their motivation (2 answers) and social skills (3 answers). Finally, the pupils who indicated concerns related to their new school primarily mentioned bullying and conflicts (6 answers), lack of friends (3 answers), negligible German language skills (3 answers), and little or no support from their teachers (2 answers) as some of their concerns. Even if the open-ended answers cannot be used to evaluate the programme's effect, they gave an insight into the thoughts and reflections of some of the pupils who participated.

## Discussion of the findings of the Huckepack evaluation

The main aim of this study was to evaluate the summer programme Huckepack aimed at supporting newcomer pupils before transitioning from primary to secondary school in Germany. Huckepack is a two-week extracurricular summer program developed and implemented by the *International Rescue Committee* in 2020 and 2022. Using a pre-post-test design, and comparisons of mean scores at T1 and T2 through *t*-test, we found that participation in the programme neither in 2020 nor in 2022 led to many statistically significant increases in the outcomes. However, perceived academic challenges rose significantly among the children who participated in 2020. This finding shows that children held positive views of the challenges associated with the school transition, including that they anticipated that the tasks in their new school would be fun and engaging, that they would learn

many new things, and that they would be able to show what they could truly do. In contrast, perceived social challenges (e. g., looking forward to a new school because they will be able to talk to and play with nice kids) did not change while participating in Huckepack. In the second iteration of the programme in 2022, no significant changes emerged at T2 compared to the ratings at T1 before the beginning of the programme. However, pupils reported higher levels of social awareness and well-being, specifically a positive outlook on their future, after participating in Huckepack. However, these increases were overall small and not statistically significant. Even if our results generally failed to indicate the expected positive effects of Huckepack, some findings may give direction for future research. Due to their positive correlations with school transition expectations, self-esteem, social awareness, and well-being could be promising entry points to supporting the transition process of newcomer pupils.

To our knowledge, Huckepack is the first summer programme focusing on supporting newcomer pupils in the transition from primary to secondary school. Thus, this study addresses, in part, the crucial gap in research on evidence-based programmes and approaches to providing supportive structures for newcomer children and their families as they transition within the German school system. Responsiveness to the needs of newcomer pupils is essential in light of vulnerabilities related to potential experiences of stress and trauma during the migration process.<sup>18</sup> Irrespective of the results of the *t*-tests, the high retention rate and the anecdotal feedback from participating pupils indicate that Huckepack provided a safe space for social-emotional learning. Working with small groups of pupils was another strength in ensuring a high retention rate. Working closely with newcomer pupils over several weeks is probably important as a safe space for social-emotional learning.<sup>19</sup>

## Strengths and limitations of the study

The study had several key strengths. First, the instruments were pre-tested and adapted by teachers who teach German as a second language, allowing for the questionnaire to be easily understood by the pupils. The data also indicated that

---

<sup>18</sup> See Lutine de Wal Pastoor, “The mediational role of schools in supporting psychosocial transitions among unaccompanied young refugees upon resettlement in Norway,” *International Journal of Educational Development* 41 (2015), accessed December 19, 2022, doi:10.1016/j.ijedudev.2014.10.009.

<sup>19</sup> See Pia R. Britto et al., “Pathways to a more peaceful and sustainable world: The transformative power of children in families,” *Development and Psychopathology* 33 (2021): 409–420, accessed December 19, 2022, doi:10.1017/S0954579420000681.

pupils had no major problems in completing the questionnaire. Second, the questionnaires were administered in an anonymous and trustworthy environment. Also, the pupils seemed to enjoy completing the survey using tablet devices. Third, most of the pupils who provided data at both T1 and T2, i.e., 43 in 2020 and 16 in 2022 respectively, responded to all questions, with only few data missing. Together, these observations may indicate that the study design was generally well perceived and pupils were able to use the tablet devices with ease.

Some limitations were evident. First, the reliability (i.e., internal consistencies) of some scales (e.g., extrinsic motivation to learn) at the first measurement point was only acceptable. Additional research is needed to examine the psychometric properties of all scales to bolster confidence in interpreting the programme effects. Second, only self-reported measures were employed, and the mean scores of the scales were generally high (means  $\geq 4$ ). This might indicate a social desirability bias, a general problem with self-report measures. Thus, future projects should include observational and behavioural measures to comprehensively examine programme effectiveness using multiple methods and informants. Moreover, the lack of a control group limits confidence that the observed gains were related to Huckepack rather than general developmental processes. A randomised controlled trial may shed light on the causal impact of Huckepack on newcomer pupils' academic and social-emotional skills. The small sample sizes, particularly in 2022, are another limitation, which also limits the generalisation of the findings. Therefore, larger samples are needed to increase confidence in the study's findings. In addition, the test-retest method without a control group presents several weaknesses, especially over a short course of time, as in the present study. Although this method enables one to appraise mean differences over time, it is based on the assumption that the measured constructs do not change. Also, the participants may be familiar with the items at the second measurement, which may affect their responses. Hence, additional methods, such as qualitative interviews, should be used in future research. Finally, the differences in school systems in both federal states hinder the possibility of directly comparing and contrasting the pupils' outcomes across study sites.

## Conclusion

Summer programmes that offer opportunities for academic and social-emotional learning, and that are culturally responsive to the needs of newcomer pupils may have the potential to provide much-needed psychosocial support during periods of transition. Being able to learn and test one's skills in a safe space with caring adults and peers is the foundation of Huckepack. The COVID-19 pandemic from



2020 to 2022 had a substantial impact on learning and well-being. Even though primary schools opened up before the implementation of Huckepack and managed to create a sense of a “normal” classroom setting right before the summer holidays, it was overwhelming for many children to deal with their school and social life in times of the pandemic. In part due to the pandemic, many children reported that they did not have the chance to see and visit their new school before the transition. Due to the small samples and the pre-post-test design, the general lack of statistically significant findings of this pilot evaluation is by no means conclusive. More studies using a similar design, although with much larger samples and control groups in place, are needed. Also, more in-depth, qualitative methods could be used to appraise the experiences of newcomer pupils during their participation in Huckepack. Using such methods would also allow for a more thorough understanding of the value of Huckepack after the transition to secondary school. Two possible entry points for such qualitative research are self-esteem, social awareness, and well-being, given the pupils’ self-reported (non-significant) growth in these areas.

## References

- Breuer, Erica, Lucy Lee, Mary De Silva, and Crick Lund. “Using theory of change to design and evaluate public health interventions: A systematic review.” *Implementation Science* 11 (2016): 1–17. Accessed December 19, 2022. doi:10.1186/s13012-016-0422-6.
- Britto, Pia R., Suna Hanoz-Penney, Liliana Angelica Ponguta, Diane Sunar, Ghassan Issa, Sascha D. Hein, Maria Conceicao do Rosario, Maha A. Almuneef, Irem Korucu, Yaya Togo, Jamshed Kurbonov, Nurlan Choibekov, Hien Thi Thu Phan, N. Shemrah Fallon, Bekir B. Artukoglu, Franz J. Hartl, Rima Salah, Siobhan Fitzpatrick, Paul Connolly, Laura Dunne, Sarah Miller, Kyle Pruett, and James F. Leckman. “Pathways to a more peaceful and sustainable world: The transformative power of children in families.” *Development and Psychopathology* 33 (2021): 409–420. Accessed December 19, 2022. doi:10.1017/S0954579420000681.
- Broström, Stig. “Communication and continuity in the transition from kindergarten to school.” In *Transitions in the Early Years*, edited by Aline-Wendy Dunlop and Hilary Fabian, 76–87. London: Routledge, 2002.
- Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge. “Aktuelle Zahlen, August 2022. Tabelle, Diagramme, Erläuterungen.” Accessed December 19, 2022. [https://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Statistik/AsylinZahlen/aktuelle-zahlen-august-2022.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile&v=2](https://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Statistik/AsylinZahlen/aktuelle-zahlen-august-2022.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=2).
- Dumčius, Rimantas, Jan Peeters, Nóirín Hayes, Georges van Landeghem, Hanna Siarova, Laura Peciukonytė, Ivana Cenerić, and Hester Hulpia. “Study on the effective use of early childhood education and care in preventing early school leaving. Final report N° EAC/17/2012.” Publications Office of the European Union: Luxembourg, 2014. Accessed December 19, 2022. [http://archive.erisee.org/sites/default/files/Study%20on%20the%20effective%20use%20of%20ECEC%20in%20preventing%20early%20school%20leaving\\_FINAL%20REPORT\\_0.pdf](http://archive.erisee.org/sites/default/files/Study%20on%20the%20effective%20use%20of%20ECEC%20in%20preventing%20early%20school%20leaving_FINAL%20REPORT_0.pdf).

- Karakayali, Juliane, Birgit zur Nieden, Sophie Groß, Çağrı Kahveci, Tutku Güleriyüz, and Mareike Heller. "Forschungsbericht 'Solidarität im Wandel?'/ein Forschungs-Interventions-Cluster des Berliner Instituts für empirische Integrations- und Migrationsforschung (BIM)." Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, 2017. Accessed April 12, 2023. <https://digital.zlb.de/viewer/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:de:kobv:109-1-13840554>.
- Knoppick, Henrike, Michael Becker, Marko Neumann, Kai Maaz, and Jürgen Baumert. "Das subjektive Erleben des Übergangs in die weiterführende Schule. Die Bedeutung der Antizipation für die Bewältigung dieses kritischen Lebensereignisses." *Zeitschrift für Entwicklungspsychologie und Pädagogische Psychologie* 48 (2016): 129–143. Accessed December 19, 2022. doi:10.1026/0049-8637/a000152.
- Larran, Julie, Isabell Schuster, and Sascha Hein. "The feasibility of implementing autism intervention methods in formal education settings welcoming refugee and asylum-seeking children: A systematic review of the literature." *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development* 179 (2021): 7–28. Accessed December 19, 2022. doi:10.1002/cad.20449.
- Leckman, James F., Liliana A. Ponguta, Gabriela Pavarini, Sascha D. Hein, Michael F. McCarthy, Haifa Staiti, Suna Hanoz-Penney, Joanna Rubinstein, Kyle D. Pruett, M. Yanki Yazgan, N. Shemrah Fallon, Franz J. Hartl, Margalit Ziv, Rima Salah, Pia Rebello Britto, Siobhan Fitzpatrick, and Catherine Panter-Brick. "Love and peace across generations: Biobehavioral systems and global partnerships." *Comprehensive Psychoneuroendocrinology* 8 (2021): 100092. doi:10.1016/j.cpnec.2021.100092.
- Liddle, Ian, and Greg F. A. Carter. "Emotional and psychological well-being in children: The development and validation of the Stirling Children's Well-being Scale." *Educational Psychology in Practice* 31 (2015): 174–185. Accessed December 19, 2022. doi:10.1080/02667363.2015.1008409.
- López, Ruth M., Jaein J. Lee, and Rosann Tung. "Implementing a summer enrichment program for secondary newcomer students in a New England community." *International Journal of Leadership in Education* 23 (2020): 86–101. Accessed December 19, 2022. doi:10.1080/13603124.2019.1629629.
- Mackenzie, Erin, Anne McMaugh, and Kerry-Ann O'Sullivan. "Perceptions of primary to secondary school transitions: challenge or threat." *Issues in Educational Research* 22 (2012): 298–314. Accessed December 19, 2022. <https://search.informit.org/doi/abs/10.3316/aeipt.195502>.
- Müller, Florian H., Barbara Hanfstingl, and Irina Andreitz. "Skalen zur motivationalen Regulation beim Lernen von Schülerinnen und Schülern. Adaptierte und ergänzte Version des Academic Self-Regulation Questionnaire nach Ryan und Connell." Alpen-Adria-Universität (2007). Accessed December 19, 2022. [https://ius.aau.at/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/IUS\\_Forschungsbericht\\_1\\_Motivationsskalen.pdf](https://ius.aau.at/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/IUS_Forschungsbericht_1_Motivationsskalen.pdf).
- Müller, Lauritz R. F., Katharina Gossmann, Franziska Hartmann, Karl P. Büter, Rita Rosner, and Johanna Unterhitzenberger. "1-year follow-up of the mental health and stress factors in asylum-seeking children and adolescents resettled in Germany." *BMC Public Health* 19 (2019): 908. Accessed December 19, 2022. doi:10.1186/s12889-019-7263-6.
- Nauck, Bernhard and Andreas Genoni. "Status transition in the educational system and well-being of migrant adolescents in cross-national comparison." *Zeitschrift für Erziehungswissenschaft* 22 (2019): 47–69. Accessed December 19, 2022. doi:10.1007/s11618-019-00887-z.
- Overgaaauw, Sandy, Carolien Rieffe, Evelien Broekhof, Eveline A. Crone, and Berna Güroglu. "Assessing empathy across childhood and adolescence: Validation of the empathy questionnaire for children and adolescents (EmQue-CA)." *Frontiers in Psychology* 8 (2017): 870. Accessed December 19, 2022. doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2017.00870.

- Pastoor, Lutine de Wal. "The mediational role of schools in supporting psychosocial transitions among unaccompanied young refugees upon resettlement in Norway." *International Journal of Educational Development* 41 (2015): 245–254. Accessed December 19, 2022. doi:10.1016/j.ijedudev.2014.10.009.
- Ravens-Sieberer, Ulrike and Monika Bullinger. "Assessing health related quality of life in chronically ill children with the German KINDL: First psychometric and content-analytical results." *Quality of Life Research* 7 (1998): 399–407. Accessed December 19, 2022. doi:10.1023/A:1008853819715.
- Rice, Frances, Norah Frederickson, and Joanna Seymour. "Assessing pupil concerns about transition to secondary school." *British Journal of Educational Psychology* 81 (2011): 244–263. Accessed December 19, 2022. doi:10.1348/000709910X519333
- Sachverständigenrat Deutscher Stiftungen für Integration und Migration. 2018. "Schule als Sackgasse? Jugendliche Flüchtlinge an segregierten Schulen." Accessed December 19, 2022. [https://www.svr-migration.de/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/SVR-FB\\_Bildungsintegration.pdf](https://www.svr-migration.de/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/SVR-FB_Bildungsintegration.pdf).
- Schwarzenthal, Miriam, Linda P. Juang, Maja K. Schachner, and Fons J. R. van de Vijver. "A multimodal measure of cultural intelligence for adolescents growing up in culturally diverse societies." *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 72 (2019): 109–121. Accessed December 19, 2022. doi:10.1016/j.ijintrel.2019.07.007.
- Shonkoff, Jack P., Andrew S. Garner, the Committee on Psychosocial Aspects of Child and Family Health, Committee on Early Childhood, Adoption, and Dependent Care, and Section on Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics. "The lifelong effects of early childhood adversity and toxic stress." *Pediatrics* 129 (2012): e232–e246. Accessed December 19, 2022. doi:10.1542/peds.2011–2663.
- Sirsch, Ulrike. "The impending transition from primary to secondary school: Challenge or threat?" *International Journal of Behavioral Development* 27 (2003): 285–295. Accessed December 19, 2022. doi:10.1080/01650250344000082.
- Tran, Dahvy and Barbara Roberts Hodgson. "Meeting the Needs of Refugee and Immigrant Students and Families in a Culturally Responsive Way." *Voices in Urban Education* 41 (2015): 7–15. Accessed December 19, 2022. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1074917>.
- West, Martin R., Katie Buckley, Sara Bartolino Krachman, and Noah Bookman. "Development and implementation of student social-emotional surveys in the CORE Districts." *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology* 55 (2018): 119–129. Accessed December 19, 2022, doi:10.1016/j.appdev.2017.06.001.

**Table 1:** Scales used to assess children's outcomes before (T1) and after (T2) participating in Huckepack in 2020 and 2022.

Construct	Scale	Subscale and number of items	Cronbach's $\alpha$ at T1	Cronbach's $\alpha$ at T2	Sample example items
School transition expectations	Impending Transition to Secondary School Perceived as a Challenge and Threat (ITCT) <sup>20</sup>	2020: Social challenges subscale: 4 items	0.86	0.81	“When I think of the fact that I will go to a new school next year then I look forward to it because I will be able to talk to and play with nice kids.”
		2022: Social challenges: 6 items	0.94	0.95	“When I think of the fact that I will go to a new school next year then I look forward to it because the new tasks will be fun for me.”
		2020: Academic challenges: 5 items	0.74	0.77	“If my mother is happy, I also feel happy.”
		2022: Academic challenges: 8 items	0.93	0.95	“When a friend is angry, I tend to know why.”
Empathy	Empathy Questionnaire for Children and Adolescents (EmQue-CA) <sup>21</sup>	2020: Affective Empathy: 7 items	0.55	0.73	“If a friend is sad, I like to comfort him.”
		2020: Cognitive Empathy: 5 items	0.71	0.81	
		2020: Prosocial Motivation: 6 items	0.56	0.88	

<sup>20</sup> Ulrike Sirsch, “The impending transition from primary to secondary school: Challenge or threat?” *International Journal of Behavioral Development* 27 (2003): 385–295, accessed December 19, 2022, doi:10.1080/01650250344000082.

<sup>21</sup> Sandy Overgaauw et al., “Assessing empathy across childhood and adolescence: Validation of the empathy questionnaire for children and adolescents (EmQue-CA),” *Frontiers in Psychology* 8 (2017): 1–9. doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2017.00870.

**Table 1:** Scales used to assess children's outcomes before (T1) and after (T2) participating in Huckepack in 2020 and 2022. (Continued)

Construct	Scale	Subscale and number of items	Cronbach's $\alpha$ at T1	Cronbach's $\alpha$ at T2	Sample example items
Intercultural competence	Multimodal Intercultural Competence Measure for Adolescents in Culturally Diverse Societies <sup>22</sup>	2020: Motivation: 6 items	0.90	0.87	"It's fun for me to interact with people from other cultures."
Motivation toward learning	Academic Self-Regulation Questionnaire (SRQ-A) <sup>23</sup>	2020: Intrinsic motivation: 5 items 2020: Extrinsic motivation: 4 items	Too low therefore subscale not used 0.57	Too low therefore subscale not used 0.67	Extrinsic motivation: "I work and study at school because I want to learn new things."
Self-esteem	Children's General Self-Esteem <sup>24</sup>	4 items	2020: 0.63 2022: 0.78	2020: 0.70 2022: 0.94	"I am proud of myself."
Social awareness	Student self-report of social and emotional competencies <sup>25</sup>	2022: 5 items	0.65	0.79	"In the last 2 weeks, how carefully did you listen to other people's points of view?"

22 Miriam Schwarzenthal, Linda P. Juang, Maja K. Schachner, and Fons J. R van de Vijver, "A multimodal measure of cultural intelligence for adolescents growing up in culturally diverse societies," *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 72 (2019): 109–121, accessed December 19, 2022, doi:10.1016/j.ijintrel.2019.07.007.

23 Florian H. Müller, Barbara Hanfstingl, and Irina Andreitz, "Skalen zur motivationalen Regulation beim Lernen von Schülerinnen und Schülern. Adaptierte und ergänzte Version des Academic Self-Regulation Questionnaire nach Ryan und Connell," Alpen-Adria-Universität (2007), accessed December 19, 2022, [https://ius.aau.at/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/IUS\\_Forschungsbericht\\_1\\_Motivationsskalen.pdf](https://ius.aau.at/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/IUS_Forschungsbericht_1_Motivationsskalen.pdf).

24 Ulrike Ravens-Sieberer and Monika Bullinger, "Assessing health related quality of life in chronically ill children with the German KINDL: First psychometric and content-analytical results," *Quality of Life Research* 7 (1998): 399–407, accessed December 19, 2022, doi:10.1023/A:1008853819715.

25 Martin R. West, Katie Buckley, Sara Bartolino Krachman, and Noah Bookman, "Development and implementation of student social-emotional surveys in the CORE Districts." *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology* 55 (2018): 119–129, accessed December 19, 2022, doi:10.1016/j.appdev.2017.06.001.

**Table 1:** Scales used to assess children's outcomes before (T1) and after (T2) participating in Huckepack in 2020 and 2022. (Continued)

Construct	Scale	Subscale and number of items	Cronbach's $\alpha$ at T1	Cronbach's $\alpha$ at T2	Sample example items
Well-being	Stirling Children's Well-being Scale <sup>26</sup>	2022: Positive Emotional State: 5 items	0.84	0.93	"I've been feeling cheerful about things."
		2022: Positive Outlook: 7 items	0.87	0.96	
Open-ended questions	Developed by the study authors	2022: 3 questions			(1) "What are you looking forward to when you think of going to a new school?" (2) "Which of your strengths (things that you can do well) can you use in your new school?" (3) "Which concerns do you have when you think of going to a new school?"

**Notes.** With the exception of the well-being measure, all responses were made on a five-point scale ranging from one (*strongly disagree*) to five (*strongly agree*), and responses were averaged across the items to create the respective subscales. For well-being, response options ranged from one (*never*) to five (*almost always*) for positive emotional state and from one (*strongly disagree*) to five (*strongly agree*) for positive outlook.

<sup>26</sup> Ian Liddle and Greg F. A. Carter, "Emotional and psychological well-being in children: the development and validation of the Stirling Children's Well-being Scale," *Educational Psychology in Practice* 31 (2015): 174–185, accessed December 19, 2022, doi:10.1080/02667363.2015.1008409.

**Table 2:** Descriptive statistics

	<i>Huckepack 2020</i>					<i>Huckepack 2022</i>				
	<b>Pre (T1)</b>	<b>Post (T2)</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>p</b>	<b>d</b>	<b>Pre (T1)</b>	<b>Post (T2)</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>p</b>	<b>d</b>
School transition: perceived social challenges	4.54 (0.70)	4.52 (0.62)	0.19	0.851	0.03	4.29 (0.88)	4.26 (0.82)	0.30	0.766	0.08
School transition: perceived academic challenges	4.46 (0.67)	4.67 (0.49)	-2.47	0.018	-0.39	4.21 (0.73)	4.22 (0.94)	-0.04	0.971	-0.01
Self-esteem	4.32 (0.69)	4.47 (0.61)	-1.73	0.092	-0.26	4.06 (1.05)	4.17 (1.14)	-0.74	0.471	-0.19
Intercultural competence	4.13 (1.02)	4.37 (0.77)	-1.61	0.115	-0.26					
Affective empathy	4.02 (0.60)	3.96 (0.83)	0.56	0.581	0.09					
Cognitive empathy	4.31 (0.73)	4.32 (0.77)	-0.05	0.962	-0.01					
Prosocial motivation	4.74 (0.36)	4.61 (0.67)	1.73	0.092	0.28					
Extrinsic motivation to learn	3.05 (1.02)	3.14 (1.10)	-0.49	0.624	-0.08					
Social awareness						3.65 (0.86)	4.01 (0.74)	-2.07	0.056	-0.52
Well-being: positive emotional state						4.09 (0.98)	4.29 (0.87)	-1.31	0.213	-0.35
Well-being: positive outlook						4.22 (0.79)	4.43 (0.86)	-1.51	0.156	-0.40

**Table 3:** Correlations between the outcome measures at T1

	School transition: perceived social challenges	School transition: perceived academic challenges
School transition: perceived social challenges		0.75*** (0.75***)
Self-esteem	0.39** (0.68***)	0.43** (0.79***)
Intercultural competence	0.37*	0.53***
Affective empathy	0.25	0.35*
Cognitive empathy	0.17	0.34*
Prosocial motivation	0.54***	0.61***
Extrinsic motivation to learn	-0.13	-0.11
Social awareness	(0.54***)	(0.57***)

**Notes.** Pearson's  $r$  correlation coefficients ( $n = 44$ – $45$ ) with estimates for 2022 in parentheses ( $n = 47$ ). \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .



## Contributors

**Bariş Altındağ** is Technical Advisor of Education & Youth Europe at the International Rescue Committee (IRC), based in Germany. He was the project lead for the pilot “Huckepack” program in July 2020, responsible for curriculum, recruitment, and implementation, and advised and actively supported the implementation of the follow-up “Huckepack” in summer 2022.

**Baard Herman Borge**, PhD, is Professor at the School of Business and Economics, UiT Norway’s Arctic University in Harstad. His research is multidisciplinary and on varied topics, but most of it centers around the collaborationist movement “Nasjonal Samling” (NS) and its role during the German occupation of Norway 1940–1945, secondly the post-war judicial process against collaborators and thirdly its social consequences, especially for children of former NS-members.

**Julie Ane Ødegaard Borge**, PhD, is an associate Professor at the NLA University College (Norway). Her research interests are citizenship education, political participation among youth and social science didactics. Between 2017–2022 she worked at the Rafto foundation for human rights in Bergen (Norway) with various human rights and democracy educational programs.

**Shanti D’Sa** is Education Coordinator at the International Rescue Committee (IRC), based in Germany. She coordinates and oversees IRC’s education programs in Germany and was actively supporting the implementation of “Huckepack” in summer 2022.

**Jakub Gałęziowski**, PhD, is a social and oral historian focused on Polish history of Second World War and its consequences. In his dissertation he dealt with the topic of Polish children born of war; it has been recently published. Currently affiliated with University of Warsaw, where he teaches oral history and biographical methods. Co-founder of the Polish Oral History Association and its current President.

**Sascha Hein**, PhD., is a professor in the department of education and psychology at the Freie Universität Berlin, Germany. He received his Ph.D. in educational sciences from Goethe University Frankfurt am Main, Germany. His research focuses on the education and mental health of youth involved in the juvenile justice system, as well as early childhood development and education in humanitarian contexts.

**Wiebke Hiemesch**, PhD, is postdoctoral researcher at the University of Hildesheim (Germany). Her research interests include the history of children and childhood, material culture and cultures of remembrance. Her latest work offers an epistemological discussion of children’s drawings as historical sources.

**Anne Klein**, PhD, is Senior Lecturer at the Department of Human Sciences, University of Cologne (Germany). With a strong foundation in Holocaust studies and contemporary history, her actual research interest is directed towards theory-led insights into history, society and subjectivation. In academic discourse, she points out agency and critique as driving forces of political change and profiles intersectional perspectives in biopolitics and human rights research.

**Elke Kleinau**, PhD, emeritus Professor for the History of Education and Gender at the University of Cologne. Her main research interests are the history of girls' and women's education, childhood history, travel narratives, German colonial history and biographical research.

**Julie Larran**, M.S.c, is a doctoral student at the Free University of Berlin, Germany. Her main research interests are school-based mental health services worldwide such as in-school intervention programs, school counseling and how to support children from migrant and refugee backgrounds transitioning through different educational levels.

**Ingvill Constanze Ødegaard**, PhD, GESIS-Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences in Cologne, Germany is Professor II at Centre for Gender Research at the University of Oslo, Norway, and Honorary Professor of International Politics at the CBS International Business School, Cologne, Germany. She has published widely in the field of Children Born of War (CBOW) and is founder of the "International Network for Interdisciplinary Research on Children Born of War". Since 2020 she has also been managing director and chairwoman of the foundation "Children Born of War Project".

**Martina Koegeler-Abdi**, PhD, is a researcher at Human Rights Studies in the History Department at Lund University. In addition to the study of children born of war and the history of childhood, her research interests include family secrecy, cultural memory, rights and representation, respectability politics as well as transnational American studies.

**Anja Schierbaum**, PhD, is research associate at the University of Cologne (Germany). Her research interests include questions of education and socialization, youth research; as well the history of family. Her latest work is an edited volume with the title "Child(ren) and Childhood(ies) in the View of Research".

**Kristina Schierbaum**, PhD, is scientific associate at the Goethe-University Frankfurt (Germany). Her research interests include the history of children and childhood, the work and life of Janusz Korczak and home education in the former GDR. Her latest work was an essay on remembering and forgetting in Korczak's orphanage *Dom Sierot*.

**Rafaela Schmid**, PhD, is a Research Associate at the Chair of Historical Educational Research with a focus on Gender History at the University of Cologne. She studied Social Work in Wiesbaden and Educational Science in Cologne, where she received her doctorate in 2021. Between 2015 and 2018, she was a Research Associate in the project 'Occupation Children' in Postwar Germany, funded by the German Research Foundation.

**Maria Schriefer** is Senior Education Officer at the International Rescue Committee (IRC), based in Germany. She was the project lead for the "Huckepack" program in July 2022, responsible for curriculum, recruitment, and implementation.

**Isabell Schuster**, PhD, is a post-doctoral researcher at Free University of Berlin, Germany. She received her PhD in Psychology from the University of Potsdam, Germany. Her research interests lie in the social and emotional development of children, adolescents, and young adults, with a special focus on the prevention of aggression.

**Lina Stotz**, LL.M., is a doctoral researcher with the EuroWARCHILD Project at the University of Oslo. She studied international law in The Hague and Geneva. Her main research interests concern the needs and rights of children born of war, women's and children's rights under international criminal law and intersections between law and society.

**Lars-Erik Vaale**, M.Phil., is an independent researcher, specialising in legal history. He has written extensively about transitional justice in Norway, with special emphasis on the use of the death penalty and the connection between law and politics during the postwar reckoning with traitors and war criminals after 1945. In addition to these issues, Vaale's academic work also encompasses the history and phenomenology of freemasonry and heraldry.

