

education and its redress. His work reminds readers that even well intentioned action (i.e. compensatory schemes) can cause harm because of the state's colonial past. A better future—both Milloy and Miller suggest—requires relationship building. A decolonized future recognizes Indigenous peoples as partners, not subjects, of church and state.

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Lynne Taylor

*In the Children's Best Interests: Unaccompanied Children in American-Occupied Germany, 1945–1952*

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Lynne Taylor's new book, *In the Children's Best Interests*, examines policy toward unaccompanied children in the American occupation zone of Germany over the course of seven years between 1945 and 1952. She examines how the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration's (UNRRA) initial belief that all children should be reunited with their families and repatriated to the countries of their origin was complicated over time by the reality of the unaccompanied children they found in Germany. Taylor places her study at the nexus of work on refugees, on children in war, and on the American occupation of Germany, but sees herself as primarily in conversation with Tara Zahra's book, *The Lost Children* (2011). Taylor claims that Zahra missed a "key factor in the calculation of welfare workers when determining what was 'best' for unaccompanied children" by failing to recognize one of the child welfare workers' central concerns, namely "the need for a legal identity based on citizenship" (11–12).

Taylor begins her book with an overview of the origins of UNRRA and the debates over who should care for unaccompanied children in post-war Germany. She details the tremendous struggle child welfare agents faced in searching for unaccompanied children, especially those who had been brought to Germany as part of the Nazi "germanization" program. She stresses the constant lack of resources that compromised efforts to carry out searches and the struggle between UNRRA's wider goal of resolving the refugee situation—ideally through the repatriation of refugees in displaced persons' camps—and UNRRA child welfare workers, whose search for children demanded time and resources. She bases her analysis on records left behind by UNRRA and the Office of the Military Government United States (OMGUS) rather than drawing on prior historical works and the accounts of UNRRA child welfare workers. Consequently, Taylor's discussion of the early era falls short of its full potential.

Taylor's analysis deepens when she turns to the struggle between UNRRA child welfare workers, who saw the search for children as a way to reverse Nazi racial policy,

German *Landesjugendamt* (state youth department) authorities, who did not want children removed from their German foster homes, and OMGUS authorities, whose primary interest was in democratizing West Germans and thus avoiding conflict with German authorities. Because OMGUS authorities increasingly saw the remaining unaccompanied children as an “intractable problem” that needed a “quick and simple resolution,” they welcomed the Allied Control Authority Directive of 1947, that declared that “a person of unknown parentage born in Germany, or a person of unknown parentage whose country of birth is unknown, will be deemed a German citizen” (166). In direct contradiction to UNRRA child welfare workers, OMGUS authorities increasingly insisted that separating unaccompanied children from their German caregivers was not in the children’s best interest and left them with German families unless biological parents could be located. As Taylor emphasizes, “OMGUS chose to give the German families, institutions, and *Landesjugendamt* a voice in the decision-making process—as an object lesson in democracy and the rule of law,” even if it meant “leaving children whose nationality was not certain in German foster homes and institutions” (329).

Taylor’s contribution is clearest in her final chapters where she demonstrates that after International Refugee Organization (IRO) replaced UNRRA in 1947, the focus on children’s legal security became paramount. Though IRO authorities recognized that removing children from German foster families was problematic, they also realized that neither German families nor the *Landesjugendamt* guaranteed foster children German citizenship. Whereas OMGUS authorities had naively believed that all unaccompanied children would ultimately be considered German, IRO authorities increasingly realized that this would not be true if West Germany became a country. Moreover, as Taylor points out, contradictory definitions of illegitimacy, adoption, the age of majority and guardianship in the Eastern European countries made it clear that repatriating unaccompanied children did not guarantee citizenship. In this context, as IRO and the occupation forces planned to close down child search operations, the former issues—children’s emotions and physical well-being—that had governed decisions about unaccompanied children were superseded by concerns about their legal status.

*In the Children’s Best Interests* advances our understanding of the complicated efforts to secure the future for unaccompanied children in post-war Germany. Taylor’s close reading of the relations between OMGUS, UNRRA, IRO and local German authorities in the American zone makes clear how attitudes toward unaccompanied children shifted over time. Her claim that the legal status of unaccompanied children was a central factor in decision-making expands our understanding of unaccompanied children. Though this is a valuable contribution, her almost exclusive focus on archival records limits her analysis. Her discussion of Jewish infiltrates, early UNRRA child workers, and the struggle over German (*Volkdeutsch*)/Polish children includes some repetition of what is already known. In the end, however, Taylor’s study adds to Zahra’s groundbreaking study of European children after the Second World War. The work will be of interest to scholars of post-war Germany, refugee studies, human rights, and children as well as a general audience interested in the post-war military occupation.

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