



## **Understanding Harm, Rethinking Violence, Transforming Childhood: A 20th Century History**

**Digital Workshop, 24-25 September 2021, via Webex. \*Deadline for pre-circulated papers: 14 September 2021\***

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1. Outline
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3. Guidelines for pre-circulated papers and short talks

### **1. Outline**

Violence against children is a major contemporary concern. Child abuse cases feature prominently in the media, and many institutions ranging from the Catholic Church to boarding schools for young athletes have been forced to investigate violence within their ranks. In early 2020, the lockdown in many countries once more drew attention to the threat that parental violence poses to many children. Moreover, violence-related concepts like harm, vulnerability and resilience figure prominently in contemporary pedagogical discourse as experts try to find ways to prevent violence and to understand and alleviate its psychological effects.

In a historical perspective, what counts as violence has rapidly changed and expanded since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and with a particular dynamic since the 1970s. At the same time, measures to prevent violence against children have multiplied shaping both contemporary childhood and society. While violence has been a recurrent theme of histories of childhood since the work of Philippe Ariès, only in the last decade have historians begun to study violence against children as a subject in its own right, analyzing its many forms, causes and consequences. This work has enriched our understanding of modern childhood. In many countries, commissions have been set up to investigate forms of abuse and maltreatment in institutions. However, so far most studies have concentrated on specific kinds of violence, on institutional structures, on questions of responsibility and compensation within specific national contexts. An overarching, transnational debate on the history of violence against children has only just begun. We want to foster such a debate by bringing together leading international experts in the history both of violence and of childhood.

The fundamental transformations in the way European societies came to understand violence were closely entangled with changing concepts of vulnerability and harm, concepts whose history has only recently begun to be investigated. Yet it remains at most vaguely explored when and in which ways notions of children's vulnerability changed after 1945. Studies in the history of psychology/psychiatry, and on the rise and

influence of trauma concepts and PTSD, offer important contexts, but so far have rarely focused on children.

We are interested in exploring ‘how’, ‘why’ and ‘when’ perceptions of violence changed and what effects these changes had in educational, social and political practice: How did different forms of violence and their prevention become major cultural concerns, how did they relate to changing concepts of harm and children’s vulnerability? How did such newly evolving concerns come to shape both modern childhoods and contemporary societies? To which extent did they transform political and judicial practice? We are convinced that new understandings of violence and concurring changes in practices – of control, prevention and mitigation – fundamentally transformed societies and social institutions. This seems to hold particularly true for the decades after 1945. Analyzing these changes thus helps to shed new light on an understudied but essential aspect of the most recent past.

The transformations in societies’ conceptions of violence and vulnerability were neither linear nor the product of an inevitable and uniform process. In the workshop, we want to focus on the conditions, actors, and consequences of change in a transnational perspective: What was the role of scientific disciplines such as psychology, psychiatry, paediatrics and other fields? In which ways did social groups such as women’s movements or parents’ organisations come to change concepts of vulnerability and harm? What was the role of changing media landscapes for transforming the ways of speaking about violence? And how did changing conceptions of violence and vulnerability alter childhoods and children’s institutions, e.g. by introducing new regimes of prevention, supervision and control?

## **2. Preliminary Programme**

Conference-Link: <https://uni-halle.webex.com/uni-halle/j.php?MTID=m91b64d442f776b5d9d56f295496a20ba>

*Please let us know if you need any advice regarding the use of Webex. It does not require any downloads, and you can access the conference room without a password.*

**Friday, 24 September 2021**

**9.15-9.45**

Sonja Levsen / Till Kössler: Welcome and Introduction

**9.45-11.15 Panel I**

Jennifer Crane (Oxford): The Expertise of Experience in British Child Protection, 1960-2000: A National or Transnational Story?

Rhian Keyse (Exeter): “The dice are loaded against her very heavily”: Girls’ experiences of and resistance to early marriage in Western Kenya, 1930-45

*++ Coffee break, 30 minutes ++*

**11.45-13.15 Panel II**

Svenja Goltermann (Zurich): Mobbing Among Children. On the Genealogy of a Concept

Mischa Honeck (Kassel): Small Fingers on Big Triggers: Children and Gun Culture in Twentieth-Century America

*++ Lunch break (1 ½ h hours) ++*

**14.45-16.15 Panel III**

Friederike Kind-Kovács (Dresden): Children's Transports in the 20th Century: Another Form of Violence?

Nick Baron (Nottingham): Trauma, Memory, and Identity. Researching Violence, Displacement and Childhood in Soviet Society

*++ Coffee break, 30 minutes ++*

**16.45-17.45**

Commentary Christian Gudehus (Bochum) and Discussion

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***Saturday, 25 September 2021***

**9.00 -10.30 Panel IV**

Anne-Claude Ambroise-Rendu (Versailles-Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines): Elements for a History of Psycho-analytic Readings of Sexual Violence Towards Children in the 20th/21st centuries // *Eléments pour une histoire de la lecture psychanalytique des violences sexuelles infligées aux enfants XXe-XXIes*  
(Talk in French. An English translation of the paper will be provided to participants. Discussion in English and French)

Peter Hallama (Bern): State Socialism, Socialist Legality, and the Case of Intra-Familial Child Abuse. East Central Europe, 1948-1989

*++ Coffee break (30 minutes) ++*

### 11.00-12.30 Panel V

Sonja Matter (Bern): A Feminist Perspective on Sexual Child Abuse. The Austrian Women's Movement and the Changing Conceptualization of Children's Vulnerability in the 1980s

Johanna Sköld (Linköping): Redressing or Excusing the Past? How Child Sexual Abuse was Evaluated in the Swedish Redress Scheme for Historical Abuse in Out-of-home Care

*++Lunch break (1 ½ h) ++*

### 14.00-15.30 Conclusion

Concluding debate and future perspectives

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### **3. Guidelines for Papers and Talks**

The workshop will be based on a combination of pre-circulated papers and short talks. The panels will thus offer ample time for an intensive discussion.

**\*Paper deadline\*:** Please send us your papers as a pdf or in a word-format by **\*September 14, 2021\*** (to both [till.koessler@paedagogik.uni-halle.de](mailto:till.koessler@paedagogik.uni-halle.de) and [sonja.levsen@geschichte.uni-freiburg.de](mailto:sonja.levsen@geschichte.uni-freiburg.de)).

**Papers:** Regarding the length of pre-circulated papers, the format is rather flexible: a length of about seven to fifteen pages would seem optimal to us. We do not mind if you include published material into your papers. The workshop aims to initiate/intensify a transnational dialogue about the history of children and violence and thus to serve as a space for the exchange of ideas about the present state of research in various fields and national contexts, about methodology, terminology, and thematic approaches – and about implications for ongoing and future research in this field.

**In the talks** (15 minutes max.) we would kindly ask you to focus on the questions laid down in our exposé. We hope that the workshop's core question – of 'how', 'why' and 'when' perceptions of violence changed and what effects these changes had in educational, social and political practice – will serve as a common thread for the whole workshop. Furthermore, we would very much welcome if you would include into your talk some reflections on how you perceive, in your field of research, the extent/limits of transnational dialogue among historians, as well as on where you see shortcomings/limits/blind spots of current research and which methods would be fruitful to overcome these. Furthermore, we would invite you to sketch open questions and unexplored fields that you would regard as important for future research.

Talks thus, rather than giving a summary of papers, would optimally take the papers as a basis to situate papers in a larger context, to try our new ideas, to stimulate discussion on how to understand the recent historical transformations in the fields of violence and children.

We are very much looking forward to seeing you all virtually in September! Please do get back to us with any questions you might have in the meantime.