

## Listening to victims

The participatory German reappraisal process of child sexual abuse

Ass.-Prof. Dr. M. Rassenhofer Dubai, December 7, 2022



# "I never imagined that anybody would ever listen to me."

Victim of sexual abuse at the telephonic contact point of the Independent Commissioner



## Berliner Morgenpost

KRIMINALITÄT

## Canisius-Kolleg: Missbrauchsfälle an Berliner Eliteschule

An dem von Jesuiten betriebenen Canisius-Kolleg in Tiergarten sind über Jahrzehnte hinweg Schüler von Lehrern sexuell missbraucht worden. "Mit tiefer Erschütterung und Scham habe ich diese





#### SPIEGEL ONLINE DER SPIEGEL

**Odenwaldschule** 

# Pädagogen teilten "sexuelle Dienstleister" fürs Wochenende ein

Nach der langen Reihe bekanntgewordener Missbrauchsfälle ringt die katholische Kirche um ihre Glaubwürdigkeit. Sie ist jedoch nicht die einzige Institution, die solche Vorkommnisse vertuschte. Jetzt wurden auch an einer bekannten hessischen Privatschule Fälle von sexueller Gewalt bekannt.

#### German reappraisal process since 2010



#### Round Table "Child Sexual Abuse in Relationships of Dependence and Imbalance of Power in Private and Public Institutions and in Families"





Berlin, 21. September 2010. Unter

dem Motto "Sprechen hilft!" startet

die Hnahhängige Beauffragte zur

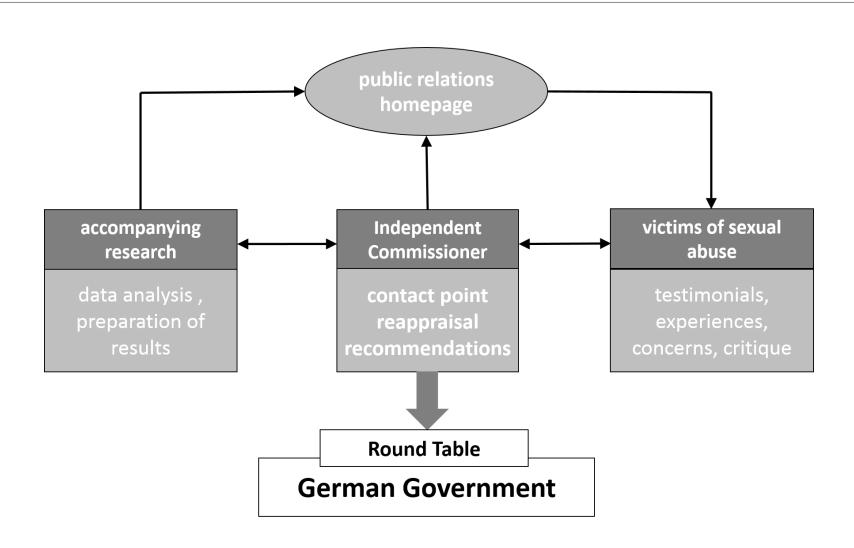
Anlaufstelle vorgestellt. Der

bei der 2. Sitzung des Runden

vollständige Zwischenbericht wird

Independent Commissioner for the Reappraisal of Child Sexual Abuse





#### Media Campaign | "Speaking Helps"



























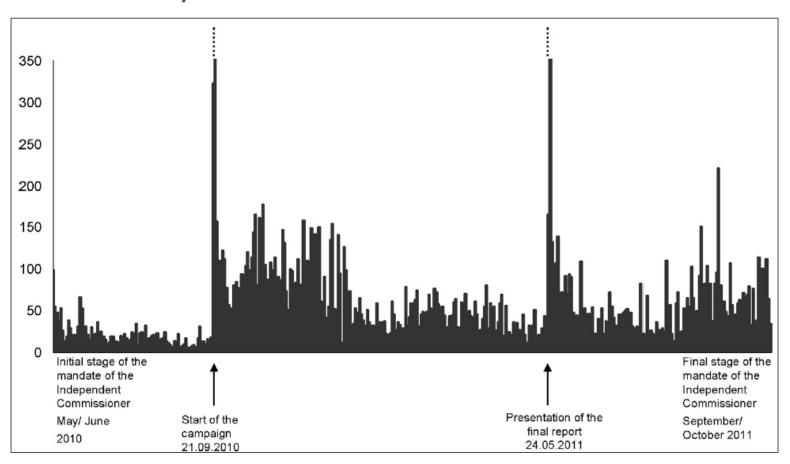


## Media campaign:

- Posters
- Advertisments
- Film clips in TV



### Number of daily calls





#### Helpline "Sexual abuse"

- Offer of the Independent Commissioner
- Germany-wide, free and anonymous contact point
- Focus: Counseling and information transfer
- Accompanying research process since January 2016











#### First project phase (2010 – 2011)

- Web-based template
- Collection during the phone calls or retrospective documentation of information from letters or e-mails
- Free conversations
- Different populations for different aspects
- No suggestion

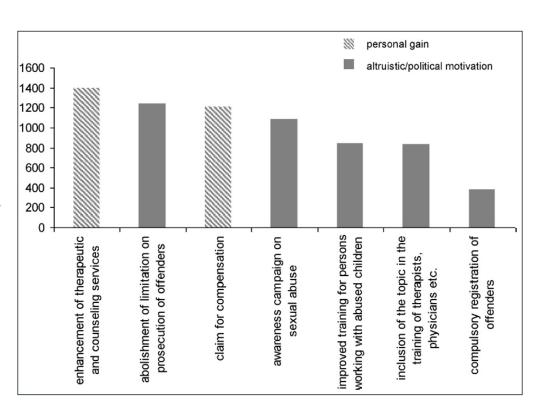
#### Current project phase (since 2016)

- Web-based template
- Collection during the phone calls
- Standardized questions and standardized instrument (Childhood Trauma Questionnaire; CTQ)
- Changing core issues
- Free conversation



### Sample of victims (May 2010 – October 2011)

- N=4,750
- 67% female
- Age M=46 .2 (SD=14.4)
- 90% cases with repeated abuse
- 96% cases with hands-on abuse,
  34% with penetration
- 57.4% intrafamiliar abuse



#### Results | 1<sup>st</sup> Project Phase



#### Kindesmissbrauch Child Abuse & Neglect 37 (2013) 653-663 Contents lists available at ScienceDirect Belastungen durch sexuellen Child Abuse & Neglect Missbrauch und medizinische und therapeutische Behandlung Listening to victims: Use of a Critical Incident Reporting Erfahrungen und Forderungen von Betroffenen System to enable adult victims of childhood sexual abuse to participate in a political reappraisal process in Germany J. M. Fegert<sup>1</sup>; C. Bergmann<sup>2</sup>; N. Spröber<sup>1</sup>; M. Rassenhofer<sup>1</sup> <sup>1</sup>Klinik für Kinder- und Jugendpsychiatrie und Psychotherapie, Universität Ulm; <sup>2</sup>Bundesministerin a Miriam Rassenhofer\*, Nina Spröber, Thekla Schneider, Jörg M. Fegert Unabhängige Beauftragte zur Aufarbeitung des sexuellen Kindesmissbrauchs (URSKM) University Ulm, Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry/Psychotherapy, Steinhoevelstr, 5, 89075 Ulm, German ARTICLE INFO Schlüsselwörter Keywords Sexueller Mis. Spröber et al. BMC Public Health 2014, 14:282 Recent revelations about the scope and severity of past child sexual abuse in German institu tions set off a broad public debate on this issue, and led to the establishment of a politically вмс appointed Round Table committee and an Independent Commissioner whose mandate were to reappraise the issue and develop recommendations for future policies. A media npaign was launched to publicize the establishment of a Critical Incident Reporting tem (CIRS) whereby now-adult victims of past abuse could anonymously provide tes-Gegenstand sexuellen Kin RESEARCH ARTICLE monials and let policy makers know what issues were important to them. Respondent could either call a hotline number or communicate by mail or email. The information col lected was documented and analyzed by a research team, and the results of interim report und Empfehlu Child sexual abuse in religiously affiliated and were included in the recommendations of the Independent Commissioner and the Round childho secular institutions: a retrospective descriptive ing servi financial formationen analysis of data provided by victims in a pendent viese Datend dazu, das Wi government-sponsored reappraisal program a fund fo Governm of child s sexuellen Mis in Germany und Method and other Nina Spröber<sup>1\*</sup>, Thekla Schneider<sup>1</sup>, Miriam Rassenhofer<sup>1</sup>, Alexander Seitz<sup>2</sup>, Hubert Liebhardt<sup>1</sup>, Lilith König<sup>3</sup> durch anonyr ind Jörg M Fegert<sup>1</sup> Gespräch and se: Der Schw genheit liege Background: The disclosure of widespread sexual abuse committed by professional educators and clergymen in ernden Missb institutions in Germany ignited a national political debate, in which special attention was paid to church-run institutions. We wanted to find out whether the nature of the abuse and its effect on victims differed depending Jörg M. Fegert | Miriam Rassenhofer institutionelle Thekla Schneider | Alexander Seitz | on whether the abuse had been experienced in religiously affiliated versus secular institutions Auswirkunger Nina Spröber Methods: In 2010, the German government established a hotline that victims could contact anonymously to der Stichprob describe their experiences of sexual abuse. The information provided by callers was documented and categorized. Erfahrungen Our analysis looked at a subset of the data collected, in order to compare the nature of the abuse experienced at Sexueller dizinisch-ther three types of institutions: Roman Catholic, Protestant, and non-religiously affiliated. Non-parametric tests were used to compare frequency distributions, and qualitative data were analyzed descriptively. ner. Schlussfo Kindesmissbrauch -Results: Of the 1050 victims in our sample, 404 had been in Roman Catholic, 130 in Protestant, and 516 in non-religious Anliegen der institutions. The overall mean age at the time of reporting was 522 years, Males (59.8%) outnumbered females. Victims Zeugnisse, who had been in religiously affiliated institutions were significantly older than those who had been in secular institutions. nach Ausbau Almost half the victims had been abused physically as well as sexually, and most victims reported that the abuse had pie- und Bera Botschaften, occurred repeatedly and that the assaults had been committed by males. Patterns of abuse (time, type, and extent), and the gender of the offenders did not differ between the three groups. Intercourse was more frequently reported by older Konsequenzen rausforderung victims and by females. Similar percentages of victims in all groups reported current psychiatric diagnoses (depression anxiety disorders, PTSD). Significantly more victims from Protestant institutions reported having current psychosocial Betroffener zu Conclusion: The results suggest that child sexual abuse in institutions is attributable to the nature of institutional structures and to societal assumptions about the rights of children more than to the attitudes towards sexuality of a pecific religion. The exploratory data arising from this study may serve as a starting point for building hypotheses, a

Das Bundeskinderschutzgesetz

#### Informationen about

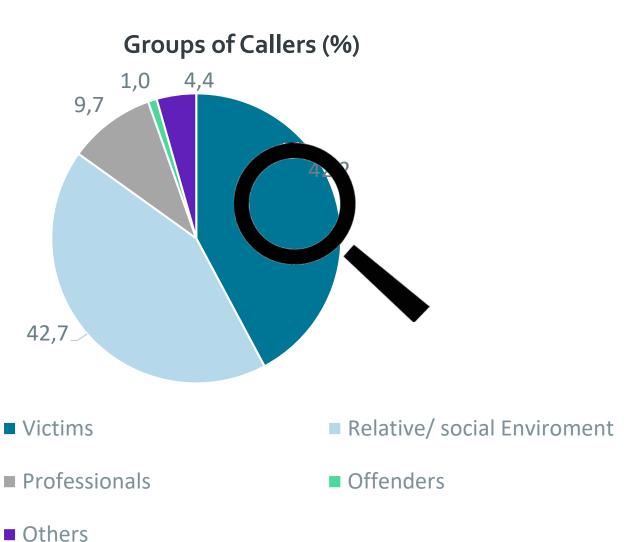
- severe cases of abuse
- High risk populations and rare phenomena
- Consequences of abuse and coping strategies

# Contribution to political and societal consequences

- Nation-wide child protection act
- Law for the strengthening of the rights of victims of sexual abuse
- Sensitization of the society for the issue of sexual abuse

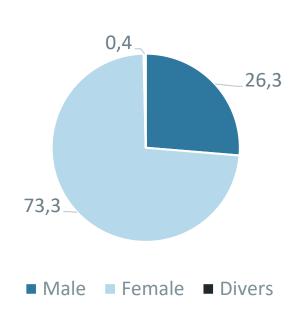
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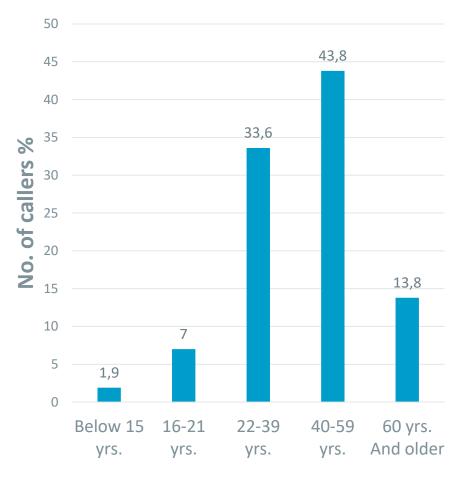






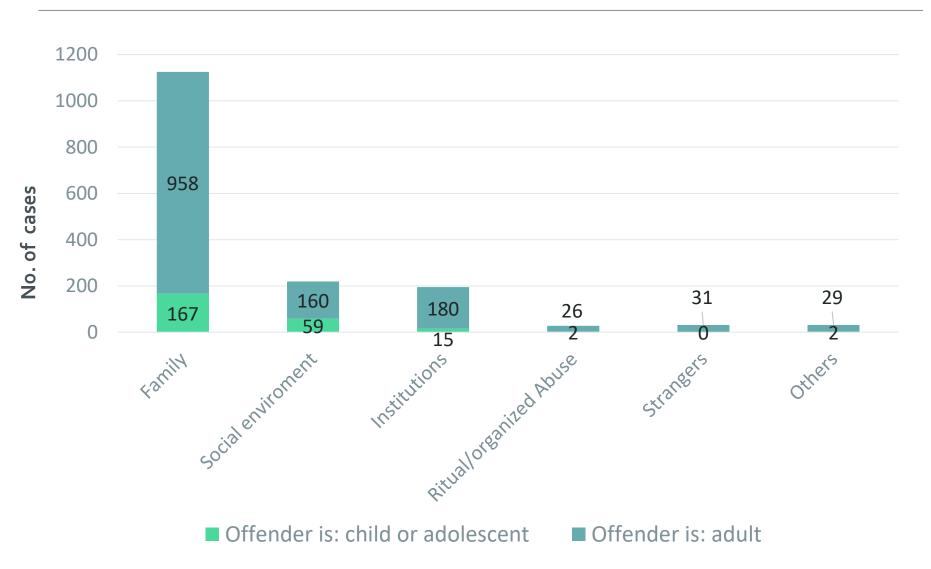
#### Callers who are victims





#### Results | Current project phase

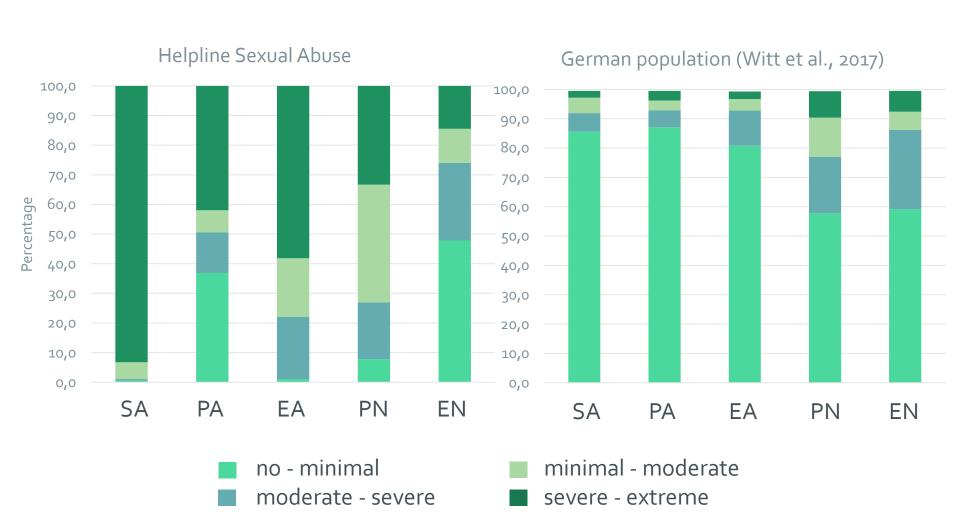




Data source: n=1634 cases reported by victims



#### **Childhood Trauma Questionnaire**





#### Results

- Participation of victims in reappraisal process and research is feasible
- Well accepted by victims
- Deeper insight in the dynamics of sexual abuse and its consequences
- Legal changes
- Sensitization of the society

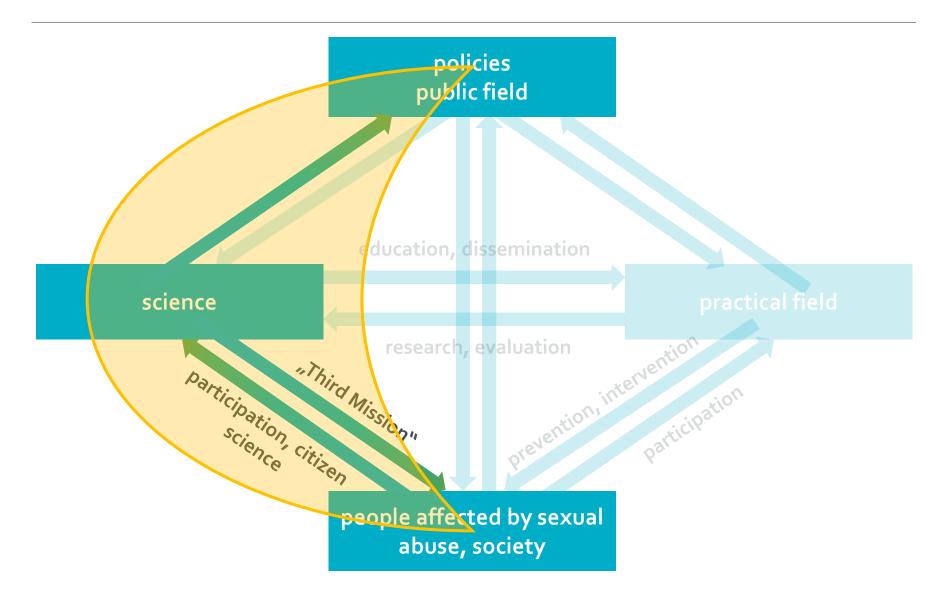
#### Limitations

- Self-selected, biased sample
- "holes" in the data set

#### **Strengths**

- No suggestion effects
- Huge quantity of data
- Information on severe cases, highly burdened individuals, high risk groups, rare phenomena, ...







- Participation of victims and the use of their expertise (,citizen science') is feasible
- Scientific value
- Potential impact on policy making and societal changes
- Participation represents an important aspect of knwoledge transfer in the field of child protection



# "If everybody kept quiet about it, nothing would change."

Victim of sexual abuse at a hearing initiated by the Independent Commission

Thank you for listening.