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Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version

Zeitschriftenartikel / journal article

**Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:**

Mochmann, I. C. (2017). Children Born of War - A Decade of International and Interdisciplinary Research. *Historical Social Research*, 42(1), 320-346. <https://doi.org/10.12759/hsr.42.2017.1.320-346>

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## Children Born of War - A Decade of International and Interdisciplinary Research

Ingvill C. Mochmann\*

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**Abstract:** »Kinder des Krieges – Zehn Jahre internationale und interdisziplinäre Forschung«. The group of Children Born of War (CBOW) has existed under the notion of different wordings throughout history of mankind. Being fathered by foreign and often enemy soldiers and local mothers these children are known under a variety of different names in their respective home countries. Although different, these particular groups of children seem to share some similar characteristics across time, nations, and conflicts. In order to facilitate a systematic comparative analysis, the research field of Children Born of War was established in 2006 unifying the various research activities, information and knowledge on these children cross-nationally. This article summarizes the achievements obtained so far focusing on the following questions: How was the conceptual framework developed to analyze CBOW interdisciplinary and internationally? How was the empirical evidence base on CBOW expanded and consolidated? What are the results obtained so far? The article concludes that developing new research programs is a cumbersome and challenging process as basic components of the research field do not exist *a priori*. With respect to the field of Children Born of War this process is further complicated as the topic is highly sensitive. Nevertheless, by systematically expanding collaboration and research networks, presenting the topic in relevant research settings and engaging in knowledge transfer the research program today has reached a level of consolidation which provides a sustainable basis for future development. It thereby supports further research on the topic. As the best interest of Children Born of War is often neglected, the expansion of this research field may also give this group a higher visibility in national and international politics and facilitate their empowerment in today's conflict and post-conflict zones.

**Keywords:** Children Born of War, occupation children, war children, children, war, conflict, vulnerable populations.

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## 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

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“Children Born of War” (CBOW) commonly refers to children who have one parent (usually the mother) that is a member of the local community and the other parent (usually the father) that is part of a foreign army or peacekeeping force (Grieg 2001, 6; Mochmann 2006, 198-9). These children have been born as a result of armed conflicts throughout history, are presently being born in ongoing conflicts and are likely to be born also in future (Mochmann 2014; Mochmann and Kleinau 2016). Although still a taboo in many countries and regions, the topic has obtained increasing attention both in academia and in the public over the past few decades (Kleinau and Mochmann 2015, 34). In particular, a growing focus on children born of WWII since the 1990s, and on children born of sexual exploitation and abuse in various conflicts zones of the 1990s triggered off new discussions and developments. This finally led to the establishment of the research area of Children Born of War in 2006. This article summarizes the main discussions, developments and achievements obtained during the past decade focusing on the following questions: How was the conceptual framework developed for analyzing CBOW interdisciplinary and internationally? How was the empirical evidence base on CBOW expanded and consolidated? What are the results obtained so far? The aim is to show how a new research field may develop successfully and sustainably discussing challenges and possible solutions. Section 2 will present the development of the conceptual framework focusing on the elaboration of definitions and a sufficient categorization. This will be followed by experiences related to existing personal and official data usable for research (section 3.1) and primary data collection using participatory research methods (section 3.2). In the following section (4), the role of collaboration, outreach and knowledge transfer will be discussed, whereas section 5 introduces some of the results obtained so far, both in terms of providing conceptual frameworks for analysis as well as with regard to findings from various research projects. In conclusion, a summary and outlook follows in section 6.

I would like to emphasize that although various projects, publications, organizations, and activities are addressed in this article, many others exist – known and probably unknown – to me which may be relevant to the research field of Children Born of War. This article will primarily focus on those activities which are of particular importance to understand the dynamics in the development of the research program of CBOW over the past ten years.

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank Andrea Meckel for her assistance and valuable comments.

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## 2. Developing a Conceptual Framework on Children Born of War

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As already pointed out above, voluntary and involuntary sexual relations between local mothers and foreign soldiers are nothing new in wars throughout the history of mankind (cf. Vikman 2005). However, the pregnancies and births followed by the consequential sexual assaults are mentioned only seldom even though it may be assumed that they existed. The oldest document I have encountered so far explicitly mentioning such children is from the Thirty Years' War between 1618 and 1648 (Pleiss 2002). Also from later periods there exist several documents and sources which provide evidence that Children Born of War was an issue far before the topic reappeared on the academic and public agenda focusing on WWII, the Cold War with its proxy wars and more recent conflicts: For example they are mentioned in documentations of the genocide against the Armenian population (Tachjian 2009) and of the genocide against the Herero and Namaqua population by the German colonial power in Namibia at the beginning 20th century (Burke and Oltermann 2016). A high-profile example is that of the children fathered by members of the French colonial occupation troops from Northern Africa, Senegal and Madagascar in the Rhineland in post WWI Germany (Hirschfeld 1934; Roos 2013). In the following sections (2.1 and 2.2) preliminary approaches to structure the newly established research field and further developments and refinements throughout the last decade are presented.

### 2.1 Preliminary Approaches to Structure the Research Field

The first effort to (a) define this particular group of children and (b) collect an overview of various conflicts and estimate the number of CBOW and (c) establish a network to advance these children's rights was done by the "War and Children Identity Project" (WCIP) at the turn of the last century. Under the leadership of Professor Stein Ugelvik Larsen, University of Bergen, Norway, WCIP published the first report "The War Children of the World" in 2001 (Grieg 2001). Here the WCIP defines "War Children" as "Children who receive a stigma as a result of being born by women who had a relationship with enemy soldiers and children born as a result of sexualized violence/rape used as war strategy" (Grieg 2001, 6). The report lists children by military personal and peacekeeping troops from WWI until early 2000 covering a variety of conflicts and regions such as the Vietnam War, the genocide in Rwanda, the civil war in former Yugoslavia and so on (for complete list see Grieg 2001, 8-9). Based on this list Grieg argues that this is a global phenomenon and that "it is clear that children have been born as a result of relationships ranging from mutual consent to organized rape" (Grieg 2001, 9).

In the following couple of years several research projects took place in different networks around the world focusing on different regional areas and conflicts (Mochmann and Larsen 2005, 2008; Ericsson and Simonsen 2005b; Carpenter 2007). However, the conceptualization and term used to define the respective group of children under research varied strongly from general terms, such as war children, children of war, war babies, children born of sexual exploitation and abuse, to regional specifications, such as “Wehrmachtskinder” (children of German soldiers in Europe introduced by Drolshagen 2005), “Amerasians” (children of American soldiers in Korea), “Vietamericans” (children of American soldiers in Vietnam) to more abusive names such as “tyskerunge” (children of German soldiers in Norway and Denmark), “war leftovers” (children of Canadian soldiers in Europe), “children of hate” (genocide in Rwanda), “bụi đời” (dust of life – children of American soldiers in Vietnam), “Chetnik babies” (also called children of the enemy – children born of war rape in Bosnia-Herzegovina during the civil war in the 1990, Daniel-Wrabetz 2007, 21) (cf. Grieg 2001, 20; Mochmann, Lee and Stelzl-Marx 2009, 272). Many of these concepts were not mutually exclusive. Also, in different countries and contexts the same term could have different meanings and refer to different groups. For example “war children” in Germany refers to the cohort born between 1929 and 1945 and not necessarily children fathered by foreign soldiers (Kleinau and Mochmann 2016a, 13). Thus, a new and neutral concept was required to facilitate systematic research.

Therefore, during discussions and meetings throughout the year 2006 a new term was developed. At the end of 2006 an expert meeting – “Consolidating the Evidence Base of Children Born of War” – took place in Cologne which had as one of its main tasks to define the research agenda for future international and interdisciplinary collaboration (Mochmann 2006, 198-9). In this setting Mochmann proposed – leaning on Carpenter’s (2005) terminology in the context of sexual exploitation – the adoption the general term “Children Born of War” for *all* children of foreign soldiers and local mothers (Mochmann 2007, 2). This was unanimously agreed upon by the participants (Mochmann 2007, 6).

Furthermore, at the same meeting Mochmann introduced four categories of Children Born of War: (1) children of enemy soldiers, (2) children of occupying soldiers, (3) children of child soldiers and (4) children of members from peace keeping troops (Mochmann 2007, 2; Mochmann 2008, 55-6). These categories, while surely not being exhaustive, give a broad clustering of the groups of CBOW that exist and were developed based on the overview provided in the WCIP report by Grieg (2001). The categories have been presented in detail in previous work and will thus only briefly be summarized here (cf. Mochmann and Larsen 2008, 350-1): (1) Children of enemy soldiers are fathered by foreign soldiers who are located in the country or region and clearly defined as enemies such as German soldiers in Russia during WWII or Bosnian Serb Army in Bosnia-Herzegovina during the war in former Yugoslavia in the

1990s. In the case of (2) children of soldiers from occupation forces, the soldiers can be seen as enemies or allies, depending on the view of the local population. For example, the allied forces occupying Germany in the post WWII years were by some parts of the populations conceived as saviours and by others as enemies. In recent years, the topic of (3) children born to child soldiers has reached the public agenda. An example are girls that have been abducted by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in Uganda since the start of the conflict and who were impregnated by a member of the LRA (Apio 2007). Finally, the last category includes (4) children fathered by members of peacekeeping forces, such as peacekeeping missions in countries like Korea, Cambodia and Liberia.

Within each of the above described categories a further distinction might be drawn between children of consensual relationships, children of rape and sexual exploitation and children of prostitutes. At the 2006 expert meeting it was intensively discussed whether the children of the different categories had something in common and whether it would be fruitful to have them in one group. Particularly with regard to children born of consensual relationships vs. rape several participants had opposing views as it was argued that the children born of genocide rape such as in Bosnia and Rwanda are a category with special need for protection which cannot be compared with others. However, others argued that there should not be any dividing at all – all the children are Children Born of War and should be looked upon as one group (Mochmann 2007, 6). It was argued that evidence available indicated that for the well-being of the child there were no clear indications that it was easier to grow up as a CBOW from a consensual relationship in post-conflict societies than from sexual assault and rape (cf. Mochmann and Larsen 2008, 351-2). As shown by van Ee and Kleber (2013) an ambivalent relationship can exist between mother and child. In this case, the woman was a refugee in the Netherlands with her child conceived by rape in Bosnia. Although, the mother was traumatized and her relationship towards the child emotionally difficult, she argued that he was all she had.

## 2.2 Conceptual Refinements during the Past Ten Years

These preliminary approaches to structure the research field by providing a definition of this group of children and various categories may seem rather simple. However, at the time there was not much to build upon from the perspective of research methodology. Thus the development took place using an inductive research approach (Bryman 2012). By trying to connect all loose threads, I tried to work out first parts of a conceptual framework which could be used to systematically research and analyse Children Born of War in a comparative perspective. This evolved further after exploring the empirical evidence base which will be presented in the next section. The conceptual framework was thus in a continuous dynamic process over the ensuing ten years, where precisions of

the definition and the refinements of the categories took place with the growth of the research network and increase knowledge base. In 2016 a follow up expert meeting took place in Cologne on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the establishment on the “Children Born of War” research programme to:

- provide a critical analysis of the progress obtained with regard to growth of knowledge in the research field of Children Born of War in the past years
- analyze policies implemented which are of importance to Children Born of War and
- expand the analysis to other groups of war-affected children who may experience similar problems as the Children Born of War.

At this meeting the definition of CBOW was slightly reformulated (SINTER University of Cologne and GESIS – Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences 2016, 1):

The phrase Children Born of War refers to those children who, in the context of an armed conflict, have a local civilian woman as a mother and are fathered by a foreign soldier, para-military officer, rebel or other person directly participating in hostilities. These children have been born as a result of armed conflicts throughout history. For present purposes the term has been adapted to cater to modern warfare and for that reason we include children born to child soldiers and children fathered by members of a peacekeeping troop.

Furthermore, the following aspect was specified:

The situations which lead to the birth of a Child Born of War differ in their nature. During armed conflict, it can be especially difficult to distinguish between voluntary and forced sexual relations. As a consequence, Children Born of War can be the result of intimate relationships but also because of the use of sex as a survival strategy, such as in exchange for goods or money. Conflict-related sexual violence, including gang rape and sexual slavery is prevalent and also results in pregnancies. Sexual violence is used against women and men, girls and boys and as a weapon of war, systematically destroying the communities in which it is perpetrated. Some of the women and girls who have had children as a consequence of these crimes are among the refugees presently seeking security in Europe.

Due to changing patterns of warfare and violence such as the abduction and sexual assault of Nigerian school girls by Boko Haram (Sinclair 2017), the IS terror, kidnapping, rape and slavery of – amongst others – Yazidi women and girls (Kuntz and Feck 2016) 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 (cf. Mochmann and Kleinau 2016, 302).

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### 3. Sources in the Research Area of Children Born of War

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As was presented in the section above the group of CBOW includes children who share a similar background, but who have been and are born in a variety of different (post-) conflict settings. This goes along with a strong variation in the availability and access to different sources of information across countries, conflicts and categories of CBOW. Further complicating the research, CBOW belong to what is usually described as a “hidden population.” Members of such populations sometimes intentionally hide their membership and this is also often the case for the group of CBOW: Evidence so far indicates that if the social environment of the child and its local parent knows about the biological background this can result in stigmatization and discrimination (cf. Mochmann, Lee and Stelzl-Marx 2009, 263-4). CBOW and/or their families therefore often try to hide the identity of the child’s father. This leads to methodological problems when trying to gain information about them (cf. Mochmann, Lee and Stelzl-Marx 2009, 271-2).

Due to this, data is rare and any kind of data, documentation and/or information which may be found can be seen as a starting point for obtaining further information. This may differ from other research areas in which primary data collection is of main interest. Therefore, section 3.1 is dedicated to already existing sources of information in form of personal and official data which may be used in the research field of CBOW. However, primary data collection, qualitatively as well as quantitatively, has also played an important role in the last decades. The process of data collection will be discussed in section 3.2, with a special focus on participatory research methods and the crucial role of lay researchers in improving the evidence base of CBOW.

In the case of CBOW it needs to be considered that gathered data, documents and results are not only relevant for the researcher to learn more about the situation of Children Born of War in a society during and after a conflict. They also are of great importance for the individual child (or later adult), as sources to learn more about themselves, the background of their parents and of their own life, in particularly the first years of life which many children cannot recall. In the field of Children Born of War researchers and affected individuals face the necessity to very closely work together, which poses both challenges and possibilities. Researchers are specifically dependent on the individuals not only as participants in interviews and questionnaires, but also as sources for personal documents, as help to contact other affected individuals and as contributors in the development of new questionnaires and research specifically designed for this group of people.

It is neither the intention nor purpose to cover all possible ways to access data and information as this would go beyond the scope of this article, but rather to show the multifaceted approach which is often needed to obtain knowledge on complex topics such as CBOW. Detailed analyses and discussions on various methods and sources can be found in the publications addressed in this article and on the webpage of the network “International and Interdisciplinary Research on



Children Born of War” (INIRC-CBOW) which will be introduced in further detail in section 4.

### 3.1 Use of Existing Personal and Official Documents and Data to Research CBOW

In the field of Children Born of War, all kinds of documents and mass produced data may and already did contribute to gather information and do research. To roughly structure the relevant documents and data sources used in this research field, I will use the classification given by Scott (2004). According to Scott (2004, 281) documents may be classified as *written*, *audio* and *visual* and include documents such as newspapers, diaries, stamps, directories, handbills, maps, photographs, paintings, gramophone records, tapes and computer files. Furthermore, he classifies the documents in terms of their authorship, i.e. whether the documents originate from the *personal sphere* or the *official sphere*, whereby documents from the *official sphere* are subdivided according to their origin in *state* or *private bureaucracy*. In the case of CBOW the knowledge base refers to several types of documents from the personal and official sphere and includes amongst others biographies, autobiographies, witness accounts, birth certificates, baptizing documents, letters, photographs, administrative data and medical records (Mochmann 2015). Some of them will be presented in further detail below.

Documents from the personal sphere might especially give information for children born of consensual relationships. For example, in consensual relationship which lasted for a longer period of time, letters between the mother (local woman) and father (foreign soldier) would often be exchanged. Photographs of a woman and a man in uniform, family pictures or pictures of mother and child have also been important documents, at least for the children born during and after WWII either by occupying or allied forces. Often these documents were closed for decades, being only accessible to the mother or restricted to few family members who hid it from the child and/or other family members. Many Children Born of War have found such documents by coincidence, many not until the mother had died and her belongings were in the responsibility of the children. Some of these letters, photographs and (excerpts) of diaries have then later been published openly for example in the media, in the Internet, in books and via interest organizations, and in biographies and/or autobiographies of the Children Born of War (e.g. Tarp 1997; Hügel-Marshall 1998; Øland 2001; Drolshagen 2005; Picaper and Norz 2005; Clapton 2009; Molnár 2008; Muth 2008; Diederichs 2012; Crott Berthung and Crott 2012; Behlau 2015; Baur-Timmerbrink 2015; Grødahl 2016). In many cases the access to these personal documents have thus moved from being closed to open-published over the years (cf. Scott 2004, 282). Only through this did they become available and could be used for research purposes (e.g. Virgili 2009; Stelzl-Marx and Satjukow 2015; Satjukow and Gries 2015; Burian 2016). However, often these

documents were destroyed by the mother or other family members such as the stepfather or grandparents and thus lost, for research purposes as well as for the affected children.

Next to personal documents, official documents and data, produced by either private or state bureaucracy (cf. Scott 2004, 281) may also serve as information sources for research. Official documents and data which have their origin in private bureaucracy are those produced by organizations such as businesses, schools, hospitals, and churches. State documents include local and national government documents. In the case of CBOW-documents such as birth and baptizing certificates, adoption cases, Church books, paternity cases, and personal military files seem to be of great importance. State documents would typically be documents such as Acts of Parliament, reports of commissions, research reports, statistical reports and data. For example, Tibelius (2016) used archive material of the Bundesarchiv (national archive) of the German Institute for Youth Human Services and Family Law to analyze the acknowledgement of paternity and financial support Norwegian CBOW received from their German fathers. Olsen (2005) for instance used among other material, the report of policemen, a Norway wide enquiry of the local municipalities as well as newspaper articles as sources to reflect upon the acceptance of women who had had relations with German soldiers. Using government documents Borgersrud (2004, 2005) analyzed the handling and decision-making process of the Norwegian postwar government with regard to the children fathered by German soldiers. Another very important study was carried out by Ellingsen (2004), who used Norwegian register data to compare e.g. the education or health status of CBOW with those of other people of their birth cohort who were children of single mothers.

The existence and access to both types of official documents vary between countries and throughout time in the case of Children Born of War. For example, in countries where so-called “Lebensborn” homes (such as in Norway) were established by the German occupation during WWII documentation is particularly good. Also, in the case of WWII, paternity cases, court records, adoption cases, archive files stored by e.g. the “Deutsche Dienststelle” WAST in Berlin or “Riksarkivet” in Norway have been opened to Children Born of War in recent decades. In many cases this has made the search for the father and other family relatives possible for the respective individuals. However, in many conflicts, particularly where children are conceived by (gang) rape no birth certificates exist, adoption cases may be closed to the children etc.

Being dependent on these data, the success of CBOW in their private search for information as well as general research on CBOW has been restricted by these local circumstances. However, even if documents can be retrieved, they should be tested thoroughly with regard to their validity as it can have been corrupted in some way (Scott 2004, 283). Some Children Born of War from WWII, for example, learned when they found original birth or baptize certifi-

cates or adoption papers that other documentation they possessed had been corrupted; first names changed, biological father exchanged with stepfather, parents were in reality grandparents, sister or aunt was actually the biological mother etc. Finally, the representativity of available documents needs to be taken into consideration as not all documents are stored; many personal, private and public documents are destroyed at some point in time. In addition, the availability many official documents that have survived is limited by confidentiality and official secrecy. Some may become available after some time, others are permanently restricted. When using such documents one should also consider the context in which they were produced; particularly, during and after immediate post-conflict situations the issue is likely to be highly complex and emotional and the issue and treatment of children fathered by enemy soldiers are likely to be connected to the war experiences (cf. Simonsen and Ericsson 2004). Finally, researchers using process-generated data also need to keep in mind that (in contrast to research-elicited data) the document and data production is not controlled by the researcher, but primarily for other reasons e.g. public administration purposes (cf. Baur 2009, 11).

To summarize, as stated above, the sources presented in this section may be important sources, firstly for an individual child to learn about its own private background as a child born of war, and secondly for the individual itself or researchers to learn more about the situation of Children Born of War in a society in general during and after a conflict. However, the researcher will normally not get access to the personal documents unless it is provided to him/her by the affected individuals themselves. Access to register data which facilitates an analysis of the life development of Children Born of War compared to other children the way this has been done for Norway (cf. Ellingsen 2004) depends on both the existence of such data and the permission to access the data. Such analyses may not necessary give a complete picture, however, as many aspects at the psychological and emotional level can only be transmitted by the individuals themselves. To a certain extent this is provided by biographies and autobiographies of CBOW. However, in order to understand more about the lives of Children Born of War it is essential to ask the children themselves. All other sources, data and information can only provide additional inputs about the context. Thus in recent years – through close collaborations with Children Born of War themselves, some qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys have been carried out and are still ongoing. In the following section the development of the first comparative survey on Children Born of War will be presented putting special emphasis on the use of participatory research methods in this research field.

### 3.2 Using Participatory Research to Collect Data on CBOW

As discussed before, the group of CBOW is difficult for researchers to access as they are a so called “hidden population” (Mochmann, Lee and Stelzl-Marx 2009, 271). For these groups no sampling frame exists and standard probability sampling methods are inadequate or impossible (Heckathron 2002, 11). Researchers often can only guess how many CBOW are born in or after a conflict. It is an even more difficult and sometimes impossible task to find out who these children are, especially if they do not want to be found and more so as Children Born of War sometimes themselves do not know about their biological origin. In addition, CBOW are different than other hidden populations such as homeless as they are not identified by a specific interest or behavior which would necessarily lead them to actually meet with each other and to visit the same places. As they are Children Born of War by birth, it is not necessary to ever meet any other member of the group in order to be part of it. Even though over conflicts and time there are many CBOW, it is still a very small group. It might very well be that a CBOW, without taking own action (as e.g. joining an institutional network of CBOW) will not get to know any other CBOW. Researchers thus in many situations depend on existing networks and structures that are established by the CBOW themselves, which however are only joined by those individuals who feel a need for such a network. Also the willingness of group members to collaborate within research projects is crucial. Thus, going through primary data collection in order to expand and consolidate empirical evidence based on CBOW researchers face severe challenges.

Participatory Research Methods are an approach to overcome some of the problems in the research of hidden populations described above (Mochmann 2015; Mochmann and Meckel forthcoming). Such methods include members of the population in the research process and thereby gather important information which can be used in the analysis of that population. How this inclusion is done is very much dependent on the population under research as well as the goal of the research. The approaches useful for researching homeless people may not necessarily be the same as for CBOW. In the case of CBOW many aspects need to be considered, such as the feature of the conflict and time distance; e.g. if it is still very present within the society researchers need to be much more cautious than in the case of a conflict from years ago as an exposure may endanger the mothers and still (very) young children.

The first study using the participatory research method in the field of Children Born of War was initiated by Professor Stein Ugelvik Larsen in cooperation with the Norwegian War Child Association (Norges Krigsbarnforbund – NKBF) in 1995 and will be summarized briefly in the following. In the mid-1990s Professor Larsen met children fathered by German soldiers during the occupation of Norway during WWII. At this event these – in the meantime adult children – told about their experiences in postwar Norway and Larsen

suggested carrying out a survey among the members of NKBF to map this and how it had impacted their lives. Elna Johnsen, CBOW herself and board member of NKBF, established contact to other members of the NKBF with the purpose of collecting topics and questions of relevance to the members. Except for some individual stories, newspaper articles and (historical) documents, little was known about which issues one should include in a questionnaire. NKBF members provided questions of relevance to them thereby providing a basis for developing the questionnaire and after several revisions, in which I was involved as well, the survey was sent to 650 members of NKBF in 1997. In a next step, Arne Øland, Danish CBOW and leader of the Danish War Child Association (Danske KrigsBørns Forening – DKBF) used an almost identical questionnaire adjusted to Danish specifications which was sent 400 members of DKBF in 2003 and Monika Diederichs, Dutch CBOW, did the same to analyze the life developments of Dutch CBOW in 2004. The surveys were based on written questionnaires and were in all three countries sent out via the respective national organizations (Mochmann and Larsen 2005).

Although these surveys were not representative for the reasons described above and the questionnaires proved to have methodological problems, it was the first attempt to systematically collect and analyze CBOW and facilitated defining relevant factors for CBOW life course analysis. Experiences from the surveys in Norway, Denmark and the Netherlands showed that the questionnaire was too long (250 questions) and had too many open-ended questions which resulted in misunderstandings among the respondents. In the follow-up discussions between researchers and representative from the CBOW organizations who had collected feedback from their members, several aspects were addressed. The questions had to be more precise and different topics should be better divided and questions should be simpler and wordings and concepts should be kept as simple as possible. Also it was emphasized by several respondents that positive aspects of life development should be more in focus. Beyond methodological issues it was discussed whether all Children Born of War had a need to talk about experiences and participate in such surveys at all. Finally, it was addressed that support to fill in the questionnaire and access to psychological assistance should be provided both during the field phase and afterwards (cf. Mochmann 2015).

Years later another effort to improve and revise the original questionnaire with the purpose to implement it in further comparative surveys on CBOW was done. In the context of a network project funded by the AHRC (lead Sabine Lee), a workshop “Using participatory research in cross-national research on hidden populations” took place at GESIS Cologne in 2013, 18 years after the first contact to Norwegian *Wehrmachtskinder*. In addition to researchers, both CBOW fathered by German soldiers in Europe during WWII as well as CBOW fathered by members of the allied forces in post-war Germany, the so-called *Besatzungskinder*, participated in the meeting. The aim of the workshop was to

find questions relevant to both groups and elaborate them methodologically: Are the questions from the first survey still relevant and are they equally relevant for both groups of CBOW from WWII? The information base had grown significantly in the meantime so the questions to be answered were amongst others: How to be sure the important topics are addressed? How to address them, so that they are not misunderstood? Are there cultural- and nation-specific questions? Which ethical issues must be considered? Finally, since the two different CBOW groups participating in the meeting discussed the question separately, we hoped to find out whether they were similar or different with regard to the issues they considered to be relevant to their life development. At the meeting the German translation of CBOW specific questions used in the research of the Norwegian, Danish and Dutch surveys was presented to and discussed with the participants. These questions were later included in the study “Besatzungskinder: Identitätsentwicklung, Stigmatisierung und psychosoziale Konsequenzen des Aufwachsens als Besatzungschild in Deutschland” (Kaiser et al. 2015a, 51-7) and then included in a survey adjusted for Austrian occupation children under the leadership of Stelzl-Marx (Kaiser et al. 2015a, 57).

It can clearly be said that none of the studies above would have been possible without (1) individual CBOW being willing to participate in developing the questionnaire and sharing their knowledge, (2) mobilizing and motivating other CBOW of their organizations and networks to participate in the survey, (3) being willing to support the cumbersome task of distributing the questionnaire and (4), taking a huge share of questions and feedback from their members. However, some challenges and limitations in using lay researchers also became visible in both rounds of the questionnaire elaboration. Developing questions and questionnaires with people who have no prior experience and methodological knowledge may cause misunderstandings on both sides: researchers and participants. Furthermore, it was exhausting for the participants. Not just the age of the lay researchers, but also the length of working sessions, the methodological discussions and the sensitivity and emotional aspects of the topic thus need to be considered. Furthermore, the researcher needs to be aware that topics may be addressed that may be selective, i.e. which may have been of particular importance to the lay researchers themselves, but not necessarily representative for a larger part of the group. Also memories play an important role here. Long-term memory, selectivity of memories and validity of memories may bias the process. In particular the possibility of retraumatisation should be taken into consideration when planning to use the participatory research method in analyzing hidden populations and sensitive topics. Although in the cases elaborated above most of the lay researchers were accustomed to exposing themselves and sharing stories, both personal and group experiences, the intense reactivation of memories may have consequences and needs to be kept in mind by the researchers. As emphasized by Arne Øland in his presentation at the workshop: „When

we want to know something about others we have to ask, thereby risking to violate invisible borders which we do not know.” I think this is a very important aspect and all researchers working on and with Children Born of War should keep this in mind in all phases of the research process – we need to be aware that we may cross borders, being it ethical, sensitive, emotional, private – that we simply did not think about. As the field of CBOW is steadily growing and research projects presently are in progress or planning all around the world this is more important than ever. Table 1 below summarizes the sources, methods and challenges addressed above.

**Table 1: Sources, Methods and Challenges in the Research Field of Children Born of War**

		Sources	Research Methods	Methodological Challenges
Level	Macro	Official documents and mass data	Qualitative and quantitative text and statistical analyses	Are not collected, have been destroyed, are not accessible, bias in selection, context dependent
	Meso	Contemporary witnesses (neighbours, teachers, fellow pupils), Close family members (mother, grandparents, etc.)	Qualitative and quantitative interviews	Sample representativity, Anonymity, validity of memories
	Micro	Personal documents, Qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys	Qualitative and quantitative text and statistical analyses	Sample size and representativity, not accessible, sensitivity, anonymity, (re-) traumatisation, memory, selection of control groups
	All levels		Discourse analysis, triangulation Multimethodology Mixed methods	Complexity

#### 4. Improving the Evidence Base through Collaboration, Outreach and Knowledge Transfer

The International Network for Interdisciplinary Research on Children Born of War (INIRC-CBOW) was established by me in 2008 as a result of the Cologne expert meeting in 2006 which was addressed in section 2. Compared to other areas of war and peace research this topic was for a long time widely neglected and systematic and reliable information and data on the different groups of

CBOW were rather scarce (cf. Lee and Mochmann 2015, 18-20). Recognizing the importance of improving the evidence base in order to pursue the situation of Children Born of War in conflict and post conflict situations on the political and humanitarian agenda is the primary aim of INIRC-CBOW, taking the following steps (INIRC-CBOW 2017):

- Collecting data and information on Children Born of War across time and nations and thereby expanding the evidence base.
- Gathering research results, literature, ongoing research projects on Children Born of War and promoting collaborative research projects on the topic.
- Developing recommendations of best practices to secure the rights of Children Born of War in co-operation with NGOs and governmental organizations.
- Developing medical therapies focusing on the special needs of Children Born of War.

The aim is to offer individuals interested in the field of CBOW a network where all relevant information could be collected and shared with the community. The webpages<sup>2</sup> were set up to offer visibility worldwide to all CBOW related activities and a platform to exchange information, requests, calls, advice, etc. The network so far has 155 registered users, including researchers from various disciplines, such as medical doctors and psychologists, Children Born of War and/or their family members, journalists, members of NGOs, politicians, and military personnel. Several activities have been organized over the past years such as conferences, research projects, publications, political advocacy, networking, capacity building, etc., which will be presented below. Reports on INIRC-CBOW activities are continuously updated on the internet pages and additionally twice a year a newsletter in English language is distributed to its members. It has been developed and expanded continuously and runs without any funding. From April 2016 until mid-March 2017 the INIRC-CBOW webpage had an audience size of 3,087 which amounts to an average of 257 unique visitors monthly. This shows its high visibility and significant role as an information platform in the area of Children Born of War.

Throughout the years since first starting to work on the topic in 2004, I have reached out to all persons and organisations which have crossed my way and whose work could in some way be related to CBOW. Due to the historic, international and interdisciplinary approach of the topic this has led to interesting and fruitful collaborations across countries and disciplines. This approach seems to be necessary in the field of CBOW as it is impossible to know about all country specific features which may be relevant. The sources described in section 3.1 above, their analysis with the most appropriate research methods, and the interpretation of the results may strongly vary depending on the con-

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<sup>2</sup> <<http://childrenbornofwar.com>> (Accessed March 27, 2017).



text. Still many questions that occur are similar, thus allowing within certain limitations for joint international and interdisciplinary projects. Thereby the exchange between researchers and research groups is profitable such as described in section 3.2. This has been done quite intensively over the past decade and has resulted in a variety of research projects, publications and conferences, where colleagues across disciplines usually not closely connected have been cooperating such as medicine, history, social sciences, education and psychology. Research projects such as the surveys among the German and Austrian occupation children mentioned in 3.2 (lead Heide Glaesmer) which was extended to Norway (lead Martin Miertsch), *Children of Occupation: Experiences in Education and Experiences of Difference in Familial Dialogue* (lead Elke Kleinau), *CHIBOW / Children Born of War – Past, Present and Future* which includes 15 different PhD projects (lead Sabine Lee), *War and Child Mothers in Northern Uganda* (lead Norman Mukasa), *Sexual Violence and Gender Relations during the German Occupation of Poland in World War II and Their Aftermath: Post-War Punishments and German Polish Children Born of War* (Maren Röger), *Stigma and Silence: Children of German Soldiers in the Netherlands* (Monika Diederichs), and “Kodierung und Harmonisierung von 60 niederländischen Fragebögen im Rahmen einer komparativen Studie” (lead Elke Kleinau and Ingvill C. Mochmann). These and other research projects reaching from Australia to Belgium, from British Columbia, Canada, to the Democratic Republic of Congo, are listed on the INIRC-CBOW pages. I also established close collaborations to other research teams that have been working on CBOW or related topics such as the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative (HHI) and ICON Consultancy (in Cologne), which both work in the intersection between research, practice, and consultancy, or music and arts such as Interperform Coaching & Culture.<sup>3</sup>

From its start INIRC-CBOW has collaborated closely with national and international organisations representing Children Born of War. Contacts go back to my activities in the War and Children Identity Project (WCIP) which was presented in section 2.1, in particular, related to the comparative survey presented in section 3.2. Over the years several of the national associations representing the Children Born of War have collaborated and established BORN OF WAR, international network (BOW i.n.), which cooperate at the European level since 2007 (BOW i.n 2017). In addition to being indispensable partners in research activities as emphasized in section 3.2, these organizations provide a crucial support to Children Born of War – and increasingly also to their extended family members – in their respective countries as well as support and

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<sup>3</sup> Special thanks go to Susan Bartels, Vincenzo Bollettino, Jocelyn Kelly and Jennifer Scott at HHI, Tanja Lingohr from ICON and Paul Hörmann from Interperform.

guidance for the establishment of similar organizations around the world such as in Bosnia.<sup>4</sup>

Several conferences have taken place over the past years including researchers, Children Born of War and their families, civil society and often media, non-governmental organizations, intergovernmental organizations, and politicians. Often parts of the event were open to the public. INIRC-CBOW has, for example, carried out the research conference “The Legacy of War Time Rape” which I organized in cooperation with the Peace Research Institute Oslo and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign affairs in 2011 and which was opened by Radhika Coomaraswamy, the Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations, Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict from 2006 until 2012 (cf. Mochmann and Haavardson 2012). In 2012 the conference “Besatzungskinder in Österreich und Deutschland” was organized (Satjukow and Stelzl-Marx 2015, 12-3). Further, in 2015, on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the end of WWII several conferences and workshops took place. An example is the authors’ conference “Besatzungskinder und Wehrmachtsskinder – Auf der Suche nach Identität und Resilienz” (organized by Elke Kleinau and Ingvill C. Mochmann), which had a special focus on resilience of CBOW. The conference was opened by Mechthild Rawert, member of the German Parliament, who is supporting the development of international standards and rules of relevance to Children Born of War at the national, European and international level (Rawert 2016). Furthermore, the conference “Interdisciplinary perspectives on Children Born of War – from World War II to current conflict settings” took place (organized by Heide Glaesmer, Sabine Lee and Philipp Kuwert). In 2016 – as addressed in section 2.2 – the expert meeting “Children Born of War in a comparative perspective – state of the art and recommendations for future research and policy implementations” (organized by Elke Kleinau and Ingvill C. Mochmann) took place. The outcomes of the meeting were summarized and can be found in the INIRC-CBOW pages (SINTER and GESIS – Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences 2016). Finally, several conferences, training seminars and events are ongoing within the CHIBOW project mentioned above (lead Sabine Lee).

Even if not complete, the information provided above show that over the past decade a significant number of activities have taken place which have been highly important both to expand the knowledge base on Children Born of War, but also to reach out to individuals, organizations and others who possess information which may be of relevance to take the topic forward both in research and in practice. This work continues and at present one of the issues is focusing

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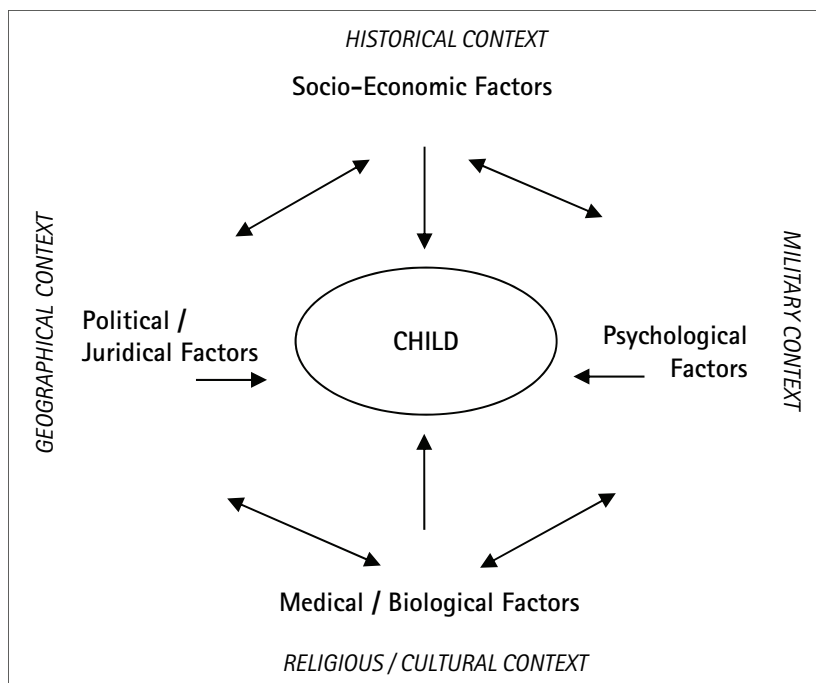
<sup>4</sup> I would like to thank all organizations and Children Born of War who have supported my activities over the past ten years. Special thanks go to Einar Bangsund, Ute Baur-Timmerbrink, Winfried Behlau, Thorleif Blatt, Monika Diederichs, Henny Granum, Elna Johnsen, Michael Martin, Gerd-Inger Resch, Svein Ødegaard, Arne Øland, and Violetta Wallenborn.

on the children of refugee women in Europe who are likely to be the offspring of IS-fighters conceived as a consequence of enslavement and sexual assaults (Kuntz and Feck 2016).

## 5. Where Do We Stand – Some Research Results

Inferred from the knowledge base so far available from the various resources and projects described, I identified several distinct while interrelated dimensions which may have an impact on the life development and life chances of Children Born of War: (1) the socio-economic, (2) the psychological, (3) the medical/biological and (4) the political/juridical dimension (Mochmann 2012). These are presented in Figure 1 below.

**Figure 1:** Dimensions and Contexts Influencing the Life Development of Children Born of War



Source: Modified version of Mochmann 2012, 36.

Furthermore, I assume that several contexts may have an impact on the four dimensions and thus also on the child. These contexts are military, historical,

geographical, and religious/ethnic, and address questions such as: Is it a civil war? Are the military forces allied, enemy or peacekeeping? Is rape and torture used as a military strategy? How are the countries/groups at war related historically (friends vs. enemies) and/or geographically (changing borders/sharing borders)? Is the conflict based on or influenced by religious and/or ethnic cleavages? These contexts may not have a direct impact on the child, but are likely to have a significant impact on the four dimensions and thus indirectly on the development of the child.

Most of the sources presented in this article address similar dimensions and findings: In the socio-economic dimension factors such as stigma, social exclusion, poverty, and social deprivation have been found to be often present throughout the childhood and youth of CBOW. The psychological dimension is characterized by factors such as taboo, lies, shame, and identity crises. Specifically taboos of and silence about the biological origin has been an omnipresent finding in the research on CBOW and in (auto)-biographies published on the topic and may have a strong impact on the child and its development. Medical/biological factors may include infanticide, poor health, abuse, trauma, and HIV/AIDS, for which there was evidence in several studies carried out in the last decades. Finally, the political/juridical dimension includes factors such as statelessness, access to personal information, and access to social services. These factors are often interrelated in their impact on the child. It needs to be emphasized thereby that CBOW seem to be often and more so than other children born during war and postwar times affected by many negative factors simultaneously.

In the following a few exemplary research results will be presented to highlight the relevant dimensions and factors. In the case of Norwegian children fathered by German soldiers, Ellingsen (2004) using register data showed that they had among others less education and income and poorer health compared to Norwegians from the same age cohort. This suggests negative consequences for the children even years after the conflict ended. Analyses of the survey data described before, gathered in Norway in 1997 and Denmark in 2003, indicate however differences between the countries, such that in Norway more participants reported health-related problems (e.g. concentration problems) than in Denmark (Mochmann and Larsen 2008). A study by Kaiser et al. (2015b) on German occupation children shows that these children have higher rates of most traumatic experiences and higher rates of posttraumatic stress disorder, depression and somatization than the same age cohort of the general German population.

There are several studies providing evidence for severe stigmatization and mobbing experienced by CBOW during childhood and adolescence. E.g. the early surveys conducted in Denmark and Norway (Mochmann and Larsen 2008) and later also in Germany (Kaiser and Glaesmer 2016) found this to be an often reported problem. Also narrative interviews carried out with CBOW

show the social exclusion of those children in Norway (Ericsson and Ellingsen 2005; Ericsson and Simonsen 2005a, 2008), in Germany (Kleinau and Schmid 2016), and Northern-Uganda (Apio 2007) to mention some examples.

Experiences of exclusion were thereby found to be connected to a low sense of self-worth and social trust (Meckel, Mochmann and Miertsch 2016; Meckel et al. forthcoming), psychological factors which potentially have a strong impact throughout the life. As indicated before, taboo, silence and (possibly as consequence of those) identity crises were other factors which seem to be especially present for CBOW, as was e.g. concluded from the analysis of closed and open questions of the Danish CBOW-survey in 2003 (Mochmann and Øland 2009).

How closely the fate of the mothers and thereby children are linked to the official policies and governmental actions is very well documented in several publications, amongst others in an article by Mochmann and Lee (2010) analyzing CBOW in the context of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and will thus only briefly be summarized here. For example, in post-war Norway women who married German soldiers lost their Norwegian citizenship, were detained and deported to Germany with husband and child/children after the war and child benefit regulations were constructed in such a way that the children of German soldiers were excluded from benefits, only to name some of the actions taken (Mochmann and Lee 2010, 275-6). Also in other countries and conflicts it was shown that the political decision making with respect to CBOW may be of high relevance: In the case of children fathered by US soldiers in post-war Germany, the US authorities officially refused any responsibility for providing child support or settling paternity, likely worsening the situation of the child. In contrast the United States acknowledged responsibility for children of American soldiers and Vietnamese women born during the Vietnam War in the Amerasian Homecoming Act of 1987 (cf. Mochmann and Lee 2010, 277-82; also Lee 2009, 2011). In many cases, files on the biological background of the children were closed for decades and still are. In the case of children born of rape in Bosnia-Herzegovina during the civil war in former Yugoslavia the Islamic community opposed registers and records in an attempt to avoid future stigmatisation in the assumption that it would be the best for the child never to learn about the background of its origin (cf. Daniel-Wrabetz 2007, 30). Through this example the interrelatedness of the above described factors is very clear: A political decision was made having in mind the social situation of the children, which, however, makes it very hard to impossible for the respective individuals to find out details about their biological background in case they want to. And although the intention may have been good a study by Erjavec and Volčič (2010) shows most of the Bosnian CBOW participating in the survey grew up under very difficult circumstances, often in poverty and with traumatized mothers. The complexity in setting the human rights agenda for CBOW in Bosnia and beyond has been excellently analyzed in Carpenter (2009, 2010).

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## 6. Summary and Outlook

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As I emphasized in the beginning, the various projects, publications, organizations, and activities presented in this article do not give a full account nor discuss all activities that may be relevant to the research field of Children Born of War. The focus has been limited to those parts of particular importance to understand the dynamics in the development of the research program of CBOW over the past ten years. As has been shown several research projects have been conducted which give valuable insights to the life developments of different groups of CBOW and which offer a good – although far from sufficient – basis for further systematic comparative studies. In particular, in future the theoretical framework needs to be elaborated. The dimensions, factors and contexts presented in Figure 1 and described in the previous section clearly demonstrate that this research field incorporates several different disciplines which rely on different theories and sources in the analysis. For example, medical doctors and clinical psychological researchers may analyze post-traumatic stress syndrome (PTSS) among (older) Children Born of War and compare this group with other war affected groups (cf. Kaiser et al. 2015b). Based on theories of the impact of early parent-child bonding on a child's development (cf. Glaesemer et al. 2012), developmental psychologists may compare whether issues related to biological identity and identity crises differ between adopted Children Born of War and for example other adopted children or the general population. Theories on poverty or discrimination of single mothers and their children may be applied by the social scientist to compare these effects on the group of Children Born of War compared to other children who are raised by single mothers. These few examples are given to emphasize that within the different disciplines decisions have to be taken regarding theories, hypotheses, operationalization, selection of questions, scales, control groups, etc., which are based on the knowledge prevailing within the disciplines. Only this way we can, for example, evaluate to which extent Children Born of War actually are more vulnerable compared to other exposed children. Such children could be, for example, children of Nazi collaborators in occupied territories during WWII (cf. Borge 2016), children of Holocaust survivors, children of forced laborers, fatherless children (cf. Venken and Röger 2015), or “Verdingkinder” (cf. Jäggi 2016).

Another aspect which should be in research focus in the next years is to understand which experiences have strengthened the CBOW in their life (cf. Kleinau and Mochmann 2016b). Too quickly causality between being CBOW and negative life developments are assumed ignoring the fact that actually many have coped fairly well with their lives. The interesting question thus is – what makes the difference? In particular when considering the elaboration of policies, support systems and medical/psychological treatments for CBOW in present and future conflict zones, knowing what has been important to other

CBOW may be of great importance to understand how to empower these children. As pointed out in the beginning of this article, the growing humanitarian crises around the world are likely to increase the number of CBOW and the growing number of refugees seeking protection in western Europe more than ever requires that civil society, health personnel, politics and other actors become aware of CBOW, their diversity, but also similarity. Only this way we can provide a sustainable environment of support and trust integrating CBOW into (post-)conflict societies.

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