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Child Sexual Abuse by Catholic Priests, Deacons and Male Members of Religious Orders in the Authority of the German Bishops' Conference

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The aim of the research project is to explore the nature and scope of sexual abuse of minors by catholic priests, deacons and male members of religious orders in the authority of the German Bishops' Conference. Beside a comprehensive longitudinal survey of all cases and suspected cases (taken place between 1945 and 2014) there will also be a scientific analysis of the data archives of the Roman Catholic Church.

The project requires an interdisciplinary approach of different scientific disciplines which includes criminological, psychological, sociological and forensic –psychiatric expertise. The study is module-based and includes the following sub-projects:

1. Gathering the data location and data management practices in terms of sexual abuse cases in the area of the German Bishop Conference
2. Qualitative biographical analysis of people concerned (interviews with victims and offenders)
3. Institutional comparisons
4. Analysis of prevention aspects
5. Secondary analysis of national and international empirical evidence of sexual abuse cases.
6. Quantitative analysis of personnel files

Sub project 1 records current and past practices of data management (e.g. completeness, storage, data protection) of personnel files of the group of people who might have been offenders in terms of child sexual abuse in the dioceses. The primary aim of sub-project 2 is to interview people who were victims (N=100) or offenders (N=70). All participants are requested to describe their individual development before, at the moment and after the abuses have taken place. Furthermore they are asked to describe the experiences from a current point of view, i.e. current importance, present meaning and current manner of dealing with the sexual abuse experiences. In sub project 3 offences of sexual abuse and handling of sexual abuse within the Roman Catholic Church will be compared to offences and handling of sexual abuse in other institutions (e.g. school or sport unions). The comparison will be done by analyzing criminal files. Subproject 4 analyzes prevention programs that have been installed meanwhile. In sub-project 5 all hitherto national and international empirical studies about sexual abuse within the Catholic Church will be analysed. Sub project 6 examines personal files of members of the Catholic Church with regard to evidence of sexual abuse. Data acquisition takes place by using a survey

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questionnaire. This sub-project allows an estimation of the prevalence of sexual abuse of minors by catholic priests.

The project started in July 2014 and will be finished at the end of 2018. The research group consists of the following persons: H. Dressing (project coordinator, Professor of Forensic Psychiatry, H.J. Salize, Professor of Sociology, D. Dölling, Professor of Criminology, D. Hermann, Professor of Sociology, A. Kruse, Professor of Psychology, E. Schmitt, Professor of Psychology.

The study design and preliminary results will be outlined.