Author's response to reviews

Title: Patterns of Child Sexual Abuse in Religiously-affiliated and Non-religiously-affiliated Institutions: Results of the Liaison Office of the Independent Commissioner for Victims in Germany

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Version: 6 Date: 3 February 2014

Author's response to reviews: see over
Cover letter

Child Sexual Abuse in Religiously Affiliated and Secular Institutions: A Retrospective Descriptive Analysis of Data Provided By Victims in a Government-Sponsored Reappraisal Program in Germany

Answers to reviewer 1: Danilo Baltieri

Thank you very much for your encouraging evaluation of our manuscript!

Answer to reviewer 2: Kate Walsh

Thank you again for your critical and constructive feedback. We have addressed your concerns in this revision of the manuscript, as follows:

1. “On page 4, the manuscript acknowledges recovery from abuse but it should also acknowledge resilience/resistance as a significant portion of abuse victims do not develop psychiatric/interpersonal problems.”

We have added a mention of resilience on page 4 and page 10 and have added literature.

2. “On page 9, the manuscript states that factors common to all 3 settings were associated with abuse including group cohesion, hierarchical power structures, etc. this statement must be revised since there is no non-abused comparison group; thus, we cannot discern whether these factors are common to all Germans or just to abuse victims. I would suggest removing this statement in its entirety. A similar statement is made in the conclusions on page 12 and should be removed.“

On p.8 – 10 we have described the framework, nature and methods of our study. Due to your feedback, we have changed the statements on page 9/12. In this revision of the manuscript we have clarified that our results are based on testimonials of victims (results are descriptive!). The nature of our study and the data we have gained does not allow to draw causal conclusions, but can serve as a starting point for building hypotheses. So comparing different groups (e.g. having a group of non–abused adults that were reared in an institution besides to adults that have experienced child sexual abuse) could be the next step in a further study to clarify hypotheses.

3. “I would like to see some discussion of why this study is important given that institutionalization practices seem to be different currently in Germany and cases of abuse in religious institutions have decreased dramatically.”

This is a very good point. The discussion has been expanded (see page 11) to address this.