

Institution: University of Birmingham		
Unit of Assessment: UoA 28 History		
Title of case study: Children Born of War: Empowering advocacy, enhancing wellbeing and changing their experiences in the present and the future		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2010–2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Professor Sabine Lee	Professor in Modern History	1994–present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 1 August 2013 to 31 December 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
<p>1. Summary of the impact Lee and her colleagues have changed the lives of Children Born of War (CBOW) present and future by highlighting and addressing the significant challenges they face, shaping discourse and policy and mitigating against discrimination and stigmatisation. They have achieved demonstrable impact in three main areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Initiated policy development and changes in practice at an international level through sustained engagement with key stakeholders, such as the UN. 2. Changed the self-perception of CBOW through participatory approaches and the co-creation of cultural artefacts, enabling them to take ownership of their life stories. 3. Empowered CBOW to challenge stigmatisation and discrimination in their societies, including in Norway, Germany, Austria, Vietnam, Haiti, DRC and Uganda. CBOW have found a voice, raised awareness of the health, wellbeing and legal challenges they face and increased empathy, through inclusive processes and cultural artefacts. 		
<p>2. Underpinning research Initiated by an AHRC Research Networking grant on Children Born of War (CHIBOW) (2011), Lee developed a series of international and interdisciplinary research collaborations, which enhanced the research source base and understanding of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) and gender-based violence (GBV) in conflict and the experiences of CBOW (conceived in both consensual and exploitative/abuse relationships) in the 20th century. Lee's initial research focus on World War II expanded through the Initial Training Network (ITN) project she led (2015–2019), which constructed the first comprehensive comparative study of CBOW, covering armed conflicts, occupations and peacekeeping missions in four continents across the 20th Century.</p> <p>The project created a new evidence base: culturally appropriate and ethically sensitive research methodologies were developed through interdisciplinary collaborations. Research with CHIBOW ITN partner Bartels led to the most extensive narrative data capture around peacekeeper-fathered children to date (including the first qualitative interview material with children aged six upwards). [RO1, RO2]</p> <p>As PI on a number of grants, Lee has worked collaboratively with scholars in Global Public Health (Bartels), socio-legal studies (Bunting), anthropology (Apio) and psychology (Glaesmer and Kaiser) in conducting fieldwork. Utilising participatory research approaches has shaped Lee's work deeply and has informed the data and analysis. Findings arising from this extensive research include:</p>		

RF1) Enhanced understanding of the historically contextualised life-courses of CBOW conceived in conflicts across Europe, Asia, the Americas and Africa in the 20th century, including specific analyses of childhood adversities, human rights challenges, economic and psychosocial disadvantages, and physical and mental health challenges. [RO3, RO5, RO6]

RF2) Historically and culturally sensitive comparative analysis of CBOW experiences resulted in a more nuanced understanding of the specificities of CBOW experiences as well as identifying patterns of such experiences independent of geopolitical and historical contexts.

RF3) Historical-anthropological insights into the impact of kinship and patriarchal social structures on the integration of CBOW and their mothers into fragile post-conflict societies have resulted in better understanding of how specific cultural norms, customary laws around marriage laws, bride wealth and lineage making, as well as implementation of inheritance laws, lead to inequalities of social, educational and economic opportunities. This led to new insights into barriers to integration for enemy-fathered children and their mothers into fragile post-conflict societies. [RO3]

RF4) The first conceptualisation of CBOW rights as part of the human rights and child rights discourse led to a substantially enhanced understanding of the rights-based approaches on which support and assistance for victims and survivors of SEA and GBV is now based.

The research has thus improved definitional clarity and contributed to a genuinely comparative analysis of CBOW experiences across time and space.

3. References to the research

RO1: Luissa Vahedi, Susan A. Bartels and Sabine Lee (2019) “Even peacekeepers expect something in return”: A qualitative analysis of sexual interactions between UN peacekeepers and female Haitians’, *Global Public Health*. DOI: [10.1080/17441692.2019.1706758](https://doi.org/10.1080/17441692.2019.1706758)

RO2: Sabine Lee and Susan Bartels (2019) “They Put a Few Coins in Your Hand to Drop a Baby in You”: A Study of Peacekeeper-fathered Children in Haiti’, *International Peacekeeping*. DOI: [10.1080/135333312.2019.1698297](https://doi.org/10.1080/135333312.2019.1698297)

RO3: Sabine Lee (2017) *Children Born of War in the 20th Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press). Runner-up in the 2019 Social History Society Book Prize.

RO4: Sabine Lee (2015) ‘Besatzer — Besetzte und Besatzungskinder in Deutschland und Österreich 1945–1955’, in Ute Timmerbrink, *Besatzungskinder — Die Töchter und Söhne alliierter Soldaten in Deutschland* (Berlin: Christoph-Links-Verlag), 26–49.

RO5: Sabine Lee (2011) ‘The Forgotten Legacy of the Second World War: GI children in post-war Britain and Germany’, *Contemporary European History*, 20(2): 157–182. DOI: [10.1017/S096077731100004X](https://doi.org/10.1017/S096077731100004X)

RO6: Sabine Lee and Ingvill Mochmann (2010) ‘The Human Rights of Children Born of War: Case Analyses of Past and Present Conflicts’, *Historical Social Research*, 35(3): 268–298. DOI: [10.12759/hsr.35.2010.3.268–298](https://doi.org/10.12759/hsr.35.2010.3.268–298)

4. Details of the impact

Lee’s research and collaboration has achieved significant impact in three main areas:

1. Initiated policy development and changes in practice within international organisations and nation states

Policy development at the United Nations (UN) was affected by raising awareness of the CBOW and the absence of mechanisms to support them emotionally, socially and legally. **Better UN support mechanisms were introduced** as a result of Lee engaging with UN personnel

across different offices and departments, highlighting the particular needs of CBOW. This included the inclusion of a rights-based approach to victim support (UNSCR2467) and the appointment of a Victims Rights Advocate in August 2017 as a champion, among others, of the support and assistance of children born of conflict-related sexual exploitation and abuse.

Multiple policy audiences and the UN were further engaged through a multi-layered sustainable media strategy, starting in 2014, in multiple languages and countries, targeting platforms such as BBC, ORF, MDR, GEO, *Times*, *NYT*, *Libération*, CNN and GI (the biggest online platform in Brazil). For example, in 2019, the first large-scale historically contextualised analysis of community perceptions of UN Peacekeeping and CBOW was read over 120,000 times in the first month and was picked up across different international outlets, increasing the visibility of the topic among policy makers. In response, the UN Victims' Rights Advocate and the Assistant Secretary General for Human Resources contacted Lee and Bartels and asked them to collaborate on improving reporting structures around SEA and GVB by peacekeepers and thus to provide more effective victim support. [S1] Similarly, the analysis also directly led to policy development and action in Chile on the issue of CBOW. In January 2020, the Chilean Congress approved the creation of a commission to investigate cases of abuse in Haiti. The CNN Chile news anchor stated that, 'the research has been very relevant' to the establishment of the Commission. [S3]

Examples of further impact at the international level are:

- **Informed, supported and changed the UN's data collection process:** CBOW data has been used in the annual report of the UNSRSG for Sexual Violence in Conflict every year since 2015. [RO2, RO4; S1] Since 2014, Lee has fed research insights [RF1, RF2, RF3] into central and in-country offices within the UN, including the Office for UNSRSG Sexual Violence in Conflict, who attested that Lee 'was the person who got us to start focusing on the issue,' as well as the Victims' Rights Advocate and the in-country UN Women Protection Gender Advisor. [S1]
- **Raised awareness and shifted policy on CBOW issues on the UN Security Council (UNSC):** Evidenced by the inclusion of matters relating to CBOW, as distinctive concerns since 2015, on various UNSCR's on Women, Peace and Security (WPS), most recently in UNSCR2467. Additionally, under the supervision of Lee, Apio's work was instrumental in CBOW issues being placed on the agenda of the UN Security Council in March 2015. Apio's invited presentation at the Open Debate of the Security Council raised the profile of the issue and directly informed the SC debates. [S2] In response, the UN Security Council President asserted that 'we must recognise that reintegration is a long-term effort that requires the collective responsibility of all stakeholders, including the international community'. [S2]
- **Improved practices and training at the UN** by shaping new training and directly influencing UN practitioners. In response to a parallel study on peacekeeper-fathered children in the DRC and Haiti [RO1], the UN invited Lee to contribute to its ongoing (2018–present) critical evaluation of UN peacekeeping training. Their input revealed inadequate coverage of culturally contingent CBOW issues and led to a reconsideration of best practice in training. [S1] Lee and Bartels are currently working with UN Women Protection Gender Advisor to update training guidance. The pilot, which was planned to take place summer 2020, has been postponed until summer 2021 due to Covid-19.

2. Changed self-perception of CBOW through participatory approaches and the co-creation of cultural artefacts, enabling them to take ownership of their life stories

The research has **significantly shifted self-perception within the CBOW community** through active inclusion in the research (RO2, RO3, RO4). Participatory approaches directly engaged with target communities in Norway, Germany, Austria, Vietnam, Haiti, DRC and Uganda. CBOW used engagement in research to process psychosocial challenges and create space for new self-perception. A 2015 GEO article on *Russenkinder* recorded how some CBOW participants in

Germany reported a sense of 'normality [...] replacing shame and shyness', leading some to claim that they now feel 'proud' of their biological origin, 'felt esteem' and 'now have a voice.' [S4; S5] Similarly, participants in the Ugandan chapter spoke of how 'drastically, I feel my life changed' reported feeling 'safer', 'proud of who I am' with a 'reduction in the level of stress and trauma' and that the project 'rebuilt my hope for the future and has built a process of healing', in stark contrast with former feelings of 'misfortune that I was born,' of feeling 'desperate' 'miserable' and 'fearful' in a life 'full of hatred, stigmatization and rejection'. [S11]

New cultural artefacts allowed CBOW to reconstruct identities. Supported by Lee's historical contextualisation of their life-courses (RO3, RO4, RO6), CBOW have written biographical and autobiographical pieces, which have further changed their self-perception, resulting in 'new self-confidence' and 'a voice in society that they hitherto had not had [...] we no longer feel marginalised'. [S7] The German Foreign Ministry facilitated the translation of a CBOW's book into Bosnian, which further supported the public discourse on the topic of CBOW in former Yugoslavia. The value of collaboration between academic partners and CBOW support groups was specifically mentioned in awarding the *Bundesverdienstkreuz* (German order of merit) to one of the participants in 2017 [S8].

3. Empowered CBOW to challenge stigmatisation and discrimination in their societies and beyond, and increased empathy through inclusive processes and cultural artefacts

New support groups (*Distelblüten*, the Bosnian 'Association of Forgotten Children of War') were established and new foci for activities were found as a result of CBOW's active inclusion in research processes (RO3, RO4) and the creation of a significant evidence base. Established in response to a CBOW 2015 symposium, for example, since 2018, the Association of Forgotten Children of War has specifically focused on raising public awareness. [S6] In 2019, the President of the Association of Forgotten Children of War gave her own speech in the UN chamber as part of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, only a fortnight after two other representatives of the Forgotten Children of War Association spoke at the United Nations at an event of the UNSRSG on Sexual Violence in Conflict.

The research has **further increased the international visibility of CBOW** through the creation of new, participatory cultural artefacts. Lee collaborated with award-winning artistic director Darrel Toulon in the production of a new cultural artefact, the docu-dance 'In the Name of the Father'. The performance was choreographed using the interviews with CBOW, some of whom, together with professional actors and dancers, participated in the performance. The President of the Association of the Forgotten Children of War noted that, 'I felt a tremendous relief when I told my story in front of a full theatre. This show made us visible.' [S9] In December 2019, the production played to full houses at the National Theatre, Tuzla and the Theatre of War, Sarajevo, and it was scheduled for international showings in 2020. The 'Bosnian chapter' of 'In the Name of the Father', has been supplemented by a 'Ugandan chapter', which premiered a performance at Aboke in January 2020 and was set to complete further regional performances in April/May 2020. The psychologist working with the Ugandan participants stated that before the project began participants had 'trust issues with each other and the trainers' but that, by the end of the project, participants 'were socializing more with each other, creating friendships' and 'trusting more, opening their walls which they had guarded because of the stigma.' Some participants actually found siblings amongst the group. Participants were 'given a platform' to 'express their voices' and were able to 'advocate for their rights through the medium of art.' [S10]

The research has **promoted higher levels of empathy and understanding for CBOW** through new cultural artefacts: Lee's collaborative research [RO5] on the life-courses of Lebensborn children directly informed the development and production of a BAFTA-winning mobile game/app. 'My Child Lebensborn' is a virtual story-driven nurture game, which promotes awareness of and empathy for CBOW amongst younger audiences. It is currently rated 4.8 out of 5 on Apple and GooglePlay respectively, based on more than 2,800 reviews, and rated 9.9 of 10 on tap tap. It has been reviewed widely and positively in the press, with the *Guardian* (9 June

2018) review praising it as: 'uniquely effective' in bringing 'to vivid life the emotional texture of history'. It was featured among the 'Best video games of 2018' in *The New Yorker* (Simon Parkin, 29 November 2019) and won the 2019 BAFTA for best 'Game Beyond Entertainment'.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

S1: Emails between Lee and UN personnel, including UN Victims' Rights Advocate and the Assistant Secretary General for Human Resources. (confidential)

S2: UN SECURITY COUNCIL REPORT: Children and Armed Conflict (16 June 2015).

S3: Email from CNN Chile news anchor to Bartels. (confidential)

S4: GEO article on *Russenkinder* and the [co-produced video](#) [CD-rom containing article available on request, only version available].

S5: Testimonial from participant.

S6: Association of Forgotten Children of War powerpoint given at a Birmingham conference on 18 January 2019.

S7: Testimonial from participant.

S8: [Press Release](#) – German Order of Merit.

S9: Testimonial from the President of the Association of the Forgotten Children of War.

S10: Testimonial from psychologist involved in work in Uganda. (confidential)

S11: Surveys from Ugandan Chapter. (confidential)