

Abstracts of the session

"Analysing children born of war across time, nations and disciplines"

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Session coordinator: Ingvill C. Mochmann, GESIS – Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences, Cologne, Germany

Description of session:

“Children born of war” are children who have been fathered by a foreign soldier belonging to an enemy, allied or peacekeeping force and a local woman. These children are often born with a stigma of belonging to the enemy and are often treated as such both at the social and political level. Little systematic evidence exists so far on this topic, however, and information on children born of war range from historical and personal documents, biographies, statistical data, medical data, questionnaire surveys and even photos. The aim of this session is to collect and discuss empirical evidence on this particular group from all disciplines and invites papers which 1) presents quantitative or qualitative data from a particular country and/or 2) compares empirical results across countries and/or 3) discusses challenges and possible solutions related to methodology and data collection in the analysis of children born of war.

Part I: Introduction and overview

Developing a methodology for the research field of “Children born of war”

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“Children born of war” are children who have been fathered by members of occupational or peacekeeping forces and local women. Although it may be assumed that such children are born in every war and conflict that has taken place throughout the history of mankind, only little research on this topic exists. Knowledge available indicates that these children have often been exposed to discrimination and stigmatisation in their families, communities and societies, though. From the methodological perspective this research field comprises several challenges. Firstly, no theoretical model has been developed yet, which includes all aspects relevant to the analysis of children born of war. So far theories and explanations from other research fields have been used to analyse social, psychological, medical, juridical etc. aspects of this particular group. Secondly, it is rather difficult to obtain data as children born of war often belong to the hidden and marginalised population groups. Thus, an estimation of the population size of this group is difficult and representative samples thus difficult to achieve. In addition, the topic is very sensitive. This implies that in the process of acquiring knowledge on the dimension of the ‘problem’ researchers have to be careful not to uncover mothers and children thereby increasing their stigmatisation and discrimination in family and society. In this presentation a general overview of the state of the art will be given and suggestions for a methodological approach which facilitates the analysis and comparison of children born of war across time and space will be elaborated.

Part II: Children born of war during and after Second World War

Enemy's Children in French Postwar society: Shame, Secret and Reconciliation

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Born by thousands and thousands during the war, they were a stake between Berlin and Vichy. When the war was over, they did not suffer from ostracism of the French authorities. In fact they all lived in the private sphere their own condition of enemy’s children. The presentation will focus on the life of these children until now. Firstly during decades what did they know about their father? How was the secret organised in their families? What image of the parents did they have in mind? Sometimes when they were young, often later when they approached retirement, they started to search for their roots. Asking the family, writing authorities, searching in German War cemeteries, meeting a clairvoyant, there are many different ways of tracing their fathers. At last, a lot of them found a part of their story: a name, a tombstone somewhere in Germany, but also a father or his family. They also discovered that this story was not unique and private. Each of them is one among thousands. For that reason, some of them have founded associations and claim for recognition. The French/German case is emblematic of the possible difference between state policy and private feeling. By the time of French/German reconciliation and building of European community, these children remained in the shadow, growing up far from this process. Today, whereas World War 2 seems so far for both societies, these children just appear to be as the last War aftermath.

From gossip to knowledge. From fatherhood to paternity, from motherhood to maternity – sources to cryptic knowledge of paternity and maternity during and after the German occupation of Denmark.

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From time immemorial ignorance of maternity and particularly of paternity has been commonplace in European societies. Ancestry was always associated with 'blood'. In the first half of the 20th century the introduction of the classification of blood groups was seen as a promising tool of evidence in paternity cases. The political reasons were equivocal. In Denmark e.g. the eminent social democrat politician and later Minister of Justice, K.K. Steincke, got seven new laws passed in 1937 concerning illegitimate children in order to diminish their mortality, a mortality which allegedly was the double of the mortality among legitimate children. On the one hand the manoeuvre succeeded, because the maintenance payments secured a certain living standard for the children, while it failed on the other hand, because the identities of the children were neglected later on. In this presentation different sources of knowledge on paternity and maternity in the Danish case will be presented and discussed: 1. Traces of concealment. 2. Gossip 3. Traces, marks and clues 4. Testimonies 5. Evidence in the parish register 6. Evidence in *Statstidende* 7. Evidence in the police archives 8. Interrogations by *Mødrehjælpen* 9. Paternity-cases in the *Vergleich Kommission* 10. Notifications in *Standesamt I* in Berlin or at local courts in Germany 11. General negotiations between Danish and German authorities 12. Evidence by dna-fingerprinting.

The forgotten generation. Children of Soviet Soldiers and Austrian/German Women

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In all four zones in Germany and Austria „children of occupation“ were born after the Second World War: als a result of voluntary sexual encounters between local women and foreign occupation-soldiers, but also as a consequence of rape. Often they were regarded as „children of the enemy“, who were – together with their mothers – frequently discriminated against. After all they had the „wrong“ father. Thus many of them were confronted with racial, ideological and moral prejudice. „Russenkind“ („Russian child“) or „Russenbalg“ („Russian bastard“) were common abusive words up to the 1960's. Many of the „children of occupation“ – and their children – have been in search for the father for several decades. This is linked to the wish of exploring one's own identity and looking for one's „personal roots“. Even children who had been born as a consequence of rape have dealt with this vital issue. In some cases, on the other side, former soldiers of occupation have tried to find their children and the mothers in the country where they had been stationed. In the Russian Federation the euphemism „children of liberation“ has emerged in this context. In the case of a „family reunion“, the drama, emotions and joy can hardly be exceeded

Case study: Children born of American soldiers and local mothers: Comparison between the UK and Germany

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During and after the Second World War, American soldiers were stationed in Europe, most notably in Great Britain during the period of preparation for the opening of the Second Front in 1944, and in Germany during the post-war occupation and later the stationing of so-called 'support troops. In both cases, the situation of stationed troops was that of friendly (or at least not enemy) soldiers with more or less frequent contact with the indigenous population. In both cases, contact between American soldiers and local women resulted in relationships of varying degrees of intimacy; these relationships ranged from entirely voluntary relations to those involving different degrees of coercion; and in both cases a significant number of these liaisons resulted in the birth of children. The fate of children varied, and the aim of this research is to investigate differences and similarities of the children's experiences among others depending on: 1. Where and when they were conceived 2. Whether the parents married, or whether they grew up in single-parent families, or were adopted either by third parties or one parent's family 3. Whether the children were of single-race or bi-racial descent 4. Whether the children stayed in their mother's or their father's home country 5. Whether the children knew about their father's background or not. The proposed presentation will outline the state of research in this broader field of field and it will present the work in progress relating to this particular comparative project with focus on working hypotheses, preliminary results and specific methodological problems encountered in the research.

Part III: Children born of war in today's conflicts

Children born of war in Rwanda: Does truth-telling helps to find an identity beyond hate and revenge?

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During the 1994 genocide in Rwanda sexual violence served as weapon to increase fear and horror. Human Rights Watch estimates the number of victims of sexual violence during war on 250.000 to 500.000 with 5000 forced pregnancies. This presentation will discuss the scientific and methodological questions in the research with children born of war in Rwanda. The background of practical work experiences with mothers will guide the discussion. A part of the Story 'Nuwo ni uwacu' (Rwanda, 2008) will be presented. This is a film fiction made by the victims of sexual violence themselves who were forced to pregnancy. The short episode will give you an idea of the daily life conditions and the relationships within the families. The presentation will focus on the psychodynamics of mother and child during the truth-telling process. In which way can the exposure of the extreme violence during the procreation of the child get elements of healing and become a talking cure for mother and child? To answer this question we will see some cultural attitudes in the Rwandese context how to deal with the past. After understanding the problem of truth telling in this context the methodological questions will be discussed: What will we win if we understand the survey and the sampling procedures as part of a social process and include the mothers and children in the process of the research? Which variables do we have to examine to verify the hypotheses in a quantitative methodology? How can the research process take action in social life to help the children to develop an identity beyond hate and revenge?

Children of the East African great lakes: War breeds

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In Uganda, the rebels of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) orchestrated over 60,000 child and adult abductions on the unprotected communities forcing them to fall in rank as sex slaves, porters and soldiers, often subjecting them to untold levels of sufferings to break their spirits and consolidate allegiance to the rebel's cause. The LRA have, for the last two years, expanded their cross border bases, continuing to swell its military and sex slave population through ruthlessly harvesting the children of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Southern Sudan and the Central African Republic. With extremely limited literature and an attempted documentation that started more than ten years into the war, a lot of hard facts remain unknown and unconsolidated, with no known deliberate attempts to feature such in the near future. But perhaps one of the major consequences has been the birth of thousands of children in to the war itself. This paper will examine the status of children born of thousands abducted by the LRA against the background of forced relationships with men responsible for their abduction and the complete destruction of whole communities from where the abducted and rebels hail. It will also examine the extent of qualitative and quantitative documentation on this category.

Bringing peace and babies - Children born by relationships between peacekeepers and local women. Examining the UN strategy for assistance for acceptance.

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On December 21, 2007 the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution with the long title: "United Nations Comprehensive Strategy on Assistance and Support to Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by United Nations Staff and Related Personnel". Some of these victims are victims in a very peculiar way; their victim status is a result of them being born as a result of relationships or sexual exploitation by personnel that the United Nations brought into the country. The resolution calls for a detailed report to be made on this issue for the 64th General Assembly, in 2009. The report will then be the basis for the follow up by UN on this issue. Children born by different actors of war - and peace - bring forward questions of both political and academic interest: Are children born of rape or relationships really victims? Are children of mixed origin subject to stigmatization due to their origin? What are the factors minimizing the risk of stigmatizations? Could the UN strategy be used as a blueprint for other children born of war and their rights? Is the United Nations having success in pursuing claims of paternity as is planned in the strategy? How can such a sensitive issue be addressed by researchers and victim support facilitators? These and other issues will be addressed and discussed in the presentation.