

A panel proposal to the Beyond Camps 2018 conference

Panel subject:

Work with children after the Holocaust and its relevance to children in conflict today

- Dr. Verena Buser, **Child Survivors' reactions to genocide, war, and loss**
- Dr. Mary (Maggie) Fraser Kirsh , **Publicity, Privacy, and Protection: The Ethics of "Advertising" Child Survivors**
- Dr. Boaz Cohen, **Lena Kuchler and her '100 children': A micro history of Child Survivor Care after the Holocaust**

The underlying rationale of this panel is that the knowledge and experience gained in the post-war/Holocaust period can and should inform, the work done with child victims of war today. The papers deal with the reactions of the child survivor to their harrowing experiences while they were children (Buser), with the children's home and its workings (Cohen) and with the tension between rehabilitative work on one hand and public relations and fundraising on the other (Fraser Kirsh).

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Publicity, Privacy, and Protection: The Ethics of “Advertising” Child Survivors

Abstract:

This paper explores the portrayals of child survivors that appeared in newspapers, fundraisers, and newsletters in the immediate post-war period. The telling of these stories served two primary purposes: to satisfy the public’s curiosity about the youngest of survivors and to raise funds that would contribute to their rehabilitation and housing. Eager audiences clamored for more coverage of child survivors. Eva Michaelis Stern, who directed the fundraising and publicity branch of Youth Aliyah in London, noted that “the demand for. . . more material could hardly be satisfied as supplies of. . . our previously illustrated booklets were exhausted.” While relief societies hoped that additional publicity would help to raise much-needed funds, they were wary of exploiting their wards. How did caretakers such as Anna Freud and spokespeople such as Henrietta Szold act as mediators between the children and the press? How did the press portray these survivors, and to what degree did the children themselves have agency over the telling of their stories? How did the involved parties navigate the balance between publicity and privacy? Lastly, how relevant are these ethical questions to the ways in which the stories of child refugees are promoted today?

Bio:

Dr. Mary (“Maggie”) Fraser Kirsh, Visiting Assistant Professor of Judaic Studies at the College of William and Mary. Publications include: “La politique de placement des enfants en Grand-Bretagne et en Palestine” in *L’enfant Shoah* and “Remembering the ‘Pain of Belonging’: Jewish Children Hidden as Catholics in Second World War France” in *The Young Victims of the Nazi Regime*. She has been awarded the Life Reborn Fellowship at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum and the Fred and Ellen Fine Jewish Joint Distribution Committee Archives Fellowship. She is at work on her book manuscript, *From Survivor to Citizen: Rehabilitating Young Holocaust Survivors in Great Britain and Israel*.

Child Survivors' reactions to genocide, war, and loss

Abstract:

Despite the predominantly 'positive' sentiment which is prevalent in reports from the UNRRA Children's Centres for Jewish and non-Jewish children, and despite the emphasis which the reports put on the fact that the children, 'for all' their traumatic experiences, displayed a high potential for rehabilitation, it can be read between the lines that the Holocaust and the war had a long-lasting impact on the development of their personality. The reports document impressively the devastating experiences of the children, and highlight that, by the end of the war, they were traumatized in many different ways. The main themes of these reports were the children's identity, their sense of home, and their feelings towards their country of birth.

Thus, the paper will explore in a first step the children's reactions to war, genocide, and loss as documented in contemporary documents, and, in a second step, will try to illuminate the caregivers' methodology in the everyday work and life with the children. Based on which concepts were the minors treated, which role played cultural and religious issues, and are there any reaction documented which demonstrate the children's reactions to this? The paper will show that challenges from then are still relevant today in work with refugee children.

Bio:

Dr Verena Buser is research associate at Free University Berlin and lecturer at Alice Salomon University for Applied Sciences Berlin. Her areas of research include Childhood during the Holocaust, Displaced Children after WWII, History of Social Work, and Jewish functionaries in camps. Just recently she was awarded by the Hadassah Brandeis Institute for her research on UN Jewish Children's Centers, and she holds the Gerald Westheimer Fellowship of the Leo Baeck Institute New York

Lena Kuchler and her '100 children': A micro history of Child Survivor Care after the Holocaust

Abstract:

This paper will describe and analyzes the educational and rehabilitative work carried out by female Holocaust survivors with child Holocaust survivors following liberation. It focuses on one of these survivor caretakers Lena Kuchler (1910-1987).

She survived under an assumed Polish identity in Warsaw and in the countryside. Following liberation, she began writing a doctoral thesis at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków. A chance encounter with Jewish child survivors at the Kraków Jewish Committee headquarters, who were receiving no appropriate care, changed the course of her life. Via the Committee, she established a children's home in Zakopane, a resort in the Tatra Mountains. She was 34 years old at the time. She later smuggled the whole children's home to France and from there to Israel.

The paper will explore her concerns, deliberations and subsequent choices in the work with the children, and will discuss the policies formulated by her and the practices and strategies she adopted.

Kuchler has written extensively about the survivor children and about her work, there is also a paper trail of contemporary documents, interviews and children's recollections. Through them it will reconstruct the post-war life in the children's homes and explore its implications for post-conflict work today

Bio:

Dr. Boaz Cohen is head of the Holocaust Studies program of Western Galilee College, in Akko, and a lecturer at Shaanan College, Haifa, Israel. His work focuses on the development of Holocaust memory and historiography in their social and cultural contexts and on Jewish and Israeli post-Holocaust society. He is the author of *Israeli Holocaust Research: Birth and Evolution* (Routledge 2013), a co-editor of volumes on *Holocaust and Film* (2013) and *Survivor Historians* (2015), and the editor of *Was their voice heard? Early Holocaust testimonies of child survivors*, Yad Vashem, 2016..