

Child Survivors Negotiating the Postwar World

The aim of this panel is to broaden the discussion of child survivors by emphasizing the wider postwar context in which child search and the repatriation/resettlement of “unaccompanied children” took place. There has been much discussion of the “correct” context in which the Holocaust should be placed, ranging from German history since Luther to the history of European overseas colonialism, the First World War, Weimar or even just the months saw the decision-making process for the “Final Solution” crystallize. Until now, however, the historiography of child search has tended to operate in a vacuum, with an emphasis on institutional history (especially of UNRRA).

We intend to show how questions surrounding the search for and care of children were shaped by –and helped to shape –the patterns of the postwar world. Using what might be called “subaltern” categories of gender, age and religion, we analyse the ways in which approaches to caring for children in postwar Europe drew on a store of postwar assumptions about: the family and its relation to the nation; religion and group belonging; what constituted “women’s work”; and what rights and agency children could be expected to enjoy. The panel will thus re-examine and attempt to reformulate existing paradigms for understanding the history of child survivors.