“Growing up in out-of-home care” SWG invites submissions to ISCHE 42 Conference. Deadline: Jan. 15, 2020

ISCHE 42 (19 – 22 August 2020) – Örebro, Sweden

Standing Working Group Growing up in out-of-home care: Histories of children and youths in foster families and residential homes

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SWG “Growing up in out-of-home care”, general purpose

Since the late 1990s, forced out-of-home placement of children and youth became an issue in the public debate in several western countries, starting with Australia and Canada. When care leavers, who were placed out-of-home during their childhood and / or adolescence, decided in growing numbers to testify about their experiences, including maltreatment and sexual abuse, and to require explanation and / or compensation, the political authorities, responsible for forced out-of-home placements, in many countries mandated research teams to shed light on the long term history of welfare policies and historical abuse. Some of these investigations have been completed, others are ongoing or still in their early stages. Focusing on the extent of abuse and mistreatment, including sexual abuse, which occurred in residential homes and in foster families, these investigations also touched upon a variety of related issues: origin and evolution over time of public policies regarding child and family welfare; political and economic issues underlying these policies; categories and categorization of children and young people in relation to public intervention (orphans, illegitimates, delinquents, maladjusted, disabled…); social and cultural origins of those children in care; situations of the families and the individual vulnerability of the children behind out-of-home placement; the nature of educational institutions (private, public); the recruitment, training and profile of staff in educational institutions (lay / religious; gender perspective); the role of various experts and professionals in placement-related processes (psychiatrists, psychologists, judges, social workers, educationalists, etc.); educational and diagnostic methods and therapeutic practices applied in the institutions; attitudes and practices toward families. This whole line of inquiries not only touches upon past discourses and practices, but also resonates with current practices and professional interrogations in the ever-growing field of child and youth welfare. Fed by this steady stream of political and media interest and scholarly input, the issue of child out-of-home placement now and in the past has thus gained an undeniably audience in Western societies and public opinions over the last decade.
The SWG Growing up in out-of-home care will result into international comparisons on the history, experiences and memories of out-of-home care and education. It aims at the contribution to a debate of great topical importance, so enabling historians of education to get in touch with the concerns of society. We will also strive to consider a wide range of geographical regions, which have been brought during various stages of history into contact with colonial and western-inspired child welfare policies (Latin America, Asia, Africa), but also in other political contexts (such as the Ottoman empire or former communist regimes). At the first meeting of the SWG during the ISCHE conference in Berlin in 2018, the topic was the decision of out-of-home placement and last year during the ISCHE conference in Porto the focus was on the very conditions of investigating the topic of ‘Growing up in out-of-home care’ from archival, methodological and ethical points of view. During ISCHE 2020 in Örebro the SWG meeting enters the out-of-home institutions with the topic: A Gendered Educational Regime in Out-of-home institutions.

SWG “Growing up in out-of-home care”, CFP for ISCHE 2020 Örebro

Topic: A Gendered Educational Regime in Out-of-home institutions

During the Örebro session, we will examine the social origins of the children and youngsters in care, paying particular attention to gender issues and which influence this could have on the educational regime. Proposals for contributions are particularly welcome in the following three areas:

This section aims to provide knowledge about the social profile of the people involved in the placement over the 20th century, and to question the variations in the ratio of the populations targeted, taking into account a variety of factors: gender / social or legal status (born out-of-wedlock...) / ethnicity (depending on the national contexts involved). The attitude of the environment of origin can also be tackled by highlighting the way in which the parents or the family position themselves in relation to the situation of the minors concerned (request of measure or on the contrary opposition, resistance, accommodations ...) in relation to their social capital or status.

2. Gendered diagnosed problems
This section is aimed at determining the weight of gender factors in the reasons that may have motivated placement and in particular in the way diagnostics of disorders or pathologies are posed and / or evaluated by the services or actors responsible for “feeding” the institutions. Developments devoted to the different professional specializations involved in the process of sorting and diagnosing populations at risk are also possible.

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1 Paper submissions for SWGs must be submitted through the conference electronic system by selecting the respective SWG in the Abstracts area. The deadline for submitting papers is 15 January 2020. Proposals should be a maximum of 500 words excluding bibliography. Submitted papers will be redirected to the convenors to be reviewed.
3. Gendered treatment

This section aims to examine the weight of social and gender factors in the educational practices implemented by the institutions, in particular by making visible the differences in access to vocational training opportunities and/or treatment offered to the populations concerned over the 20th century. Knowledge can also be provided about the different professions involved in the institutional treatment of at-risk populations: role of religious orders, and/or educators trained and employees; collaboration and/or conflicts between different professionals (educational, medical, psychologists...); influence of public authorities and/or private actors.

4. Gendered agency

The issue of agency deployed by the populations concerned is the object of this section: is it possible to discern among the populations targeted by the placement any possibilities to act and to react to the institutional treatments they were confronted with? Are these agency capacities affected by the gender and/or social origin of the populations concerned? Do inmates’ resistance to the power of the institution involve a gender dimension?