Translation from the German original

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Sabine Lee / Heide Glaesmer / Barbara Stelzl-Marx (eds)
Children Born of War
Past, Present and Future
London, New York: Routledge 2022
(359 pp.; ISBN 978-0-367-19013-2; 120,00 GBP)

The term 'Children born of War' (CBOW) was introduced at an international meeting of experts in 2006 as a term for children for whom a number of pejorative terms had previously existed. In the German-speaking research context, these children, who were born after the Second World War from sexual contacts between local women and members of the Allied armed forces, were called 'children of occupation'. Not all children came from a consensual sexual encounter or a love affair. In the last months of the war and the immediate post-war period, cases of (mass) rape predominated, but the exchange of sex for goods or money was also not uncommon in times of homelessness and famine. Relationships between occupation soldiers and local women were often tolerated by the military governments – despite initial bans on fraternisation in the British and American zones. However, once a pregnancy became known, the soldiers were usually transferred and the existing legal situation meant that they could not be called upon to pay alimony.

In and after 'every' war, occupation soldiers fathered children with local women, including German soldiers in the territories occupied by the Wehrmacht. From the mid-1990s, researchers at the Norwegian University of Bergen were the first to investigate the social and state-legitimised processes of exclusion of these children [1]. This historical genesis of the topic already identifies a fundamental problem of this anthology, which presents the results of a project (CHIBOW) funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme [2]. In their contribution on 'Children born of war: a critical appraisal of the terminology', the editors Sabine Lee and Heide Glaesmer gloss over the Norwegian origins of research on CBOW and instead trace it back to R. Charli Carpenter's study on children born as a result of sexual violence during war [3]. In the search for a non-discriminatory name for children born in wars worldwide, Carpenter's book title "Born of War" was referred to at the above-mentioned expert meeting, but the suggestion CBOW came from Ingvill C. Mochmann, who had worked on the collection and analysis of the Norwegian data [4]. The starting point of the research was thus not the topic of sexual violence against women during the war, since sexual contacts between Norwegian women and German soldiers were quite desirable for 'racial'-ideological reasons and the majority of the children came from consensual sexual contacts or love relationships. Some of the subsequent contributions in the volume adopt the one-sided definition of CBOW given by Lee and Glaesmer, while others again focus on the entire spectrum of possible sexual encounters between local women and 'foreign' soldiers. The expansion of the term to include current wars, which differentiates between four categories of CBOW (14), also goes back to Mochmann [5]. However, reference is made to an article by the author that only appeared in 2017 [6], which disguises her authorship.

The other contributions in the volume offer a broad spectrum of historical and psychological qualification work, whereby the arrangement of the individual articles in the volume does not reveal any recognisable chronological or systematic structure. Three contributions address ethical challenges in oral history projects or participatory research with those affected [5]. Researchers who have been dealing with ethics issues for a long time will not learn anything fundamentally new, but the contributions do a good job of highlighting the challenge of implementing EU guidelines in

countries whose universities have not yet implemented ethics committees. Here, the CHIBOW project has undoubtedly set processes of institutionalisation in motion. Questions of data protection and data management are addressed, what is missing are recommendations on archiving, providing and reusing research data. Some groups of CBOW, such as the descendants of former child soldiers in Uganda, are already considered 'over-researched', i.e. the same children were repeatedly interviewed and/or observed, which exposed them to unjustifiable stress from an ethical point of view [7]. To minimise the stress on the children being studied, Boniface Ojok had them write essays in a school. Not only the CBOW but all the children in a class were included in the writing process, and it was clearly communicated that only the researcher, not the teachers, would read the essays (91ff.).

In 'Questions of identity in German occupation children born after World War II: approaching a complex phenonomen with mixed-methods analyses', Saskia Mitreuter refers to data from the quantitative-empirical project 'Occupation Children: The Children of World War II in Germany: Psychosocial Consequences, Stigmatisation and Identity Development' [8], and thus reproduces some methodological dubiousness. For example, the comparison of the 'group' of 'occupation children' with a representative sample of the general German population (154) seems questionable, according to which 'occupation children' suffer significantly more often than the general population from post-traumatic stress disorders, depression and physical complaints. A representative sample can only be drawn from a known basic unit, which is not possible in the case of 'occupation children'. There are no reliable figures for the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) and no figures at all for the German Democratic Republic (GDR). What is the significance of comparing a representative group with a non-representative group? The term 'group' could also be questioned from a socio-psychological perspective: At best, it could apply to the people organised in affected persons' networks, who, however, represent a small minority among the estimated 200,000 to 300,000 'occupation children'. The extension of the term 'occupation children' to children born after 1955 (157) makes little sense in terms of political history. At least the FRG was no longer an occupied country after 1955, but an ally in the Cold War. Was the expansion into 1966 intended to achieve a larger sample in order to make the comparison with the general population appear more legitimate?

Mitreuter and other authors state that they used qualitative as well as quantitative methods. There is a lot in the volume about conducting interviews and forming focus groups, but almost nothing about qualitative analysis methods. In this context, it is very surprising that publications from the project 'Occupied Children in Post-War Germany – Experiences of Education and Difference', funded by the German Research Foundation, were not given greater consideration [9]. A few overview articles were received, but not publications in which narrative-biographical interviews were analysed in the form of case studies. Many of the articles could have benefited from this methodological competence, as the methodological approach to life-history narratives is clearly under-complex. Qualitative approaches seem to be understood as merely making the voices of those affected heard (164). However, the discussion of methods in oral history research has long since moved beyond this stage. The pathos with which CBOW in Germany are glorified as "bridge builders in a society in transition" (164), because they have promoted the acceptance of differences, seems to emphasise the importance of one's own research performance, because one does not trust the social, political and scientific relevance that the topic undoubtedly has, especially in view of current wars.

[1] Mochmann, I. C., & Larsen, S. U. (2008). ‘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), 347–363.
[2] Since the publisher did not provide a print copy for the review, the page numbers are given according to the e-book edition.
[3] Carpenter R. C. (2007). Born of war: protecting children of sexual violence survivors in conflict

zones. Hartford: Kumarian Press.
[4] Mochmann, I. C. (2006). Consolidating the Evidence Base of Children Born of War. ZA-Information, 198-199.
[5] A distinction is made between children of 1) enemy soldiers, 2) occupying soldiers, 3) female child soldiers and 4) members of international peacekeeping forces. Cf. Mochmann, I. C. (2008). Children Born of War. In OBETS – Revista de Ciencias Sociales, 2, 53-61.
[6] Mochmann, I. C. (2017). Children Born of War – A Decade of International and Interdisciplinary Research. Historical Social Research 42(1), 320-346.
[7] Mukasa, N. & Mochmann, I. C. (2022, September 1st). Doing or not doing harm? Ethical issues in researching Children Born of War. https://blog.gesis.org/doing-or-not-doing-harm-ethical-issues-in-researching-children-born-of-war/amp/
[8] Kaiser, M., Glaesmer, H., Kuwert, P. (2022, August 22nd). 'Besatzungskinder': Die Kinder des Zweiten Weltkrieges in Deutschland: Psychosoziale Konsequenzen, Stigmatisierung und Identitätsentwicklung. https://www.uniklinikum-leipzig.de/einrichtungen/medizinische-psychologie/Seiten/psychotraumatologie-besatzungskinder-deutschland.aspx
[9] Kleinau, E. (2018). 'Besatzungskinder' in Nachkriegsdeutschland: Bildungs- und Differenzerfahrungen. https://gepris.dfg.de/gepris/projekt/279094103/ergebnisse?context=projekt&task=showDetail&id=279094103&selectedSubTab=2&

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