

Constructing Child Welfare Science in the Early Development of Child Welfare in Finland

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This paper delineates the intellectual history of endeavours to generate a unified science of child welfare in Finland in the early 20th century by elucidating the efforts of leading Finnish protagonists to depict the concept of child welfare science. The idea of such a new science was not unique to Finland; similar trends emerged extensively throughout the industrialising world, in which child welfare was being increasingly championed. The fundamental reasons given for developing a child welfare science in Finland were linked with ambitions to develop child welfare as a consistent system in modern society. The aspiration to develop a scientific basis for child welfare was not only about adapting relevant research-based knowledge to practice, but also about creating historical and theoretical self-understanding in the field. The intention was to construct a comprehensive conceptual framework for the child welfare needed in policy making, legislation and systems building, as well as in the development of professional practices. Although focusing on Finland, the review is of more general significance.

Keywords: child welfare policies; conceptual history; intellectual history; history of ideas; theory building; Finland

Introduction

The early stages of the development of child welfare in Finland occurred in the first decades of the 20th century. At that time, there was a strong belief that scientific

thinking and action would support the theoretical development of the field which, in turn, would improve the education offered therein. This article discusses the origins, background and features of the idea of a science of child welfare as introduced by the most significant early theorists of child welfare in Finland. The argumentation is based on original historical sources, original publications and archive materials¹, as well as the findings of former studies.

Child welfare in Finland was developed such that those in leading positions in the field were required to have a versatile knowledge of the value basis, principles and practices of child welfare. In addition to the integration of social, education, health and population policy affairs, the development of appropriate legislation, organisation, professional expertise and financial resources were also necessary.² The creation of a credible, stable statutory system required conceptual modelling in the sense of “organisation, models and methods for materialising the ideological scheme of institution in practice.”³ As a whole, the development of methods was considered an important dimension, and child welfare became an established field of research. This led to further theoretical structuring of the practices and principles of the field and advanced the notion of child welfare science.

It is not absolutely clear what child welfare science is and how it relates to the general concept of child welfare. In principle, child welfare science refers to the attempt to put child welfare activities into a scientific framework. In the early Finnish debate on

¹ The National Archives of Finland: (1) Save the Children Fund archive (Adolf von Bonsdorff and Bertel Nyberg archives), (2) J. H. Tunkelo archive (3) Ministry of Education archive, (3) Ministry of Social Affairs and Health archive, (4) General Mannerheim League for Child Welfare archive, (5) Central Union for Child Welfare archive.

² Pulma, ”Kerjuuluvasta perhekuntoutukseen,” [187–195]; Turpeinen, ”Lastensuojelu ja väestönkehitys,” [387–392]

³ Satka, *Making Social Citizenship: Conceptual practices from the Finnish Poor Law to professional social work* (Jyväskylä: University of Jyväskylä). [43]

child welfare, this intention manifested itself in an effort to create a unified theoretical foundation for child welfare and to develop a research agenda for the field. A conceptual system based on research data and scientific theory can rightly be seen as providing a solid foundation for the development of appropriate child welfare policies, legislation, institutional structures and the necessary training. Such a vision – a vision of the comprehensive scientific development of child protection – includes efforts to strengthen its scientific basis. The aim of this article is to create a structured analysis of the origins and early development of this idea in Finland.

The origins and development of child welfare and child protection vary among countries. The historical trajectories of childcare institutions “are linked with nation-specific societal and political discourses”, and there are good reasons to study “both the societal conditions within which child care facilities have developed and the evolution of theoretical concepts underlying childcare”.⁴ Studies of the history of child protection are predominantly focused on country-specific issues and written in the respective native tongue. No comprehensive comparative synchronic analyses of the history of child welfare have been done, and its general overview is based largely on several country-specific studies.⁵ Moreover, few attempts have been made to compile an international impression.⁶

Focusing on the case of Finland, this paper provides a nation-specific illustration of the intellectual history of child welfare. The aim is to elucidate the conceptualisation

⁴ Kaspar Burger, “A Social History of Ideas Pertaining to Childcare in France and in the United States,” *Journal of Social History* 45, no. 4 (2012): 1005–125. [1005]

⁵ Juha Hämäläinen, “The origins and evolution of child protection in terms of the history of ideas,” *Paedagogica Historica* 52, no. 6 (2016): 734–747. [736]

⁶ Mirja Satka and Caroline Skehill, “History of Child Welfare and Child Protection in Europe,” in *Oxford Bibliographies in Social Work*, ed. E.J. Mullen (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Juha Hämäläinen et al., *Evolution of Child Protection and Child Welfare Policies in Selected European Countries*, ERIS Monographs, Vol. II, (Ostrava: Publisher Albert, 2012).

of the idea of child welfare science as developed by Finnish advocates. Rather than aiming at a comprehensive analysis of the early development of Finnish child welfare, this paper confines itself to the gestalt idea of child welfare science as a part of national child welfare policy. Guided by the research question themes of how the early Finnish protagonists discussed and introduced the idea of child welfare science, this paper seeks to explain the nature of this conceptualisation as part of the intellectual history of child welfare in the more general conceptual sense.

This paper concerns intellectual history, yet, consideration of some societal factors is necessary to provide the background canvas. Finland was a poor, peripheral country in the period studied, which was also reflected in issues of child welfare. Finland's gross domestic product (GDP) *per capita* was significantly below that of its neighbour, Sweden, for example.⁷ Infant mortality in Finland was high and constituted about a quarter of total mortality until the First World War.⁸ Fecundity only started to decrease around 1910, and poverty meant that many children suffered from malnutrition and diseases. Child welfare was viewed largely from the perspective of the holistic construction of society. It was part of public policy that promoted sustainable social development and strengthened the vitality of the nation, with the aim of alleviating poverty, crime, unhealthy living conditions and other social ills.

National independence in 1917 was followed by the civil war of 1918, resulting in a cataclysmic health and security shock that left many children orphaned, and politicised the issues of child custody, poor relief and education in new ways.⁹ Early

⁷ Jason Lavery, *The History of Finland* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2006). [61–64].

⁸ Bertel von Bonsdorff, *The History of Medicine in Finland 1828–1918* (Helsinki: Societas Scientarium Fennica, 1975). [235–237]

⁹ Pulma, “Kerjuuluvasta perhekuntoutukseen,” [123–136]

discussions around child welfare were conducted mainly by a small, cosmopolitan, predominantly Swedish-speaking scholarly elite in what was essentially a developing country experiencing economic and political instability. The protagonists of child welfare science were leading civil servants of Finnish child welfare in their time.

Although each country-specific tradition is unique, certain common denominators can be found. The inception and development of social care activities have often been influenced by different religious, moral philosophical and scientific traditions.¹⁰ From the point of view of the history of ideas, philanthropy, Christianity, nationalism, and the doctrines of the Enlightenment have been the main motives for the early development of child welfare in the Western world. In Norway¹¹, for example, the early development of the theory of child protection was dominated by theologians, pedagogues, jurists and physicians, which resulted in a combination of religious, humanistic, and scientific interests. This has also been the case in Finland and in many other countries.

Doctors, philanthropists and teachers played important role in the early development of special education¹² and, as such, contributed significantly to the development of child welfare policies and practice. Aspirations were grounded in the concept of interdisciplinarity. Hence, this paper demonstrates how “the historical study of interdisciplinary concepts can give evidence of the complex relation of constructing and criticizing disciplinary boundaries that is crucial for the development of modern

¹⁰ Roger Quarsell, *Vårdens Idéhistoria* (Helsingborg: Carlssons, 1991).

¹¹ Gerd Hagen, *Barnevernets historie – om maks og avmakt i det 20. århundret* (Oslo: Akribe, 2001). [31]

¹² Annemieke van Drenth, “Doctors, philanthropists and teachers as ‘true’ ventriloquists? Introduction to a special issue on the history of special education,” *History of Education* 34, no. 2 (2005): 107–17.

scientific and scholarly thinking”.¹³ The particularly Finnish aspect lies in the endeavours to conceptualise a programmatic and systematic basis for a science of child welfare with respect to the development of a national system of child welfare.

¹³ Stefan Willer, “A Concept of Transfer – Transfers of a Concept. Generation in Physiology, Pedagogy, and Politics around 1800,” *Contributions to the History of Concepts* 6, no. 2 (2011): 69–84. [69]

In many countries, including Finland, women played a significant role in the early construction of the welfare infrastructure and in the development of welfare policies in connection with the conception of “maternalism as a theory of women’s political activity” that “exalted women’s capacity to mother and extended to society as a whole the values they attached to that role: care, nurturance and morality.”¹⁴ The characterization that “male bureaucrats, politicians and propagandists often encourage women in their welfare work” was common in many Western countries in the early stages of child welfare work and describes well the contribution of women to the development of child welfare work in Finland at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries.¹⁵

As since the second half of the 19th century middle-class women began to find opportunities in child welfare throughout the western world and their activism against child labour, domestic violence, and poverty in general established the foundations of child welfare programs throughout the United States, Great Britain, Germany, and the Scandinavian countries, in Finland, too, women were active in developing the sector. In Finland, women had been given the right to vote as early as 1906, the first in the world. Finnish society, however, was gendered in the first decades of the 20th century and mainly men also played key roles in child welfare administration.

¹⁴ Sonya Michel. “Maternalism and Beyond.” In *Maternalism Reconsidered: Motherhood, Welfare and Social Policy in the Twentieth Century*, edited by Marian van der Klein, Rebecca Jo Plant, Nichole Sanders, and Lori R. Weintrob, 1st edition, 22–37 [23]. Berghan Books, 2012.

¹⁵ Seth Koven and Sonya Michel. “Introduction: ‘Mother Worlds’.” In *Mothers of a New World: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States*. Edited by Seth Koven and Sonya Michel. Taylor & Francis 1993.

Although the main ideologues who developed the science of child welfare were men, some women were also involved in the development of the doctrinal foundations and practices of child welfare. Women even played a key role in the development of childcare institutions, mainly “based on revivalist religious values”,¹⁶ whereas men dominated the intellectual side of development efforts. The rapid development of the activities in the 1920s was influenced by, for example, Ester Ståhlberg, the spouse of the first President of the Republic of Finland, who founded the Finnish branch of Save the Children Federation, leading it until 1940, and was a key figure in the development of the foster family care system,¹⁷ and Ruusu Heininen, a pioneer in the development of orphanage training.¹⁸ Both women also created a conceptual foundation for their child protection activities in their operation areas.

The theme of this paper – the idea of child welfare science – has been noted earlier by Finnish child welfare historians, but not been analysed in detail.¹⁹ Although endeavours to lay a particular scientific foundation for child welfare as a coherent legal system played an important role in the early development of the field – not only in Finland but more widely – it barely features in the study of child welfare history. This article is an attempt to fill a gap in previous research.

¹⁶ Pirjo Markkola, ”Women’s Spirituality, Lived Religion, and Social Reform in Finland, 1860–1920,” *Perichoresis* 9, no. 2 (2011): 143–182.

¹⁷ Aura Korppi-Tommola, “Ståhlberg, Ester,” *Kansallisbiografia-verkkojulkaisu*. 23.6.2000. Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura.

¹⁸ Leena Karppinen, *Lastenkotitoiminnan muotoutuminen Sisälähetysseuran Kasvattajaopistossa Ruusu Heinisen johtajatarkaudella 1918–1932. Aatepohja, pedagogiset painotukset ja ammatillisten käytäntöjen periaatteet*. Kuopio: Snellman-instituutti.

¹⁹ Panu Pulma, ”Kerjuuluvasta perhekuntoutukseen,” in *Suomen lastensuojelun historia* (Helsinki: Lastensuojelun Keskusliitto, 1987), 7–264 [142]; Timo Harrikari, *Lastensuojelun historia: Tutkielma oikeussäätelystä, kulttuurisista kerrostumista ja hallinnan murroksista* (Tampere: Vastapaino, 2019). [32, 220].

Scientific child welfare in embryo: development prior to Finnish independence in 1917

In the true sense of the term, the idea of child welfare came into existence in Europe in the second half of the 19th century. Prior to this, several advances by enlightened individuals had been made, but programmatic and systematic efforts towards child protection only occurred in tandem with the early development of the social, educational and psychological sciences. Journalists, novelists and artists were at the forefront of galvanizing public awareness of social grievances. Consequently, the upper classes became more aware of the living conditions of the **impoverished**. Knowledge of social processes and the prerequisites for human development, coupled with an awareness of the potential for social development, bred a new understanding of the need for child protection and its potential. Child welfare, as a particular social system with special political interests, took shape with the advancement of social science, pedagogy, psychology, medicine and law. Public interest in child welfare increased, and philanthropic activities became increasingly underpinned by scientific reasoning.

Expansion of knowledge production

The development of child welfare was advanced through information obtained from concrete social research concerning the living conditions of children within different population groups. Revival of social-political interest among scholars, civil servants and politicians promoted both argument and support for child welfare. Moreover, as a result

of the Enlightenment, since the beginning of the 19th century, the development of research also reinforced educational efforts and confidence in the potential of a child's upbringing.²⁰ Early child welfare activities and activists were also motivated by religious and national ideas. The evolution of civil society was generated by raising social consciousness, and three collective awakening processes have been identified: the national, the religious and the political²¹. While the idea of a specific science of child welfare came later, especially in the 1920s, the importance of scientific information for the development of the activities and system of child welfare was already recognised at the end of the 19th century.

Interest in the development of child welfare was part of the diverse development of social protection infrastructure, which occurred simultaneously, and was in many ways rather similar in several Western countries. There were social policy reforms in terms of "collective solutions to social problems" and "ideas of public interventions" that created social protection legislation and administration to alleviate social misery by developing infrastructure for social insurance, public education, public health and occupational safety and health, and of which an important part was the study of social problems and their mitigation mechanisms.²² Accordingly, scientific approaches and knowledge developed in psychology, social sciences and health care were widely

²⁰ Veikko Piirainen, *Kylänkierralta kunnalliskotiin. Savon ja Pohjois-Karjalan maaseudun vaivashoitotoiminta vaivashoidon murroskautena 1800-luvun jälkipuoliskolla*, Historiallisia tutkimuksia XLIX, (Helsinki: Suomen Historiallinen Seura, 1958). [37–38]

²¹ Juha Hämäläinen, *Lastensuojelun kehityslinjoja. Tutkimus Suomen lastensuojelun aatepohjasta ja oppihistoriasta* (Kuopio: Snellman-instituutti, 2007).

²² Stein Kuhnle and Anne Sander. "The emergence of the Western welfare state." In *The Oxford*

Handbook of the Welfare State, edited by Daniel Béland, Kimberley J. Morgan, Herbert

Obinger, and Christopher Pierson, 2nd edition, 73–92 [76]. Oxford: Oxford University Press,

2021.

applied and translated into programmes and policies of child welfare reforms in different countries.²³ Inspiration for strengthening the scientific orientation of child welfare in Finland was drawn abundantly from abroad, where interest in child research had led to the laying of scientific grounds of child welfare. The child research movement, which originated in England in the late 1800s, had a significant influence on political interest in the prerequisites for children's growth and welfare.²⁴ Across Europe, growing political attention motivated the pursuit of a deeper understanding of child welfare and drove the development of the field through research on the child.

The early development of child welfare in Finland was influenced by the progress of social and psychological research that promoted an understanding of humankind. Scientific knowledge of the nature of man, human relationships, and the mechanisms of social processes expanded rapidly in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. At this time, reasons for social problems were debated, and political action to address them was widely developed.²⁵ Attributes of the child and childhood were increasingly investigated through scientific research, and there was growing interest in

²³ Emily D. Cahan, "Toward a socially relevant science: notes on the history of child development research." In *When science encounters the child: education, parenting, and child welfare in 20th-century America*, edited by Barbara Beatty, Emily D. Cahan and Julia Grant. New York: Teachers College Press, 2006.

²⁴ Harry Hendrick, *Child Welfare: England, 1872–1989* (London: Routledge, 1994) [33–36]; Harry Hendrick, *Child Welfare: Historical dimensions, contemporary debate* (Bristol: The Polity Press, 2003). [21–23]

²⁵ Erik Allardt, "Yhteiskuntatieteet," in *Suomen tieteen historia. Humanistiset ja yhteiskuntatieteet*, ed. P. Tommila and A. Tiitta (Porvoo: WSOY, 2000), 478–87.

pedagogical and political strategies for meeting the needs and promoting the well-being of minors.

Empirical research into society and education impacted the formation of the doctrine of child welfare already at the turn of the 20th century. After publishing a report in 1905, the Committee for Protective Education (*Suojelukasvatuskomitea*) began to gather statistical information to explore the backgrounds to children's bad behavior and neglect of their care. It has been pointed out that "the committee believed that identifying the chains of cause and effect would enable society to target preventive actions at the origins of the problem behaviour of children", and that the field could be developed according to plan "by acting rationally or applying the newest findings of science."²⁶ Thus, the committee opened a path to developing child welfare based on empirical knowledge.

Pedagogical and health-related perspective

The Finnish elementary school system (founded in the mid-19th century) and the kindergarten system (late 19th century) evolved from the pedagogical movement developed by Pestalozzi and Fröbel, which was paramount to gaining significant insights for understanding the nature of child development. Attention was paid to the regularities of a child's growth. This roused interest in research based on the views of developmental psychology. The pedagogical endeavours of child protection activities were rooted in philosophical anthropology but were also increasingly influenced by psychological knowledge of child development, as was the trend in other Western

²⁶ Mirja Satka, "Lapsi- ja nuorisososiaalityön varhaiset opilliset juuret," in *Sosiaalisen vaihtuvat vastuut*, ed. Merja Laitinen and Anneli Pohjola (Juva: PS-kustannus, 2003), 128–144. [134]

countries. In the United States of America (USA), for example, lively psychological research into child development had generated political interest in the preconditions for child development and welfare in terms of child protection.²⁷ In addition, the development of child psychology paved the way for the development of pedagogical child protection activities by revealing the mechanisms behind developmental disorders and awakening research-based efforts towards prevention and alleviation. Towards the latter years of Finland's period of autonomy as a Grand Duchy of the Russian Empire (1809–1917), Finnish pedagogical literature discussed “scientific pedagogy”²⁸ and *paedology*, “child science”; an interdisciplinary field of research belonging particularly to the child psychological research that originated in the USA in the 19th century.²⁹ During the period of autonomy prior to independence in 1917, however, juridical, ethical and organisational questions were prioritized in the development of the public child welfare system, to the extent that child psychology research was largely eclipsed. The ongoing development of child psychology was, nevertheless, an important factor in arguing academically and politically for the need for a child welfare system based on scientific thinking.

Even before independence in 1917, there was debate about the place of child protection in the state administration: whether the sector should be managed by the care of the poor or by the school department, which represented a different view of the nature of the sector, including its intellectual foundations. In the early days of independence, the sector was placed in the administration of school affairs and, from 1925, in the administration of the Ministry of Social Affairs. The initial location within

²⁷ Alice B. Smuts, *Science in the Service of Children, 1893–1935* (Newhaven: Yale University Press, 2006).

²⁸ Oskari Mantere, ”Dottoressa Maria Montessorin tieteellinen kasvatusoppi,” *Kasvatus ja koulu* 1 (1914–15): 136–46.

²⁹ Oksala Kaarle, ”Lapsitieteitten alkuvaiheista,” *Kasvatus ja koulu* 1 (1914–15): 273–83.

the school administration served to strengthen the educational perspective in developing the theoretical basis of child protection.

Of the discourses regarding the education of children within child protection services identified in early twentieth-century Finnish discussion (1900–1930) among officials and experts from the fields of social welfare, child welfare and education, two are particularly prominent: the pedagogic and the administrative. Efforts to develop child welfare in a science- and research-oriented manner are evident during this period more as part of the pedagogic rather than the administrative discourse. This notwithstanding, the pedagogic and administrative discourses intertwined.³⁰ Compulsory education in Finland was only legislated in 1921, and even then, full enrolment was not achieved until the 1950s.

Although the Finnish debate on child welfare was shaped by different pedagogical movements that were influencing Europe, child psychology was seen a central element of the field. Along with the development of international relations, the newest trends in developmental psychology, pedagogy, medicine and law gained ground in the development of the theoretical basis of child welfare. Debate also centred around “the boy issue”, focusing on the dynamics of boys’ development and particular challenges met in their upbringing by leaning on the developmental psychological and pedagogical literature of that time.³¹ Correspondingly, the debate around different subfields of child welfare was influenced by rapidly expanding medical knowledge:

³⁰ Marjo Nieminen, *Lastensuojelulapset ja koulutus sosiaali- ja koulutuspoliittisessa keskustelussa 1900–1930-lukujen Suomessa* (Turku: Turun yliopisto, 2007). [45–52, 146–55, 167–68]

³¹ Sulo Salmensaari, *Poikakysymys. Kokemuksia ja poimintoja kasvatusalalta* (Porvoo: WSOY, 1921).

health-related maternity counselling, for example, began to make progress.³² The emergence of pediatrics around the turn of 20th century not only improved the quality of medical diagnostics, but also reinforced research-informed scientific orientation in endeavours to develop child welfare as an integrated interdisciplinary system from social political perspective.³³ In general, “all medical activities were, in fact, mainly the result of urgent social needs”.³⁴ This is highly relevant in the case of child welfare.

Professional and practical interests

Two main lines of development are apparent in the history of ideas of social work; from theory to practice or from practice to theory.³⁵ In the earliest stages of Finnish child welfare, the focus was placed firmly on practical work and its functional organisation. Development proceeded primarily from practice to theory, including theory formation. The aim was to analyse practice conceptually and create norms to control it. The role of the individual and society, with respect to the psychological and sociological theories of that time, had – to the extent that they were known in Finland – relatively little direct influence on the development of child welfare as a doctrine. In contrast, the political and pedagogical trends of the time, as well as the Christian worldview, inevitably

³² Aura Korppi-Tommola, *Terve lapsi – kansan huomen* (Jyväskylä: Mannerheimin Lastensuojeluliitto, 1990).

³³ von Bonsdorff, *The History of Medicine*, [232–238]; Oiva Turpeinen, ”Lastensuojelu ja väestönkehitys,” in *Suomen lastensuojelun historia* (Helsinki: Lastensuojelun Keskusliitto, 1987), 269–470. [387–398]

³⁴ von Bonsdorff, *The History of Medicine*, [267]

³⁵ Haluk Soydan, *The history of ideas of social work*, Translated by Roy Fox, (London: Venture Press, 1999 [43–44])

affected the formation of the ideological basis of child welfare. The importance of theory for practice only became actualised with the vision of a science of child welfare.

The formation of the concept and doctrinal basis of Finnish child welfare were not greatly influenced by the various forms of professional social work that began in the USA in the 1880s and strongly developed during the first decades of the 20th century. Already before Finnish independence in 1917, efforts had been made to strengthen the scientific basis of child welfare, and to develop research and science-based occupational activities in the field. In his discussion of the results of educational child protection, J. H. Tunkelo (Government Child Welfare Inspector and a leading early Finnish theorist in the field) categorized children in need of special education, and stressed the need for home educators for further child education, particularly in child psychology and child psychiatry.³⁶ He stated that reform schools did not pay enough attention to child psychological and child psychiatric aspects, but acted “as if the question was of mass education, due, supposedly, to having blind faith in the authority of earlier external ‘systems’.”

Since the main protagonists of social welfare science and developers of the child welfare system and its theoretical basis in Finland were men, the gender aspect needs attention in any study of the early national history of child welfare. It is appropriate to state that the key figures were men who held positions in state administration and were politically motivated by the development of national vitality and the nation-state. They played a key role in creating the ideological, administrative and scientific foundation of the field, but women also worked in various positions in the evolving fields of child welfare in the wider sense of the word, such as early childhood education, schooling,

³⁶ Juho Tunkelo, ”Suojelukasvatuksen tuloksista,” *Kasvatus ja koulu* 1 (1914–1915): 3–8.

child health care, parental support, leisure activities for children, foster care and institutional childcare. Thus, women played a key role in the implementation of ideology and policies and in the development of working methods and practices.

The gender perspective in the development of child welfare science is of interest more broadly than just in Finland. For example, the key developers of early childhood education theory – Comenius, Rousseau, Pestalozzi, and Fröbel – were men, whereas mainly women put the ideas into practice and further developed them. The importance of women professionals in the development of policies and practices in different areas of the field of early child welfare has been highlighted in many national studies, including the history of early childhood education in the US.³⁷ As with many nations, this was also the case in early education in Finland.³⁸ Empirical knowledge formation gained ground within education research, with attention paid not only to the normal growth of a child but also to possible abnormalities. An article in the Finnish Pedagogical Journal (*Kasvatusopillinen aikakauskirja*) in 1898, for example, examined the intellectual and moral “defects” manifested in children, and highlighted the importance of monitoring these in education both at home and at school. In addition, the need for thorough knowledge about the emotional life of a child and early intervention in matters that could be influenced through education were emphasized³⁹. From the perspective of pedagogical thinking leaning on empiric knowledge, attention was paid

³⁷ Barbara Beatty. *Preschool Education in America*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2013.

³⁸ Sisko-Liisa Hänninen. *Suomen lastentarhatyön ja varhaiskasvatuksen historia*. Keuruu: Otava, 1986.

³⁹ Lucina Hagman, ”Virheellisyyksistä lapsissa,” *Kasvatusopillinen aikakauskirja XXXV* (1898): 208–17.

to developing pedagogical methods to address to child incivility, based on knowledge about the regularities and abnormalities of child growth. The development of sociological criminology brought about a criminal political movement that had wide influence in Europe, including Finland, and advanced criminal political and pedagogical innovations for the treatment of young offenders.⁴⁰

The emphasis of scientific knowledge-based child protection education was on the prevention of incivility and criminality, employing the causal idea of man and society – individual determinism on the one hand, and social determinism on the other. Moreover, in connection with this, child protection education stressed the importance of accruing knowledge of individual factors and environmental living factors that affected child growth.⁴¹ The relation between living conditions and the behavioral disorders of children and young people was clearly shown, which motivated the concern not only of what was wrong with the delinquent, but also what was wrong with the social environment. Such questioning highlighted the importance of knowledge generated by the social sciences. Theorists became aware that, alongside child psychology, social analysis was needed for the development of child protection and the science of child welfare.

Attempts to create a systematic view of child welfare

Child welfare in Finland began to be outlined as a separate field in the late 19th century, and it developed strongly during the first two decades of the 20th century, gaining programmatic features. State officials responsible for the development of the field had a

⁴⁰ Pulma, ”Kerjuuluvasta perhekuntoutukseen,” [105–107]; Harrikari, *Lastensuojelun historia*, [121–41, 209–11]

⁴¹ Satka, ”Lapsi- ja nuorisososiaalityön varhaiset opilliset juuret,” 138–140.

vital influence on the development of the idea of child welfare, as well as on the theoretical structuring of the field. Activities originating from different ideological roots were seen as segments of the same meaningful social task or expressions of the same idea. Writing covering the history, common principles, value basis and ethical aspects of the field set the scene for the inception of the doctrinal basis. In addition, methods and legislation developed in other countries were drawn upon and adopted in outlining, conceptualising and structuring child welfare as a functional social system comprising different working fields. The conceptual modelling of child welfare was closely connected with efforts to generate comprehensive legislation before⁴² and after⁴³ independence.

The overall aspiration was not only to react to new social problems with the aid of scientific research, but by developing a scientific basis for child welfare, the intention was to show that the field belonged to the infrastructure of modern society. **The aim was to create a conceptually integrated system of child welfare policy.** More specifically, the aim was to achieve a position within the modern societal system by justifying child welfare as a functional field of modern society and an organic part of the modern, civilized constitutional state. The idea of research-informed child welfare was certainly a manifestation of modernity, which “brought a new recognition of the childhood phase of life and new attitudes toward children, including especially affection and protection.”⁴⁴ Thus, through the development of its scientific basis, child welfare sought

⁴² Harrikari, *Lastensuojelun historia*, [166–84]

⁴³ *Ibid.*, [185–205]

⁴⁴ Gary Cross, “Peter Stearns on the History of Childhood and Family,” *Journal of Social History* 51, no. 3 (2018): 467–75. [469]

to become an integrated and acknowledged field of society, as a subsystem of society leaning on scientific rationality.

In Finland, several pre-independence texts outlining the doctrine of child welfare already discussed the importance of developing a theoretical basis for child welfare along with its conceptual formation and improved comprehension to facilitate the designing of the system in practice. The meaning of a systematic theoretical basis to the development of the field was well understood by the earliest theorists of child welfare in two first decades of the 20th century. State independence strongly promoted the development of child welfare in theory and practice in Finland.

The report of the Committee for the Provision of Child Welfare (*Suojelukasvatuskomitea*), published in 1905, made a significant opening attempt at comprehensively structuring child welfare as an operating system. This was not the only effort to develop the theoretical grounds for child welfare prior to national independence in 1917. In 1909, for example, three issues of the journal *Suojelukasvatus* were published in an effort to establish the doctrinal basis of child welfare theoretically and, thus, strengthen the field as a system within society. These theoretical analyses of child welfare, which paved the way for the later development of the doctrinal basis of the field, were included in the discussion about development of the legislation in the field.

An important element in the efforts to create intellectual coherence through historical knowledge, especially the attempts to generate enthusiasm for child welfare through publications covering the life work of pioneers in the field.⁴⁵ Early Finnish studies on the history of child welfare did not concentrate only on national issues; many

⁴⁵ Adolf von Bonsdoff, *Lastensuojelu ja sen historiallinen kehitys* (Helsinki: Otava, 1923).

examples of past child welfare activities were also taken from abroad. This notwithstanding, the writing of history was driven by the aspiration of service to the nation-state, characteristic of nineteenth-century historians in particular.⁴⁶ Studies focused primarily on significant figures and their achievements. These were introduced as examples of good characters and models of high-moral personalities, to inspire those working in the field rather than as a scientific historical analysis. History was, nonetheless, seen as an essential part of the analytical picture of child protection and as an integrating dimension in the building of a systematic view of child protection as a whole.

After state independence in 1917: Towards an integrated child welfare policy through coherent theoretical foundations

Child welfare was propagated as one of the corner stones of the young independent state. Citizens were challenged to participate in the development of the field in terms of philanthropic activities. Two significant national associations in the field were established, the Child Welfare Act was prepared, and public authority increasingly took responsibility for child welfare activities. Attention was paid to public health, with a major advance in antenatal and child health care.⁴⁷ The first years of independence have been called the “thematic years of child welfare”⁴⁸ because of the major development of activities in the field. Endeavours for developing the field through theory building were an essential part of this movement. The cost of the transition to an independent state was a bloody civil war in 1918, which resulted in a plethora of orphans, which in turn

⁴⁶ Margit Pernau, “Whiter Conceptual History? From National to Entangled History,” *Contributions to the History of Concepts* 7, no. 1 (2012): 1–11.

⁴⁷ Korppi-Tommola, *Terve lapsi*, [58–80]

⁴⁸ Kyösti Urponen, ”Huoltoyhteiskunnasta hyvinvointivaltioon,” in *Armeliaisuus, yhteisöapu, sosiaaliturva. Suomalaisen sosiaaliturvan historia* (Helsinki: Sosiaaliturvan keskusliitto, 1994), 163–260. [180]

became a social and political issue.⁴⁹ The state responded to the need for emergency care by promoting residential and foster family care in cooperation with non-governmental organisations. These activities were not particularly motivated by the concept of child welfare science but were rather about addressing the emergency. Nonetheless, they advanced both governmental and civic activities and contributed to the development of child welfare as an organised social system.

Outlining the inner structure of child welfare as a conceptual system

Forming a structured conceptual entity of child welfare proved difficult because of an initially fragmented knowledge base. Merely defining which activities belonged to the field of child welfare was problematic. While psychological and pedagogical child research provided elements for the conception, systematics had to be created from its own basis. Efforts to structure the field theoretically, to identify the central areas of knowledge and research, were included within the notion of child welfare science. Conceptual structuring was considered necessary for the development of education and research in the field.

Finnish protagonists were active in international circles. Even though they adopted ideas from other countries, their aspirations to construct a coordinated conceptual system of child welfare were home-grown in many ways. After the First World War, notably in Germany⁵⁰ where Finnish theorists had close relationships with their counterparts, some analogous and complementary attempts were made to create a

⁴⁹ Mervi Kaarninen, *Punaorvot 1918* (Helsinki: Minerva, 2008); von Bonsdorff, *History on Medicine*, [114–117]

⁵⁰ Bernd Dollinger, *Die Pädagogik der Sozialen Frage. (Sozial-)Pädagogische Theorie vom Beginn des 19. Jahrhunderts bis zum Ende der Weimarer Republik* (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2006). [389–402]

systemic view of child welfare as a particular scientific discipline comprising child welfare governance, policies and practices based on different intellectual frameworks.

Public child health care was developed with the aims of decreasing infant mortality and advancing school hygiene in particular.⁵¹ The training of public health nurses started in 1920 contributing to general and individual hygiene of children.⁵² By modern standards, the growth of many schoolchildren was stunted, and a government committee on nutrition stated, as late as 1940, that possibly up to a fifth of the population was still chronically malnourished, at least in qualitative terms, especially children from large and poor families.⁵³

After independence, the focus on health-related issues, geared to improving the vitality of population, carried over into a state interest in the welfare of children, with an explicit link to defence needs. Health promotion to strengthen the nation's vital force became an important attribute of child welfare policy as a part of the heritage of state power in Finnish child welfare, and an essential part of the comprehensive conception of child welfare science.⁵⁴

The Finnish view of the theoretical basis of child welfare science was shaped in part by eugenics, which influenced social and health policy in various countries from the end of the 19th century as a popular scientific doctrine of population policy focusing on reproductive practices to improve a nation's genetic heritage through a variety of eugenic methods, often combined with nationwide large-scale public health and hygiene

⁵¹ Ibid., [235–238]

⁵² Ibid., [65]

⁵³ Komiteanmietintö 5:1940, *Kansanravitsemuskomitea* (Helsinki). [412]

⁵⁴ Turpeinen, "Lastensuojelu ja väestönkehitys," [350–376]

programs.⁵⁵ Even before the First World War, the idea of racial hygiene, developed in North American and European universities since the end of the 19th century, was also influential in Finland and the other Nordic countries.⁵⁶ In Finland, it was originally seen – in connection with public health interests – as a social reform programme designed to prevent the social problems associated with degeneration. Proponents of the idea of racial hygiene saw the intellectually disabled, mentally ill and those who were crime-prone as a moral and social threat, which is why it was these groups that received racial hygiene attention in the debate.⁵⁷ In child welfare ideology, the perspective on genetic predispositions intensified mainly in juvenile justice thinking and care for the intellectually disabled, but even in these areas, the educational perspective remained the central theoretical basis.⁵⁸ In all the Nordic countries, sterilization laws were enacted by the mid-1930s, in Finland in 1935.

Child welfare committees, established in 1902 and 1918 to prepare child welfare law, produced the conceptual system and theoretical structure of child welfare. Their work, however, was primarily led by administrative and political interests, and was not focused on theory building or analysing theoretical grounds. Basically, the 1902 Committee aspired to defend society, while the 1918 Committee highlighted the importance of protecting children against reduced social conditions.⁵⁹ Nonetheless, both

⁵⁵ Philippa Levine and Alison Bashford. "Introduction: Eugenics and Modern World." In *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Eugenics*, edited by Alison Bashford and Philippa Levine, 3–24. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.

⁵⁶ Markku Mattila, *Kansamme parhaaksi: rotuhygienia Suomessa vuoden 1935 sterilointilakiin asti*. Bibliotheca Historica 44. Helsinki: Suomen Historiallinen Seura, 1999

⁵⁷ Mattila 1999, [125–183, 339–346]

⁵⁸ Harrikari 2019, [209–214]

⁵⁹ Timo Harrikari, "The Making of the First Child Welfare and Juvenile Crime Acts in Finland 1897–1943," *Social Work & Society* 9, no. 2 (2011): 1–17.

committees strove to outline a functional and conceptually well-structured child welfare system.

Notional legislation and administrative structures introduced child welfare as an integrated conceptual system. Committee members were required to have adequate social-theoretical, pedagogical and legal expertise, based on a scientific education and professional experience. G. A. Helsingius, a member of the first committee, published a textbook on childcare based largely on the conceptual system developed by the committee.⁶⁰ This notwithstanding, and despite his work on the conceptual system focusing on child welfare as an integrated part of poor relief, he did not contribute significantly to the idea of child welfare as a science.⁶¹ Conversely, the leader of the second committee, Adolf von Bonsdorff, proposed an international training program in child welfare, based on the internal structure of the field and expressing his opinion about the basic dimensions of a child welfare science. From the outset, the influence of administratively motivated and legislatively oriented definitions by the committee for furthering child welfare science was evident.

Establishing a scientific basis for child welfare became an essential programmatic aim of child welfare in Finland in the 1920s. In the mid-twenties, Adolf von Bonsdorff, head of the governmental child welfare office (*Kouluhallituksen lastensuojeluosasto*) and one of the main theorists of child welfare of the era, suggested establishing a professorship aimed at educating the intellectually disabled and spoke strongly for the scientific development of child welfare. During the same period, Finland proposed the establishment of a scientific child welfare institute in Geneva for the International Save the Children Union, the annual general meeting of which ratified

⁶⁰ G.A. Helsingius, *Yhteiskunnan lastenhoito* (Kuopio, 1907).

⁶¹ Satka, *Making Social Citizenship*, [41–48]

the proposal in 1926 according to a plan formulated by von Bonsdorff. Great expectations were widely held for the project. Bertel Nyberg, the first lecturer of child welfare at the Social College (*Yhteiskunnallinen korkeakoulu*) established in 1925, believed that it would act "as a key point for new child welfare activities" requiring "not only warm and selfless people, but also serious and more thorough engagement with the practical politics of the issue."⁶²

With regard to the foster family care system, there was a clear ideological-political tension between the bourgeois body that won the civil war and the losing working class, the former seeking to promote it and the latter wanting to create a public orphanage system instead. Key child protection theorists welcomed the foster care system and also contributed to its development in collaboration with its primus motor Ester Ståhlberg, the wife of the President of Finland, but otherwise did not in any way form a dominant element in child protection policy and the development of the sector as a whole.

The Adolf von Bonsdorff⁶³ archive contains a draft proposal for establishing an international institute of education and research in connection with the organisation *Union internationale de secours aux enfants* in Geneva. The draft is dated July 7th, 1927 and, although the author is not named, it is likely to have been written by von Bonsdorff himself. The document mentions the destruction inflicted by the First World War and social change, especially the shift in women's position in society, as factors underpinning the new need for child welfare measures. An international awakening of child welfare awareness is also mentioned. According to the proposal, *Union*

⁶² Bertel Nyberg, "Tieteellinen lastensuojeluopisto Geneveen," *Lastensuojelulehti* 6, no. 9 (1927): 136–137.

⁶³ The National Archives of Finland, Adolf von Bonsdorff archive, box 407.

internationale de secours aux enfants would provide annual courses in child welfare, lasting from six weeks to two months taught by experts from different countries.

Research and practical work in the field would be required of participants. Use of the university facilities in Geneva and symbolic use of the name Pestalozzi in connection with the education program were proposed. The course outline, contents and matters for discussion were well ordered. The main themes of the course's curriculum were the history and legislation of child welfare in different countries, as well as different pedagogical and developmental psychological aspects in different areas of childcare.

The draft course program reveals what was considered central to child welfare and how the field was conceptually structured. Child welfare was broadly divided into three fields of knowledge: history (1), legislation in different countries (2–6) and particular issues of upbringing and child psychology (7–15). The core questions were strongly focused on pedagogical and psychological issues at the cost of medical inquiry. The lack of a social scientific dimension is especially conspicuous. Social aspects could be considered in the context of history and law, and medical aspects within pedagogical and psychological contexts. Medicine, health issues and social sciences, however, had no visible place within this structure. However, eugenics was also one theme. In general, racial hygiene thinking was particularly favoured by some physicians and it had no particular influence on early child welfare ideology and policy, including the concept

of child welfare science, which focused more on the social environment than genetics, but von Bonsdorff had embraced it as part of "scientific" child welfare ideology.

Analysing the logic of child welfare research

Most Finnish analyses of the theoretical grounds of child welfare examined child welfare as a functioning system within society. One major figure is Bertel Nyberg, who presented an outstanding theoretical outline of child welfare as a specific in his doctoral thesis⁶⁴ in 1931. In the foreword, Nyberg acknowledges being inspired by Adolf von Bonsdorff, who “for all his life, dedicated himself to scientific endeavours in the field of social services”⁶⁵. Through his dissertations on the history of and legislative grounds for child welfare, von Bonsdorff created a framework for establishing a scientific basis for child welfare and developing it as a discipline in its own right, but unlike Nyberg, he did not outline the theoretical-scientific basis for child welfare. Although, ultimately, Nyberg’s efforts to create child welfare as an independent scientific field did not lead to the establishment of new academic institutions, they played a key role in the history of Finnish child welfare learning.

Nyberg, in his application to the Niilo Helander Foundations for a scholarship to translate his thesis from Swedish to German, dated February 26th, 1931,⁶⁶ stated that "social work for children, called child welfare (*barnskydd, Jugendwohlfahrtspflege*), primarily needs, first of all, a scientific basis that regards its theory as well as tracks its

⁶⁴ Bertel Nyberg, *Kind und Erde. Ethnologische Studien zur Urgeschichte der Elternschaft und des Kinderschutzes* (Helsingfors 1931).

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, X.

⁶⁶ The choice to publish the dissertation in German exemplifies a particular interest in being involved in the German-language debate.

history. Neither of these fields is yet being researched to a satisfactory extent.”⁶⁷

Nyberg justified the need for child welfare science primarily by arguing that the questions investigated by child welfare science were not examined comprehensively in pedagogy, child research, nor any other field of research. Although he does not explicitly mention theory building concerning child welfare, the notion of a specific science forming a theory of child welfare can be found in his reasoning. Thus, Nyberg’s efforts to create a specific science of child welfare and his discussion of the theoretical bases for this differ fundamentally from the notion of developing child welfare into a multidisciplinary field.

Nyberg held that child welfare has long been an essential part of the social organisation of humans. His doctoral thesis examined archaic ways and beliefs concerning the relationship between the child and the world in terms of social forms of care and protection, which he characterized as early models of the social welfare of children and young people. For him, the aim of child welfare science was to investigate the forms and phases of the development of child protection in connection with parenthood and social life, as they existed in different times and cultures. As a scientific discipline, through discussion on the social welfare of children, child welfare completed the knowledge generated by pedagogy and child research about the child as an object of social actions. According to Nyberg, pedagogy, child research and child welfare science formed a trinity in which each field of research has its own practical-operational

⁶⁷ The National Archives of Finland, Collection of Bertel Nyberg, box 409.

counterparts and social functions complementing and completing each other (see Table 1), but there was no overall named concept with which to refer to this entity.⁶⁸

[Table 1 near here]

While Nyberg's outlines are insightful terminologically, the German concepts he used do not always have clear equivalents in other languages. He did not, for example, discuss 'child welfare science' *per se* but rather a field of research (*Forschungsgebiet*) and a discipline (*Disziplin*). Nyberg outlined child welfare as specific social-judicial actions and called the field of research *paedophylactics* and the corresponding practice *paedophylaxis*. Moreover, to refer to *paedophylactics*, Nyberg used 'Jugendwohlfahrtspflege' which could be translated as child and youth welfare, or simply child welfare.

As child welfare science, *paedophylactics*, examines the conformities to law that appear in the relationship between the child and environment and the methods used in fostering. Research of this kind creates a solid basis for a science-based development of the practices of child welfare and education in the field. It includes parents and parenthood as a natural part of the child's environment and the broader communality, and also involves social parenthood, as occurred in primitive communities.⁶⁹ Nyberg considered this discipline and field of research in relation to the welfare science (*Fürsorgewissenschaft*), developed in Germany in the 1920s as a science covering social welfare.⁷⁰ On the other hand, as a practical action, child welfare (*paedophylaxis*)

⁶⁸ Nyberg, *Kind und Erde*, IX, 10–12.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 12–13, 222–224.

⁷⁰ Dollinger, *Die Pädagogik der Sozialen Frage*; Ernst Engelke et al., *Theorien der Sozialen Arbeit*, 7th edition (Freiburg: Lambertus, 2018). [196–205]

is “an ancient branch of social action, the aim and content of which is...the bodily, psychic and juridical care and protection of minors” and the field of child welfare, linked with socio-political actions, covers “a child’s relation to his or her environment and the relation of the environment to the child,” the aim of which is to foster this natural relation through care and remedial rearing. After publishing his doctoral thesis, Nyberg continued developing child welfare science. In the manuscript *Barnskyddsforskningens elementära grunder. Teori, histori, dynamic*⁷¹, he described “social child welfare” as actions for welfare and “thus as a sector of social policy”, in his opinion, belonging to the broad field of “applied social science or sociology”.

In his 1936 lecture discussing education in the field of child welfare, Nyberg emphasized the importance of a scientific basis for all social services education. He reflected on the lack of leading principles and confusion about details that long hindered the professional development of social services and led to actions based merely on slogans and passing impressions; despite the best of intentions, there had been a lack of rational orderliness. Furthermore, lasting results could only be achieved if a solid intellectual basis for action was created through systematic research. Nyberg reiterated the systematics that he had introduced in his doctoral thesis: the fields of research in pedagogy, pediatrics and paedophylactics; and the combination of these, which could be called pedology or child research (*Jugendkunde*).

Nyberg, child welfare work comprised educational, educational, health-related and juridical aspects, and included the moral, physical and social care of children, all of which must be examined by students. Furthermore, the starting point of education should be the view of the social worker as acting partly as a pedagogue, a public health nurse and a service worker. Bodily-material care, psychic-moral education and social-

⁷¹ The National Archives of Finland, Bertel Nyberg archive, boxes 409, 413, 419.

juridical protection constitute the three main components of child welfare.⁷² Regarding the ensemble of these three operational sectors of child welfare: “the pedagogic side of child welfare” was not examined in Nyberg’s ethnological research classifying the early forms of child welfare because “it did not clearly exist, yet” in the primitive cultures under research.⁷³ Von Bonsdorff⁷⁴ had already referred to the unity of three as consisting of care, education and protection when speaking of the development needs of national social policy. Thinking characteristic of Christian Jasper Klumker, a German theorist of child welfare, on the bond between social services (*Fürsorge*) and education (*Erziehung*) was also evident in Nyberg’s outlines, and he strongly followed Klumker’s way of analysing the theoretical grounds of the discipline of social services.⁷⁵

From the viewpoint of the history of doctrine and concepts, it is significant that Nyberg created systematics that both logically analyse and conceptually bond the entity of child welfare. However, the examination of the relations between the concepts of care, education and protection, and particularly that of their position and nature within the entity of child welfare, are left unfinished in his analysis. Nyberg ends by stating laconically that “there is not enough space here for closer examination...of these theoretical questions.”⁷⁶ From the idea-historical perspective it is essential, however, that Nyberg analysed child welfare through the three basic elements – ethic-intellectual

⁷² Nyberg, “Über die Ausbildung von Beamten der Jugendwohlfahrtspflege,” Presentation in Riga, Latvia, October 26th, 1936. [1–7, 14]

⁷³ Nyberg *Kind und Erde*, [2]

⁷⁴ Bertel Nyberg, “Ensimmäinen yleinen lastensuojelukongressi Genevessä 24–28 p:nä elokuuta 1925”, in *Meidän lapset* (Porvoo: WSOY, 1925). [182, 183]

⁷⁵ Dollinger, *Die Pädagogik der Sozialen Frage*, [393–398]

⁷⁶ Nyberg 1931, *Kind und Erde*, [11].

education, bodily health care and social-judicial protection – and emphasized their cohesiveness in the entity of child welfare.

Although Nyberg's discourse on child welfare science did not lead to the formation of a new scientific discipline, his contemplations structured child welfare theoretically. Nyberg's analyses show that, in Finland, the scientific basis for child welfare was formed in the 1920s and 1930s by discussing children's ethic-intellectual education, bodily healthcare and social-judicial protection and considering these as scientific questions of child welfare. Articles published, for example, in the journal *Lastensuojelulehti* and other journals in the field can be classified according to which of these three themed areas they mostly cover. In his article published in 1945, he argued that child welfare needed a scientific basis and stated that "the theoretical questions of child welfare have been very much neglected in Europe and especially in the Nordic countries, until now"⁷⁷. Child welfare science as a distinct discipline remained, however, unrealized, and child welfare issues were approached through other special discipline-specific frames of reference, especially those offered by medicine, science of law, psychology, sociology, pedagogy, social policy and administrative science.

The conceptual structure of child welfare was seen as necessary for both political and practical reasons: better argument for the need to develop the system of child welfare politically, and as a conceptual tool for the development of child welfare institutions and working methods in practice. The most important motive, however, may have been an intellectual ambition to understand the field and its dynamics better. The idea was not only to gather knowledge from different subjects relevant to child welfare, but to create an entirely new knowledge base, subject to its own questioning grounded

⁷⁷ Bertel Nyberg, "Yhteiskunnan lastensuojelu kaipaa tieteellistä pohjaa," in *Lastensuojelun vuosikirja 1945* (Forssa: Suomen Lastensuojelun ja Nuorisonhuollon keskusliitto, 1945), 5–9, [5].

in properties of the inner nature of child welfare. For this, it was necessary to gain insight into the substance of child welfare as a whole through phenomenological reasoning.

A part of internationalisation of the field

New options for development of the field of child protection, in theory and practice, as an integrated system of thinking and action, were opened through international interaction. In Finland, Adolf von Bonsdorff made use of foreign experiences when developing the legislative and administrative theory basis for child welfare; Arvo Ylppö, later awarded the title of Archiater, the highest Finnish honorary title awarded to a physician, used the latest medical knowledge to improve the medical treatment and health care of children; and Bertel Nyberg collaborated with and was influenced by foreign colleagues in constructing a theoretical system of child welfare. Thus, the idea of a child welfare science was especially rooted in scientific discussion through international collaboration. In their efforts to establish a scientific basis for child welfare, the Finnish child welfare ideologists drew their influences especially from Germany. However, their conceptual systematics were relatively original.

Influences from abroad

The strong development of internationalisation of the field of child welfare in the 1920s coloured the development of the field in Finland, too.⁷⁸ The concept of child welfare science was also discussed in the international context in relation to the need for

⁷⁸ Pulma, "Kerjuuluvasta perhekuntoutukseen," [190–192].

legislation, administration, research and education. Influences on the development of both public and non-governmental organisation-based child welfare were abundantly gained from abroad. This affected both the theoretical self-understanding of child welfare and the practical plans and decisions related to the organisation of the field in individual countries.

From the outset, although many of its problems and solutions were largely home-grown, Finnish child welfare was not developed in isolation. Significant inspiration for the development of child welfare as a system within society had been already been gained from abroad during the period of governmental autonomy before independence (1809–1917). Key activists familiarized themselves with developments in Germany, England and the Scandinavian countries, in particular.⁷⁹ Windows to Europe were thus opened in the field of child welfare already at an early stage. The latest trends in the field flowed to Finland and influenced the development of the field there.

After independence from Russia in 1917, international activity and influence increased markedly in Finland. Leading figures in Finnish child welfare engaged in international cooperation and offered significant insight into foreign discussions and developmental tendencies in the field through articles and lectures. Foreign examples of different legislative and operational decisions within child welfare were covered in the press, with a focus particularly on German, British and Scandinavian policies and practices. International child welfare also developed strongly during this period, as child

⁷⁹ Matti Kauppi and Elina Rautanen, *Oikeus hyvään kotiin. Pelastakaa lapset ry ja suomalainen lastensuojelutyö 1922–1997* (Keuruu: Pelastakaa Lapset ry, 1997). [24]

welfare organisations increasingly incorporated international cooperation in their action plans.

The central figures of Finnish child welfare held the position of civil servant, which largely specified their role and interests in the international activities. Through international networks, they familiarized themselves with mainline trends, schools of thought and movements abroad.

Participation in international child welfare organisations

A detailed analysis of the international connections of Finnish child welfare during the years following national independence has yet to be made. Nonetheless, Nordic cooperation was relatively extensive by the 1920s. The Scandinavian child and youth protection association *Pohjoismainen lasten- ja nuorisosuojeluyhtymä*, founded in 1919 by order of Adolf von Bonsdorff, particularly enhanced the cooperation between the Nordic Countries. It organised Scandinavian congresses in Copenhagen in 1921, Oslo in 1924, Stockholm in 1927 and Helsinki in 1930⁸⁰. Connections were developed with the Baltic Countries⁸¹, and much inspiration was also drawn from Central Europe during the 1920s. The prime influence, however, was the German tradition of child welfare, and Germany became an important role model for Finnish ideologists in their endeavours to develop child welfare as a science-based system of thought.

International organisation and cooperation thus strengthened Finland's scientific approach to the development of the field. Finland was also an active participant in child

⁸⁰ The National Archives of Finland, Adolf von Bonsdorff archive, box 407; Kalle Widgren, "Piirteitä maamme lastensuojelun kehityksestä itsenäisyyden aikana," *Lapsi ja nuoriso* 26, no. 11 (1967): 317–20. [319]

⁸¹ Kauppi and Rautanen, *Oikeus hyvään kotiin*, 73.

welfare internationalisation efforts, bearing responsibility in international organisations and contributing to international organisation of the field. Internationalisation was an important dimension of the development of the idea of child welfare science in providing the field with universal meaning. The Declaration of the Rights of the Child, made in Geneva and adopted by the League of Nations in 1924, and its statement on the child's need for special protection, added emphasis to this trend. The declaration created a basis for the major development of children's rights through international forums. It provided a stimulus for the self-conception of child welfare and strengthened the vision of child welfare as a concept based on global values and principles.

In the international community of scholars, however, the scientific foundations of child welfare advanced uneasily. In Finland, Nyberg played a significant role in the Finnish branch of Save the Children Federation, and correspondingly actively participated in the organisation's international activities. At the end of 1930s, Nyberg criticized the neglect of theoretical questions in the development of social services in Europe, and especially the Nordic countries, despite the development of social welfare science and child welfare science. Nyberg listed historical, social-pediatric, social-pedagogic and social-juridical research as sectors belonging to this mission. In addition to these, he referred to the need for special research into psychological, psychiatric, criminological, racial-biological, organisational, methodological and terminological problems.⁸²

The international organisation of the field signaled a new ideological phase in the development of child welfare. According to Nyberg, "the human and international meaning of the idea of child welfare became evident only after the World War",

⁸² Bertel Nyberg, "Om nödvändigheten av det praktiska barnskyddets basering på vetenskaplig grund," *Finland's Röda Kross* 14, no. 2 (1938): 42–44.

examples of which were the establishment of the International Save the Children Union and, in August 1925, the first International Child Welfare Congress in Geneva. In his description of the congress, Nyberg notes that the discussions were divided according to health-related, social and pedagogical issues. Diagnosing that “the theory of child welfare exists, for the time being, as a subject in extremely few universities”, he mentioned Professor Chr. J. Klumker “as the pre-eminent representative of this field within Europe”.⁸³ Klumker saw the theory of child welfare as a particular field of an education-related scientific theory-basis of the entire social welfare.⁸⁴

Norwegian historian Gerd Hagen reported that, in Norway, theologians, philosophers, pedagogues and doctors dominated the field of child welfare during the first half of the 20th century. He also stated that psychologists also participated in the development of the field as early as in the 1920s, but it was not until the post-World War Two period that child pedagogues and social workers truly came to the fore.⁸⁵ In Finland, various fields were represented in the development of child welfare, and scientific and discipline-based international cooperation was already being undertaken by the 1920s, for example in the fields of law, pedagogy for the disabled, child medicine and – unlike in Norway – also child pedagogy.

Conclusion

The analysis showed that the intention of endeavors to construct a scientific basis for child welfare in the early stage of development of the field in Finland was not only to produce research-based knowledge for practice but also to promote historical and

⁸³ Nyberg, ”Ensimmäinen yleinen,” 9, 17.

⁸⁴ Dollinger, *Die Pädagogik der Sozialen Frage*, [393–395]

⁸⁵ Hagen, *Barnevernets historie*, [31]

theoretical self-understanding. The aim was to create a comprehensive conceptual framework for child welfare as an ideational construction and a practical social system.

This effort clearly also included political intentions. The aspiration to promote a national knowledge-informed system of child welfare exemplifies how, in the words of Müller, “scientific concepts can arise in political contexts and their genesis can be connected to political strategies ... be politicized post factum when politics or politicians enlist the reputation of science to legitimize their decisions”⁸⁶. In this sense, the endeavour to develop a science of child welfare was a political mission.

Attempts to introduce child welfare as a conceptual entity were connected with aspirations to pass a particular child welfare law, organise administration for child welfare activities, and develop a logical framework for research and education. The latter intention was closely connected with the idea of child welfare as a specific discipline or – simply – a child welfare science. The notion was that this kind of science, based on questioning of its own, is more significant for the development of the domain than an interdisciplinary composition alone.

The development of theoretical foundations was, of course, of immediate political significance, as key ideologues were key officials and a major role in shaping policies for the development of the sector. Presenting the overall idea of child protection as a logical conceptual framework at least allowed practitioners and policy makers working in the field to have a holistic view of the field. However, it is impossible to show how much they actually benefited from this.

⁸⁶ Ernst Müller, “Introduction: Interdisciplinary Concepts and their Political Significance,” *Contributions to the History of Concepts* 6, no. 2 (2011): 42–52. [52]

In Finland, the central protagonists of child welfare were men, but some women also participated in the ideological development of the field. As the child welfare system consists of several sectors, each of which needs its own key developers, many of the sector-specific key players were women. The structuring of the theoretical foundations was based on a holistic examination, including an effort to combat fragmentation by developing the field as a whole. It was not, in principle, about gender, but about the fact that this perspective was natural for people in key administrative positions, and they were men.

Finnish scholars of the field were inspired by international cooperation. The idea of a special science of child welfare was also favoured in other countries and discussed in the international community of scholars attracted to child welfare. Although the move towards a unified science of child welfare was a transnational and European rather than a particularly Finnish project, the Finnish actors acted primarily on their own initiative, even though inspired by foreign colleagues.

Child welfare was held as a field in its own right, with its own integrated knowledge basis, questions and interests, and a conceptual model was developed to improve comprehension of the new field. The original idea was to create an integrated interdisciplinary entity. After the Second World War, however, the system of child welfare fragmented because of the differentiation of scientific research, the development of special disciplines, diversification of the organisation of child welfare and corresponding professional specialization.

Despite the disintegration of the knowledge basis of modern child welfare, the idea of a monolith whole is particularly evident in the aspiration to develop universal rights of the child and develop interdisciplinary activities in study and practice. This shows that the intellectual history, focusing on the origins and evolution of concepts,

should not be reduced methodologically to social and cultural history as is occasionally contemplated.⁸⁷ Hence, the idea of a science of child welfare is essentially an intellectual entity connected with various other ideas with common abiding intentions and values.

In the Finnish endeavours to build a theory of child welfare and create a scientific basis for the field, the key players highlighted the importance of historical consciousness. Literature was published on the ideas and life of its pioneers along with examples of good practices in the field through the ages, introducing child welfare as a particular tradition of noble aspirations to care for vulnerable children. The intention was not so much to learn from the past, but rather to portray child welfare as a united ideational construction.

Although the view focused on the development of the science base for child welfare in Finland, the study is of wider significance. First, the early conceptual structuring of the science base of child welfare policy provides a kind of universal perspective on the nature of the field. Second, similar efforts to develop a scientific basis for child welfare occurred in other countries and involved diverse international cooperation. Third, the early Finnish protagonists offer vibrant and durable contributions to the conception and development of child welfare as a comprehensive intellectual system.

⁸⁷ Anthony Grafton, "The History of Ideas: Precept and Practice, 1950–2000 and Beyond," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 67, no. 2 (2006): 1–32.