Abstracts

Chelsea Sambells

Self-Motivated Humanitarianism? The Study of the Evacuation of Belgian and French Children to Switzerland (1941-1945)

Although children in war are considered dependent and vulnerable, they simultaneously possess political and national significance, raising them above other casualties of war. Evacuations were a popular method to protect children, and thereby, defend the future vitality of the state. From 1941-1945, the British, German and Swiss governments collaborated to evacuate some 60,000 Belgian and French children to neutral Switzerland for three-month periods of recuperation. Although the suffering of Belgian and French children was given as the reason behind these governments’ fierce intervention, the true motivations were politically and nationally-dependent, as each stakeholder mobilized for their own self-preservation and to further their own agendas. Paradoxically, then, the effort to protect these children and to further their rights was completed without significant regard to the children themselves. And, despite the fact that these children were relegated to an ancillary role to the interests of the nation, they were, at the same time, the ones who benefitted the most from this humanitarian intervention.

Cyril Daydé

Restoring children’s broken destinies in French Occupation Zone (1945-1955). Records to be consulted in the French Diplomatic Archives

During the summer of 1945, the victorious Allied Forces undertook the reconstruction of Europe, particularly in their occupation zones in Germany and Austria. While helping the victims, they were confronted by horrors theretofore only imagined, but not known for certain.

Tens of thousands of orphans and abandoned children needed suitable help. Their health, age and nationality were to be taken into account in trying to rebuild their destiny. The post-1945 natalism both urged French administrations to repatriate French children and encouraged foreign
workers to immigrate, so as to rebuild a vigorous economy and society. But political events and diplomatic incidents would force the French administration to do an about-face.

Records produced during the decade of occupation are now a leading source on social history during the post-WWII period.

Agnès Arp

Revelations of Former Residents of Children’s Homes in the German Democratic Republic
Political and Social Demands (2009-2013)

This paper refers to a previous study carried out in Thuringia between 2010 and 2012 on the social situation of former residents of children’s homes in the GDR. Firstly, I recall the question of the legal rehabilitation of these individuals and secondly, deal with the influences and their first attempts at political mobilization, the paradigm shift to their detriment as well as the endurance of the East-German victims subjected to “specialized education” in the GDR, and their aims of achieving moral and legal recognition. Finally, I will conclude with the current status of their rehabilitation and the differences among those placed in orphanages in West Germany and those who were accommodated in children’s homes in East Germany.

David Niget

Between protection and rights
The role of the International Association of Children’s Judges in the circulation of transnational models, 1912-1965

The development of juvenile justice in most industrialised countries at the beginning of the twentieth century was due in part to a reform movement becoming involved in international penal and charities conferences. The role of the first juvenile judges was crucial, as key actors contributed to the creating the image of a “paternal and benevolent” juvenile justice. The first International Association of Child Protection (1921) had its headquarters in Brussels. This Association played a key role in the Child Protection Committee of the League of Nations created in 1924 following the adoption of the first Declaration of the Rights of Children. It gave birth to the first International Association of Children’s Judges (1930).

What was the influence of magistrates in the evolution of internationally disseminated models and proposals? They were amongst the first advocates who pressed for reform aiming to change a criminal justice system deemed harmful for both children and society. Yet they soon had to compromise
with other professionals involved in the field: doctors, psychiatrists, psychologists, and social workers. Could they still be the symbol of institutional innovation as juvenile justice tended to change from a judicial to a medico-social institution? This paper will approach the question using the proceedings of the eight conferences of the International Association of Children’s Judges that took place between 1930 and 1970, as well as the proceedings of other conferences dealing with child protection reform (international child protection conferences, international penal and penitentiary conferences, etc.).

Samuel Bousson

«For world peace: Save the children!»
International Study Weeks for Child Victims of War (1945-1951)

By the end of 1944, a new international organization had been founded in Switzerland: SEPEG (International Weeks for Study of Child Victims of War). Born from few notable figures in medicine and psychology, it quickly gathered many people already active in the field of child welfare and from other countries. As a crossroads of specialists in the medical and psychological fields, education and law, SEPEG contributed to redefining medico-social welfare policies toward child victims of war. This expertise took the form of conferences, reports and questioning of opinion. It also meant work within individual countries, through national branches, and training of specialized staff, while reflections on transnational child protection reform and conceptions of childhood were done in specialized sections (medico-psychological, educational, social and legal). Finally, SEPEG played a role in redefining a juvenile citizenship on an international scale, as shown by the momentum of the movement of children’s communities, and contributed to creating a new space for rethinking children’s rights in the postwar period.

Jean-Christophe Coffin

Children’s Rights: political and moral imperatives and psycho-pedagogical necessities according to Ernst Papanek (1900-1973)

The right to education, the freedom of the child and his or her protection are considered as fundamental values for his moral and psychological development by Ernst Papanek (1900-1973) successively educator, social worker, child psychologist and professor of education and largely influenced by Adlerian psychology. Based on his work on refugee and homeless children during and after World War II and on his work with juvenile delinquents and maladjusted children in New York City, he published his observations in American scholarly journals during the 1950s and the
1960s. He supported the emancipation and the autonomy of the child but never considered the child as an adult. His general considerations on education aimed at building a democratic society based on solidarity and on the development of social interest of the child.

Beatrice Scutaru

*From the child’s right to protection to the protection of children’s rights: Reformers and the reform process in Romania (1995-2004)*

In 2004, Romania enacted a law transposing the UN Convention on the Rights of the child into national legislation. However, in the early 1990s, when the appalling situation of Romania’s institutionalized children was discovered, this improvement seemed difficult to imagine. Therefore, this study addresses the ten-year reform process and the role of those involved, with an emphasis on domestic reformers, individuals as well as institutions. This paper shows that the National Authority for the Protection of Child Right and Adoption played a key role in reforming the Romanian child protection system. Indeed, none of this would have been possible without the support of domestic reformers (civil society, institutions, etc.). But this paper also emphasises that the interdependence of domestic and foreign actors who made these vital reforms possible.

Lucia Roselli

*Childcare in Pavia between the 19th and 20th centuries*

The text shows the development of childcare in Pavia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The study describes the activities as documented by the Charity Nursery Schools of Pavia Archive. The nursery schools were created to host mainly poor children with families in difficult situations.

Lynne Curry

*The Historical Construction of Medical Neglect in the United States (1900-1930)*

When is medical neglect a crime, a failure by adults to fulfill their duty of care to a child so grievous that it requires the sanction of the state? When is refusing medical care to a child an authentic expression of faith, worthy of constitutional protections for religious liberty? Beginning in 1901 in the United States, legal trials of parents for the faith-based medical neglect of their children lent concreteness and urgency to such abstract questions.
Maria-Soledad Rojas Novoa


With this work, I will like to provide an approach to the child’s protection history in America, and direct the debate towards some specific issues: how and why has been organized an area of concern with regard in child protection? How are generated the hegemonic discourses regarding childhood? How do they organize its internal power relations? In concrete terms, we are going to focus in the International American Child’s Protection Institute’s work, during the period from 1927 (year of the Institute’s foundation) through 1979 (year of its annexation to the Organization of the American States). In particularly, we will examine its Bulletin to visualise some practices of sense production, supported by varied actors around the project to establish a “knowledge stock” concerning American childhood.

Hélène Chambefort et Margot Georges

From Laboratory to Archives: Sources of Consideration of Children in Health Research

The National Institute of Health and Medical Research (INSERM) was created in 1964 from the transformation of INH (National Institute of Hygiene). Initially composed of slightly fewer than 30 research units, it now includes over 280 spread throughout France. INSERM is the only French public research institute entirely dedicated to human health. It has always developed research around the child, both in fundamental and clinical or public health research. There are many varied sources at INSERM which were used to write the history of the place of children and their rights within medical research: general management, collective expert reports, unit activity reports, researcher or laboratory archives, etc. These collections have been little used for the history of children and this text aims to highlight the wealth of the archives to be mobilised on this topic.

Jessica Pothet

Parenting support through the best interest of the child in France

Parenting support matters among emerging public policies in France. Indeed, a lot of public policies seize parent’s status as a way to regulate issues they are responsible for, it in the principle of the “best interest of
the child”. The notion of “best interest of the child” due to its polysemy constitutes a fruitful standard on one hand for the institutionalization of a policy with divergent orientations and in the still fuzzy outlines, on the other hand for the normalization of the family customs. The present contribution attempts to examine its various aspects through a monograph of the National Committee of parenting support.

Vanessa Guillemot-Treffainguy

From children’s rights transnationalization to child’s right internationalization (1924-1959)

After the WWI, the whole international community goes into action to protect children. The Declaration of Children’s Rights was adopted by the League of Nations in 1924. Even though it reveals the entry of the child into transnationalization relations, it doesn’t mark children rights onto international stage. Indeed, the statement merely involves society’s duties. Thus internationalization of Children’s rights was destined for failure until the DRC (1959). This study will argue that the failure of internalization of children’s rights is due to political issues.

Adeline Perrot


This article details the rise in visibility of a public category currently termed “unaccompanied foreign minors”. Our research on the origins of this phenomenon led us to investigate a key period (1993-2002) of institutionalisation of practices concerning this group of children and adolescents coming from overseas or abroad without legal representation. Commencing with the study of written sources, (non-governmental, governmental, media based), we have looked at the successive formats of the problematisation of the phenomena before the category of ‘unaccompanied foreign minors’ became the official and settled definition, with the underlying implication, that it falls within the cadre of child protection.

Marie Ranquet

Considering the Child in the Archive’s legislation (1979-2008)

Public records are full of minors, and this leads to a reflection regarding the specific protection of personal information about them. Appropriate measures have been progressively taken in order to take into account the
particular sensitivity of these personal data: it is the 100-year term for communication of some definite records about minors, which is introduced for the first time in the law on archives in 2008. Nevertheless, this solution is not perfect, and this specific term for the protection of the minor is difficult to apply. Society’s demand of a specific protection for the minor is quite clear, but the answer to this demand is not quite so easy.

Paulí Dávila et Luis María Naya

The Committee of the Right on the Child and the Right to Education in Latin America (1989-2014)

Throughout the 20th century, a number of international treaties have recognised the right to education. However, when the Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted in 1989, the right to education started to become more defined by outlining States’ obligations and the contents of education. In Latin America, when the Convention was ratified, changes were made to national legislations and existing Codes on Childhood. In the last 25 years, Latin American countries have on the whole complied with the obligation to submit reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. The aim of this paper is to analyse the observations made by the Committee on the Rights of the Child during this period of time (1989-2013) on the reports sent to them from Latin American countries, focusing our attention on the right to education. In discourse on children’s rights, the most notable conclusion is that countries in Latin America have incorporated rhetoric in harmony with the human rights approach. This speech, however, contradicts the actual situation of children.