

Susanna Niehaus\* und Andreas Krause

# Threats to Scientifically Based Standards in Sex Offense Proceedings: Progress and the Interests of Alleged Victims in Jeopardy

## Wissenschaftsorientierung in Sexualstrafverfahren in Gefahr: Fortschritte und Opferinteressen stehen auf dem Spiel

<https://doi.org/10.1515/mks-2023-0018>

**Abstract:** In the past, empirical research findings from psychosciences contributed to avoiding erroneous judgments and decisions in criminal proceedings. However, for some time now, developments have arisen that threaten to reverse the achievement at the turn of the millennium that introduced a clear scientific orientation into sex offense proceedings. This article highlights five retrograde developments and uses three examples to illustrate how these developments can interact and, in particular, offer a purported explanation for a lack of memory of experienced abuse. This creates a breeding ground for the formation of false memories that cause suffering in both psychotherapy and criminal proceedings, and it significantly increases the risk of erroneous decisions in criminal proceedings on sex offenses in German-speaking countries.

**Keywords:** Statement Validity Assessment (SVA), victim protection, visibility of victims, false memory, criminal law for sex offenses

**Zusammenfassung:** Während die Psychowissenschaften in der Vergangenheit mit empirischen Forschungserkenntnissen dazu beigetragen haben, fehlerhafte Beurteilungen und Entscheidungen im Strafverfahren zu vermeiden, gibt es seit einiger Zeit Entwicklungen, welche die Errungenschaft der Jahrtausendwende, dass eine deutliche Wissenschaftsori-

entierung Einzug in das Sexualstrafverfahren hielt, wieder rückgängig zu machen drohen. Fünf rückwärtsgerichtete Entwicklungen werden aufgezeigt. Anhand von drei Beispielen wird illustriert, wie die Entwicklungen zusammenwirken können und insbesondere eine vermeintliche Erklärung für fehlende Erinnerung an erlebten Missbrauch bieten. So entsteht ein Nährboden für die Ausbildung von Scheinerinnerungen, die sowohl in der Psychotherapie als auch im Strafverfahren Leiden verursachen und das Risiko für fehlerhafte Entscheidungen in Sexualstrafverfahren im deutschsprachigen Raum deutlich erhöhen.

**Schlagwörter:** Glaubhaftigkeitsbeurteilung, Opferschutz, Sichtbarkeit des Opfers, Scheinerinnerungen, Sexualstrafrecht

## 1 Introduction

The use of science-based methods in sex offense proceedings reduces the risk of erroneous decisions and thus not only helps to prevent wrongful convictions, but also makes a valuable contribution to victim protection. This article first recalls how the benefits of a scientifically based credibility assessment method came to be recognized within the framework of the judicial disasters in the 1990s. Second, it identifies five developments in recent years that challenge and threaten to reverse these gains and advances. Paradoxically, these developments are being driven primarily by actors who are committed to victim protection and child-friendly justice, but do not seem to reflect that their attacks on scientifically based methods may adversely affect potential victims. The third step uses three examples to illustrate how these developments interact. These five developments indicate that politically influential actors could prevent the use of scientifically based methods in sex offense pro-

\*Corresponding author: Prof. Dr. Susanna Niehaus, Institute of Social Work and Law, School of Social Work, Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts, Lucerne, Switzerland, E-Mail: [susanna.niehaus@hslu.ch](mailto:susanna.niehaus@hslu.ch); <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2183-2549>

Prof. Dr. Andreas Krause, Institute Humans in Complex Systems, School of Applied Psychology, University of Applied Sciences and Arts Northwestern Switzerland, Olten, Switzerland, E-Mail: [andreas.krause@fnw.ch](mailto:andreas.krause@fnw.ch); <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0726-4642>

ceedings in coming years. If this happens, one can expect an increase in erroneous convictions that will also impact negatively on alleged victims.

## 2 Background: Progress in Sex Offense Proceedings Through Scientifically Based Standards of Credibility Assessment

Sexual violence became a public issue during the women's movement of the 1970s when the first counseling centers and women's shelters began operating. The pioneers of this movement brought about major changes. In the 1980s, this was followed by an intensive public debate on child abuse: This not only recognized the extent of the phenomenon and the possible consequences for victims. It also focused more attention on their rights, their protection, and how to reduce their stress in criminal proceedings, and it introduced questions of victim compensation (Barton & Kölbel, 2012; Schwander, 2019). Victims of sexual violence became more visible in society, and that has been a major change for the good. A meta-analysis on the global prevalence of sexual abuse estimated that 15% of girls and 8% of boys are affected (Barth, Bermetz, Heim, Trelle, & Tonia, 2013). The negative effects on victims' health are very well documented (Maniglio, 2009), and the need for action remains great.

In the 1980s and 1990s, societies throughout the world came to experience that a strong focus on the topic of abuse also has dark sides if it is not accompanied by a focus on necessary diligence when investigating suspicions (Fisher, Schreiber Compo, Rivard, & Hirn, 2014). In 1982, the first of a whole series of daycare abuse cases took off in the United States. Within a decade, identical mass allegations of sexual abuse – in the United States, at that time already associated with satanic elements – spread like wildfire across the country. Frances (2013) describes this as a period of collective irrationality, hair-raising miscarriages of justice, and a dismaying failure of civil society, during the course of which people were pressured by well-meaning but misguided professionals into making false statements about alleged experiences. In the German-speaking world, it was particularly the scandal surrounding the so-called Worms trials of 1994 to 1997, which were also a result of using false methods to examine suspicions of sexual abuse, that led the German Federal Supreme Court as well as the Swiss Federal Supreme Court to fundamentally address the psychological methods of credibility assessment in sexual offenses. Assessments

based on polygraphy were rejected and Statement Validity Assessment (SVA) was granted probative value (Steller, 2015, p. 50; see also Berlinger, 2014), and later reaffirmed (Steller, 2020). At the time, today's critics of the method recognized this ruling on standards of psychological credibility assessment as a clear advance (e.g., Bublitz, 2021; Fegert, Gerke, & Rassenhofer, 2018; Haas, 2022).

Because, on the one hand, it is known that professionals still frequently suggest to children and adolescents as well as vulnerable adult clients that they have been abused<sup>1</sup> even though this is not the case (Brewin & Andrews, 2017; Howe, Knott, & Conway, 2018; Korkman, Antfolk, Fagerlund, & Santtila, 2019<sup>2</sup>; Patihis & Pendergrast, 2019; Schemmel & Volbert, 2021), and on the other hand, concepts from the 1980s and 1990s that were thought to have been overcome have been experiencing a renaissance for some time (Gallwitz & Gubi-Kelm, 2022; Greuel, 2022; Steller, 2018, 2020), it is important to reach sound judgments in sex offense proceedings in order to avoid false convictions and a repetition of history. With this in mind, particular attention should be given to the following five factors in the context of sex offenses:

1. Sound training and continuing education of legal professionals ensures that investigative authorities, judges, and the legal profession possess the necessary knowledge to handle sex offense cases. This enables them to engage in, for example, victim-friendly questioning or make appropriate decisions on whether an expert opinion is necessary, which issue is relevant, and which profession is required to answer it.
2. All parties to the proceedings (and particularly also experts) are aware of the rule-of-law principle of presumption of innocence and understand that the aim of criminal proceedings is to determine whether or not a criminal act has taken place.
3. In word-against-word situations without further evidence, it is necessary to assess the credibility of the testimony – with or without the involvement of an expert witness – using scientifically based methods. Given the current state of research, this is a diagnostic

<sup>1</sup> To avoid misunderstandings, it should be noted that this does not mean that professionals intentionally implant memories in their clients. Rather, suggestive processes are often subtle processes that should be understood as a complex interaction between the professional's expectation and a cognitive-affective dynamic on the part of the client. This will be further addressed in section 3.3.

<sup>2</sup> Based on the reports of a representative sample of Finnish adolescents on their own experience of sexual abuse and on unfounded suspicions they had been confronted with, it was determined that the police had to deal with an unintentional false alarm in 41% of the reports of abuse of minors.

procedure called Statement Validity Assessment (SVA; Köhnken & Steller, 1988; Steller & Köhnken, 1989) with its further developments (e.g., Maier, Niehaus, Wachholz, & Volbert, 2018; Niehaus, 2008a; Volbert & Steller, 2014) of this approach (Hohoff, 2020; Steller, 2020). SVA is a diagnostic procedure used to distinguish between experience-based statements, fabricated statements and statements based on a false memory. Whereas the possibility of a fabricated statement is checked by analyzing its quality (SVA takes into account that content quality of statements is influenced by personal and contextual variables), the chronological reconstruction of the creation and development of the statement is used to determine whether it could be a false memory (Volbert & Steller, 2014).

4. Only persons who are not involved in the case in another role (e.g., as a therapist) can serve as expert witnesses. They must also have the necessary forensic expertise to conduct forensic interviews and SVA and be familiar with the current state of research through regular continuing education courses so that they know, for example, the conditions in which false memories can develop (Oeberst, Wachendörfer, Imhoff, & Blank, 2021; Volbert, 2014, 2018) and are aware that interpretations of drawings, play behavior, symptoms, and so forth can have no diagnostic value when investigating a suspicion (Köhnken, 2019). Knowledge of psychopathology (as a standard part of a psychology degree and postgraduate studies) is also required, whereas, in contrast, a psychotherapeutic qualification is not necessary (Okulicz-Kozaryn, Schmidt, & Banse, 2019).
5. It is essential to strictly separate (biased) counseling, care, or therapy from (neutral) questioning and diagnostics in the context of clarifying suspicions (Niehaus, 2018).

Based on the current state of research and case law, these five factors should be self-evident for those involved in sex offense proceedings, and it is to be hoped that they will continue to be taken into account in the future.

### 3 Five Developments That Are Threatening This Progress

The following will show that five developments can be observed that endanger the factors for sound adjudication in sexual offense proceedings outlined in section 2 above, and that, in particular, increase the risk for judicial scandals like those observed in Germany in the 1990s.

#### 3.1 Lack of Training in Germany: Legal Ignorance as a Systematic Source of Error

The training of lawyers in Germany reveals a *first development* that can also be observed in society as a whole: protecting those (in this case, students) who might have personally experienced being victims. The German lawyer Alexander Stevens summed up the problem in an interview for the *Legal Tribune* as follows: »Lawyers have no idea about sex« (Körner, 2016). Anyone studying law in Germany will often learn nothing about criminal law for sex offenses (Odebralski, 2020). In contrast to other countries (e.g., Switzerland), this field of law has been left out of the curriculum in Germany for years in order not to disadvantage students in whom the relevant content might trigger memories of abuse (initial thoughts on how to address this problem: Bublitz, Geneuss, & Rüter, 2022; Bublitz, Geneuss, Rüter, Papenfuß, & Grimm, 2020). The topic is carefully omitted not only in study courses but also in legal clerkships. A side effect of this professionally unjustifiable protection of students from relevant criminal law is also ignorance regarding the subject area of psychological credibility assessment that is so relevant for the evaluation of evidence. This is because psychological credibility assessment in the form of SVA is known to be used only in word-against-word situations in which further evidence is lacking, and thus almost exclusively in sex offense cases (Steller, 2008). According to Odebralski (2020), gaps in knowledge of the substantive law can be filled to a certain extent in self-study with the help of the extensive commentary literature on criminal law for sex offenses. However, in the field of practice, there are pitfalls that can rarely be overcome by reading commentaries and legal textbooks. As an example of such pitfalls, Odebralski (2020, p. 1) mentions the assessment of credibility in word-against-word situations that plays a paramount role in sex offense cases but is blatantly neglected in legal training.

As a result of this systematic promotion of area-specific incompetence, German lawyers are unprepared in practice for the cases of sexualized violence to be judged – and this has major consequences for all involved. Those who have insufficient expertise cannot, for example, recognize in which cases it would be useful or necessary to commission an expert witness, in which specialist field, or which questions could advance the proceedings further, nor can they know how to avoid unnecessary stress during questioning or how knowledge of SVA can be used to evaluate a statement.

In practice, it is already noticeable today that the method is sometimes misunderstood by lawyers and not always implemented appropriately during interrogation and evidence assessment (Deckers, 2019). For example,

analyses of statement quality are sometimes not limited to the diagnostically relevant (i.e., the disputed) part of the statement, but are applied to the entire statement. There is also a tendency to simply tick off characteristics from a checklist without meaningfully weighting them or comparing quality with competence, and to argue inadmissibly about the quality of testimony when its origins are problematic (Deckers, 2019). These mistakes are also made by expert witnesses from time to time (Jansen, 2021). These experts sometimes use SVA rhetoric without applying it correctly, thus making it extremely difficult for laypeople to recognize incorrect procedures without very good legal expertise (Deckers, 2019; Köhnken, 2019; see also Fischer, 2008).

When it comes to the young generation of new lawyers who completely lack training in the relevant area of law, we can anticipate a much higher risk of nonprofessional processing of cases involving sex offenses compared to previous generations. The intuitive attribution of credibility that is then applied replaces valid criteria with considerations of plausibility, and evaluations are based on unusable stereotypes – such as the reputation of the person giving testimony and the emotionality of their presentation (Niehaus, 2008b). Moreover, the lower the expertise, the more that judgments in sex offense law will be shaped by rape myths (Gray & Horvath, 2018; Niehaus, Krüger, & Caviezel Schmitz, 2013; Smith & Skinner, 2017). The main burden of legal ignorance is thus likely to be borne by alleged victims, because their testimony in word-against-word situations is the focus of interest when judging a case. Such a nonexpert psychological assessment would also be expected to systematically disadvantage witnesses with mental or intellectual impairments (Monecke, 2022; Niehaus, 2017; Niehaus, Caviezel Schmitz, & Krüger, 2014; Stiller & Niehaus, 2019).

### 3.2 Unsubstantiated Criticism of SVA by People who Misunderstand this Methodology

The SVA approach has been criticized increasingly in recent years and we see this as the *second development*. More from the legal side, the fear is expressed repeatedly that the actual task of the court is being delegated to »judges in white,« and that the court's freedom to assess evidence will already be restricted in advance by the findings of the expert opinion (e.g., Bublitz, 2021). The error rates for SVA that are also cited in this context (Bublitz, 2021; Makepeace, 2021) refer exclusively to empirical reviews of its application to credibility features in written testimony without context information and information on the person – that

is, without background information that would enable the formulation of hypotheses and without information on linguistic performance, memory performance, experience, or personality characteristics that would enable the comparison of testimonial quality and individual competence that is central to the expert opinion. First, as has been pointed out many times, SVA is not a checklist diagnosis (Greuel, 2001), second, Criteria-Based Content Analysis (CBCA) only serves to falsify the fabrication hypothesis (Volbert & Steller, 2014). However, this fundamental methodological misunderstanding or the misleading equation of SVA with CBCA has been found in publications for almost 30 years now – for example, when it is argued that younger children or persons with intellectual impairment would be disadvantaged by the method (e.g., Fegert et al., 2018; König & Fegert, 2009; critically, e.g., Greuel, 2009; Niehaus, 2017, 2019; Volbert, 2008, 2009; Volbert, Schemmel, & Tamm, 2019).

The same lack of understanding is reflected in the false claim that SVA cannot contribute to clarifying the suggestion hypothesis (e.g., Schoon & Briken, 2019; Wolf, 2019; critically, Steller, 2020). CBCA is known to be used exclusively for testing the fabrication hypothesis. Testing the suggestion hypothesis, in contrast, requires an analysis of the origin and development of the statement (Volbert & Steller, 2014, 2020).

However, what the empirical reviews of CBCA show is, first, its clear superiority over intuitive judgment and, second, that no better truth-finding alternative is currently known internationally (Eickmeier, 2020; Oberlader et al., 2016; Oberlader et al., 2021). The absence of better methods can probably also explain why, despite the years of criticism, no equivalent or more suitable alternative<sup>3</sup> has been proposed so far (Steller, 2020; Volbert, 2018). Instead, the demand for an orientation toward international standards (e.g., Nationaler Rat gegen sexuelle Gewalt an Kindern und Jugendlichen, 2021) suggests that more suitable methods are used in other countries. This is inaccurate (Niehaus, 2019; Volbert, Schemmel, & Tamm, 2019), with Makepeace (2021) even suggesting the use of polygraphy.

<sup>3</sup> The recent proposal by Haas (2022) is also unlikely to solve present problems, especially because, first, it does not distinguish the expert's task from the task of the court. Instead, a significant part of her proposed procedure clearly constitutes an appraisal of evidence, which is the task of the court alone and not of the expert. Second, the author does not seem to realize that SVA is used exclusively in situations in which there is no objective evidence. It is typically concerned only with how a statement refers to experience.

### 3.3 Calling for an Inappropriate Approach to Criminal Proceedings Based on Scientifically Unsubstantiated Claims Regarding Trauma Memories and a Denial of the False Memory Phenomenon

Recent years have seen particularly frequent calls for a psychotraumatological approach. These are based on the argument that SVA is allegedly useless when dealing with traumatized victims (Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend, 2018; Fegert et al., 2018; Fegert & Plener, 2016; Schoon & Briken, 2019). Establishing such an approach also seems to be a central concern in the »Agenda 2022/23« proposed by the Nationaler Rat.<sup>4</sup> The lack of any indication for a need to modify the method in such trauma cases has been argued several times (Greuel, 2022; Petermann & Greuel, 2009; Volbert, 2004, 2018; Volbert, Schemmel, et al., 2019). This section argues that psychotraumatology can, in principle, make no contribution at all to answering the question regarding the reference to experience and thus offers neither an alternative nor an additional assessment perspective.

Scientifically sound psychotraumatological research, in good agreement with findings from research on the psychology of memory and on credibility assessment – and in contrast to the still widespread misconception among clinicians of a specific trauma memory that fundamentally impedes the remembering of traumas – comes to the conclusion that persons with posttraumatic stress disorders (PTSD) *usually suffer from being unable to forget* their experiences. Trauma researcher Ulrike Ehlers summarizes the state of research in this regard in a recent section on information processing in PTSD in *The Oxford Handbook of Traumatic Stress Disorders* as follows:

Complete amnesia for the traumatic event appears to be rare. ... Overall, deficits in trauma memory recall observed in PTSD appear to be subtle and effect sizes are small. Most trauma survivors can verbalize the gist of what happened to them. This contrasts with the extreme formulation of the fragmentation hypothesis by van der Kolk and Fissler (1995). (Ehlers, Ehring, Wittekind, & Kleim, 2022, pp. 382–383; see also Ehlers, Ehring, & Kleim, 2012)

The supposed antagonism between memory research and psychotraumatology is constructed in narrative discourse with reference to popular scientific contributions and is not supported by empirical evidence (Greuel, 2022, p. 65). Hence, the *third development* is about how scientifically un-

founded concepts are nonetheless increasingly demanding to exert influence on criminal proceedings. Thus, in practice, on the one hand, the concept of an alleged specific trauma memory (van der Kolk & Fissler, 1995), and on the other hand, the fact that the false memory phenomenon is denied (Breitenbach, 2011; Kavemann, Graf-van Kesteren, Rothkegel, & Nagel, 2016) are particularly problematic (see also Gallwitz & Gubi-Kelm, 2022; Niehaus, 2019).

Although the hypothesis of a specific trauma memory has been refuted by psychotraumatological research as well as by findings on the psychology of memory (Ehlers et al., 2022; Geraerts, 2010; Greuel, 2022; Otgaar et al., 2019; Otgaar, Howe, & Patihis, 2022; Rohmann, 2017, 2018; Sommer & Gamer, 2018; Volbert, 2011, 2018), clinicians stubbornly hold onto this idea (see also Otgaar et al., 2019; Schemmel & Volbert, 2021). This could be related to the fact that the extensive popular trauma literature declares the absolute exception of a complete lack of memory to be the rule, contrary to empirical findings (Rohmann, 2018), and provides a simple, intuitively plausible, and descriptive, if not accurate, explanatory model for this. However, this idea requires the assumption that psychopathological symptoms are purportedly an expression of nonremembered traumatization, and, in this way, it often forms the starting point for (auto-)suggestive processes (Volbert, Schemmel, et al., 2019).

In recent years, there are vehement demands to apply the psychotraumatological perspective to credibility assessments (e.g., Fegert et al., 2018; Fegert & Plener, 2016; Gysi, 2021; Igney & Ehmke, 2016). Even the approach, which is at least implicitly evident in these demands of regularly assuming the presence of traumatization in persons to be questioned must be regarded as extremely problematic in light of the need to conduct forensic assessments from a neutral standpoint without prior assumptions (Niehaus, 2018). This is because the primary purpose of criminal proceedings is to find out whether the traumatic experience in question has occurred (Rohmann, 2014). Psychotraumatology, however, cannot contribute anything at all to answering the expert opinion question, because first, there is a great heterogeneity of responses to trauma (Galatzer-Levy & Bryant, 2013) and by far not every victim of sexual violence develops a trauma-related disorder (Kessler et al., 2017); second, the symptoms can be feigned (e.g., Stevens & Merten, 2007); and finally, traumatized victims and persons with false memories cannot be distinguished clinically (Volbert, 2011, 2018). Inferring the presence of a specific past traumatization from present disorders is in any case inadmissible (Bryant, 2023; on the problem of PTSD diagnosis in preliminary proceedings, see Rohmann, 2014). This also applies to references to dissociative identity disorder that

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.nationaler-rat.de/fileadmin/user\\_upload/dokumente/agenda\\_nationaler\\_rat\\_2022-2023\\_.pdf](https://www.nationaler-rat.de/fileadmin/user_upload/dokumente/agenda_nationaler_rat_2022-2023_.pdf)

are used increasingly as an argument against SVA (Daber & Müller, 2022; Greuel, 2022; Lynn et al., 2022).

On this point, therefore, a difference in attitude seems to manifest in practice between forensic and clinical perspectives (Niehaus, 2018). If this argumentation is now adopted on the political level and a psychotraumatological approach is demanded in criminal proceedings (Nationaler Rat gegen sexuelle Gewalt an Kindern und Jugendlichen, 2021), then it is necessary to carefully weigh up the possible effects of these differences in attitude on case processing and the expected consequences for the alleged victims and the proceedings (Tavris & Aronson, 2016) – particularly with regard to the interest of the alleged victim, for whom the desired changes should lead to an improvement. Ethically defensible are only diagnostic examinations that are relevant for answering the assessment question, the diagnostic process is to be limited to what is necessary (Hänert, 2014). Apart from the increased coordination effort of a possible interdisciplinary assessment, which would lead to higher costs and a longer duration of proceedings, a psychotraumatological assessment is not advisable due to the lack of expected knowledge gain as outlined above.

Because the prior assumption of the existence of traumatization and the biased stance associated with it are known to contribute decisively to suggestive questioning and decision-making behavior (Posch & Kemme, 2021; Schemm & Köhnken, 2008), one would subsequently expect that conditions for the development of false memories would not be recognized due to the erroneous assumption that it is normal to first have to gain access to the memory for significant life events through therapy. False memories can then become established through confirmatory expert opinions. It is scientifically beyond question that false memories can be induced in psychotherapies (Brewin & Andrews, 2017; Howe et al., 2018; Lynn, Krackow, Loftus, Locke, & Lilienfeld, 2015; Ost, Easton, Hope, French, & Wright, 2017; Patihis, Otgaar, Lynn, Loftus, & McNally, 2023; Volbert, 2018).

Whereas the presumption of innocence and the rights of the accused are frequently and justifiably argued in connection with the topic of suggestion (e.g., Fegert et al., 2018), the consequences for alleged victims, whose mental health can be severely and permanently affected by false memories, are hardly ever discussed by psychotraumatologists (see also Niehaus, 2019). Moreover, quite a few practitioners of this approach even describe false memories as an invention of pedophile-friendly credibility experts that is intended to protect offenders and discredit victims. Kave-  
mann et al. (2016) (see also Breitenbach, 2011, 2019) express this particularly impressively: »The effort to deny the extent of sexual abuse adapted itself repeatedly to the state of knowledge and research and reached a new peak with the

thesis of falsified or induced memories« (p. 10, translated from German). In addition to ignoring a body of suggestion research that has been around for 20 years, this statement is also striking in the way it discredits those who practice SVA.

Sporer and Antonelli (2022) recently reflected on how the problem of rediscovered false memories has become so persistent in therapies in Germany (see also Shaw & Vredeveltdt, 2019). In a survey of 235 German psychotherapists, Schemmel and Volbert (2021) found that one in five assumed that it was the task of psychotherapy to uncover inaccessible memories of traumatic experiences. This misconception gives rise to a considerable risk of iatrogenic false memories. In Germany, there is also a relatively high density of practitioners of psychotraumatology who not only enjoy publishing but are also active in further training. They act as multipliers of beliefs that are extremely questionable from a professional point of view and dangerous for patients – beliefs that can be attributed to a conspiracy narrative. What is worse, these teachings were supported by the former Independent Commissioners of the German Federal Government for Questions of Sexual Child Abuse (UBSKM), Dr. Christine Bergmann and Wilhelm Rörig, and thus disseminated on behalf of the German government for more than 10 years. We shall turn to this development in the next section.

### 3.4 Conspiracy Narrative: Mind Control Through Targeted Personality Splitting and Control of Personality States by Specially Trained Offenders

As a *fourth development*, we see an exaggeration of the lack of a scientific orientation in an orientation toward conspiracy narratives. Conspiracy narratives are self-contained explanatory systems that are fundamentally inaccessible for empirical testing – that is, they cannot be falsified, because the circularity of the argumentation implies that everything remains explainable in terms of the model. This includes the assertion that internationally networked offenders in central positions who cover up for each other deliberately induce a personality split in their victims so that they can then control them remotely. Moreover, they also do this in order to cover up their deeds by activating a personality state that does not know about these offenses if, for example, interrogated by the police (e.g., Breitenbach, 2011; Fliß, 2012; Gysi, 2021; Igney, 2022; Mauz, 2020; Miller, 2014).

There is no question that there are perpetrators who manipulate their victims, but given the current state of research, the assertion that certain sex offenders are capable

of deliberately inducing personality splits in their victims in order to then specifically control their personality states must be regarded as scientifically untenable. There is neither a scientific theory on how this concept called »mind control« is supposed to be implemented, nor any serious empirical evidence for such a psychological technique (LEXPERIENCE, 2022). Despite self- and third-party-declared victims and decades of international investigative efforts, there is no criminalistic evidence (Dessecker, 2020; Schneider & Wanner, 2022) for a phenomenon that these authors (e.g., Fliß, 2012; Gysi, 2021) assume to exist contrary to all scientific standards. The lack of evidence is explained, in turn, through a perfect concealment of these crimes and a networking of influential members of the police, judiciary, and politics (e.g., Breitenbach, 2011; Igney, 2022). Tschan (2019, 2020; see also Gysi, 2022) also suggests that alleged cases are not prosecuted and registered because ritual violence is not a specific criminal offense. This argumentation is incomprehensible insofar as regularly alleged acts such as rape, murder, and kidnapping in this context would, of course, be punishable, would be prosecuted, and would therefore also have to be documented along with their context (Dessecker, 2020).

Overall, the preceding arguments show clear characteristics of a conspiracy narrative. Protagonists of this mind-control concept who are particularly prominent in German-speaking countries are individual psychiatrists, trauma therapists, and social scientists (Breitenbach, 2011, 2019; Fliß, 2012; Fliß & Igney, 2010; Igney, 2022; Gysi, 2021; Huber, 2023; Schröder, Behrendt, Nick, & Briken, 2020). Adherents of the conspiracy narrative refer in continuing education, supervision, and sometimes even in academic texts to the German-language translation of the book *Healing the Unimaginable: Treating Ritual Abuse and Mind Control* by Alison Miller (2011, German edition 2014, published, like many of these articles, by Asanger Verlag) that, in addition to a satanic calendar and extensive reports by her clients, which, of course, are not questioned with regard to their relation to reality, contains detailed instructions for therapists on how to uncover ritual abuse that their clients are unable to remember, but which the therapists suspect on the basis of the list of symptoms<sup>5</sup> that is also included in the book.

<sup>5</sup> Examples are much red and black coloring or body parts in drawings as well as contacts with other survivors of ritual violence, decompensation on satanic holidays, anxiety, speech, and sleep disorders, or learning problems. Miller (2011) refers here characteristically to »symptom lists« that were distributed in further training courses on ritual abuse during the 1980s and 1990s – that is, at the time of the widespread allegations in the United States. She adds that even the absence of »sym-

Research by investigative reporters working for Swiss television has shown that those adhering to this belief include teachers, employees of counseling centers for victims of sexual violence, representatives of the police and politicians, and, above all, psychotherapists and prominent psychiatrists (Rehmann & Stämpfli, 2021, 2022). One of the latter is psychiatrist Werner Tschan, who, as an expert in psychotraumatology, was consulted by the Swiss Federal Office of Justice as an advisor for the recent revision of the Swiss Sexual Offences Act (Kohler, 2022) and also assisted the German government from 2010 to 2011 as an expert of the German government's Extended Round Table in Berlin on the prevention of sexual abuse (Tschan, 2019).

Narratives about ritual violence and mind control are taught in further training courses for, among others, therapists. A recent independent investigation report commissioned by the canton of Thurgau on conditions in the trauma wards of the psychiatric clinic Littenheid came to the following conclusion on some of the content of a further training course taught to the staff there by Claudia Fliß:

On 65 slides, Fliß unfolds a mystical scary fairytale world with fantasy figures (guardians, programmers and head programmers, node personalities), horror figures (murderers, robots, cult figures) and a completely fantastic narrative of omnipotent perpetrators. ... Not only from a scientific perspective, but even with common sense alone, the content of the presentation is to be called gross nonsense. (LEXPERIENCE, 2022, p. 15 translated from German)<sup>6</sup>

However, this report as well as another report investigating a clinic in Bern and further research by Rehmann and Stämpfli (2023) show that these concepts, rightly called gross nonsense, were incorporated into the treatment of seriously ill patients. Therapists with such beliefs pose a danger to their patients because of the professional authority attributed to them by psychological laypersons. These are particularly vulnerable and highly susceptible to their therapists' interpretive proposals because of their psychological distress and their motivation for therapy. If one suggests to these vulnerable persons that an omnipresent group of offenders can still access them at any time via mind control even in the clinic, not only the risk of a false memory but also that of suicide is likely to increase significantly.

Many readers will be surprised to learn that the bizarre-seeming *fourth development* described in this section was even promoted by the German government. For example, there was an expert group titled *Sexualisierte*

ptoms« does not indicate that one is not dealing with a victim of ritual violence.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.tg.ch/public/upload/assets/137238/Untersuchungsbericht.pdf?fp=1>

*Gewalt in organisierten und rituellen Gewaltstrukturen* [Sexualized violence in organized and ritual violence structures] whose report contains clear elements of the conspiracy narrative (written by Igney & Kreyerhoff; published by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth; Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend, 2018). Among other things, page 5 of the report contains the following definition:

Structures of organized and ritual violence can involve extensive control and exploitation of people through mind-control methods. The systematically repeated use of severe violence forces ... a deliberate splitting of the child's personality. The resulting parts of the personality are trained and used for specific purposes. The goal of this systematic training is an inner structure that can be controlled by the perpetrators at any time and for which the child and later the adult have no conscious memory in everyday life. (translated from German)

The standard reference from the Ministry that this expert group have sole responsibility for the content does not change the impression for outsiders that these accounts were prepared on behalf of the government. The National council to counter sexual violence toward children and adolescents [Nationaler Rat gegen sexuelle Gewalt an Kindern und Jugendlichen] (2021) adopted the above definition, reaffirming the idea of »exploitation of people through mind-control methods« (p. 80). Also, the Swiss politician Samuel Kullmann explicitly refers to the supposed role model of Germany: »What sounds like a ›conspiracy theory‹ to many people is recognized by the government of the Federal Republic of Germany as reality. This is a first and important step« (Kullmann, 2020, p. 126, translated from German). Moreover, research on this topic has been funded through German federal grants. This will be discussed in more detail in section 4.2.

### 3.5 Attacks on SVA as Being Fundamentally Hostile to Victims Because it Questions Their Testimony

A *fifth development* involves the categorical rejection of the approach of systematically investigating alternative explanations (counter-hypotheses) in order to answer the question whether the statement of the alleged victim can be explained in any other way than as being based on real experience. Here, the very idea that, in the context of criminal proceedings, a person's statement that she or he has been the victim of a sexual offense should be examined neutrally is perceived as a violation of the moral obligation to believe an alleged victim of sexualized violence in every case.

Up to now, this radical demand has rarely been stated explicitly in scientific papers. However, such suggestions have been found for quite some time in popular scientific sources – suggestions that are difficult to reconcile with basic principles of the rule of law. One example is the aforementioned psychiatrist Tschan's (2019, 2020) call for clear partisanship on the part of prosecuting authorities in sexual offense cases. For example, in an article he authored for the anthology published by CARA, *Das Schweigen brechen. Rituelle Gewalt mitten in unserer Gesellschaft* [Breaking the silence: Ritual violence in the midst of our society], Tschan (2020) states: »Actually, the judiciary is called upon to proceed in a partial manner in cases of sexualized violent offenses ...« (p. 60, translated from German).

Wirtz (2005) even increased the moral pressure on those who do not automatically accept a memory of abuse as genuine by drawing a parallel with Holocaust denial. Nijenhuis (2018) called for: »laws to be formulated and passed that ... prohibit society and its citizens from ignoring or emotionally controlling the problem« (p. 501, translated from German). According to Nijenhuis (2018), »emotional control« refers to the belief that patients might report false memories. »Emotional control« is also being practiced when suggesting that therapists might create these states through suggestion (p. 498).

Igney and Ehmke (2016, p. 71, translated) even called explicitly for a »clear prohibition on the use of SVA,« arguing that the approach is »hostile to victims.« The Weisse Ring (2021) and the Betroffenenrat [Victims Council] of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse in Germany (Unabhängige Kommission zur Aufarbeitung sexuellen Kindesmissbrauchs, UBSKM, 2020) also called for a fundamental ban on SVA when prosecuting acts of abuse.

Against the backdrop of this fifth development, the public prosecutor's office of a major German city rejected the call for an expert opinion on an alleged victim on the grounds that obtaining a SVA on the testimony was already tantamount to a violation of the Istanbul Convention, because – with reference to inappropriate literature in this regard (Fegert et al., 2018; for a methodological critique Steller, 2020; Volbert, Schemmel, et al., 2019) – reinterrogating the witness could lead to retraumatization and secondary victimization. Those who do not want to give victims false hope would do well to encourage them to have realistic expectations and to differentiate carefully between the avoidable and the unavoidable stress of criminal proceedings (Volbert, 2012). Interviews with people working in the field of victim counseling indicate that, regardless of numerous efforts to strengthen victims' rights in the proceedings and a steady expansion of support, they may be unrelievedly dissatisfied, because diffuse ideals have been

induced that cannot be realized at all under the rule of law (Volbert, Skupin, & Niehaus, 2019).

For the courts, the question that will always have to be answered in the individual case is whether a statement could have been generated in any other way than by an actual reference to experience (Volbert, 1995, 2010, 2022). For this purpose, alleged victims will have to testify on the merits of the case, and there will always have to be the possibility of granting the accused the right to ask questions, and it will always have to be examined whether the statements of the alleged victim are so convincing that a conviction can be reached without a doubt. Central burdens of victims – which, by the way, are not to be equated with secondary victimization (Barton & Kölbel, 2012; Volbert, 2012) – can thus not be circumvented at all, because the re-examination of what happened in the context of a thorough assessment of the provability of an accusation remains unavoidable – with or without SVA (Volbert, Schemmel, et al., 2019).

## 4 Interactions Between These Developments and Their Consequences

The outlined developments can be embedded in the considerations of Wieviorka (2006). He pointed out that

the presence of the victim in the public sphere can also promote aberrations if it perverts: Victims and their relatives can exert pressure on the judicial apparatus to judge according to their convictions and not on the basis of clear evidence. They can obscure the truth and put pressure on judges in a misleading way either directly or with the help of the media that are always ready to arouse or exploit emotions. ... We have entered the era of the victim, and we must avoid disregarding their point of view just as much as making it the be-all and end-all of any political, legal, or intellectual consideration. (Wieviorka, 2006, pp. 106–107, translated from German)

The author cautions that fixating on the victim can contribute to a weakening of the state by emotionalizing the political debate to the detriment of any rational analysis of the facts. Patihis et al. (2023) show that the emotionalization of the debate has arrived in science. Thus, the unscientific concept of trauma memory can no longer be openly criticized. They report an academic atmosphere of victimhood elevation and that it is becoming increasingly more difficult to train students in open-minded skepticism on this topic. If this development continues, great harm will continue to be done in recovered memory therapies (Patihis et al., 2023).

In the following, we shall use three final examples from Germany as well as from Switzerland to show how irrationality is replacing rational analysis and how the five developments highlighted in section 3 partly reinforce each other.

### 4.1 Irrationality Instead of Rational Analysis: »Attacking the Null Hypothesis«

The fifth development (section 3.5) is expressed in a fundamental criticism of the principle of examining alternative explanations for the existence of an alleged victim's testimony (counter-hypotheses). This is coming from circles that want to replace SVA without being able to offer any well-founded alternative (this refers to the development in section 3.3) and who apparently do not want to understand the methodology at all (here there is a reference to the development in section 3.2). The fundamental criticism becomes clear, for example, in a publication by the National council to counter sexual violence toward children and adolescents [Nationaler Rat gegen sexuelle Gewalt an Kindern und Jugendlichen] from 2021, which states that from the point of view of the Betroffenenrat [Victims Council], »the practice of assessment on the basis of the null hypothesis ... should be put to the test« (p. 70, translated from German). The unwillingness to understand is exemplified, among other things, by the constant misunderstanding of the term »null hypothesis« when, for example, Fegert (2018, 2019) claims consistently that the null hypothesis would mean that »the participant's statement is untrue« (Fegert, 2018, p. 24, translated from German). Fegert's argumentation has been contradicted several times in a differentiated way (Bublitz, 2021; Greuel, 2009, 2022; Steller, 2020; Volbert, 2009). Interestingly, Fegert has never addressed the expert criticism of his statements on this aspect as well as other misunderstandings of the method. Instead, he simply repeats his claims. Accordingly, a report by the German child welfare organization Deutsches Kinderhilfswerk argued: »The starting point of the assessment by the court or by the expert appointed is ... the so-called null hypothesis (»The testimony of the questioned child is untrue«)« (Hoffmann & Yalcin, 2019, pp. 24–25, translated from German).

Criticism of the principle of systematically investigating and falsifying alternative explanations reveals the following argumentation strategy (e.g., UBSKM, 2020, pp. 11–13, translated from German):

1. Commencing with a demand that puts the best interests of the child centerstage (e.g., reduce stress for victims, think from the child's perspective) and basically sounds justified.

2. Quotations from victims are used to show how they suffered from having their statements questioned («That was really harsh» UBSKM, 2020, p. 11). *Exclusively statements by potential victims whose credibility was judged negatively are selected here. No reference is made to the fact that, rationally speaking, the critics cannot judge whether the victim is objectively a victim. Nor is any reference made to the fact that at the beginning of an expert opinion in word-against-word situations, no objective evidence is available and experts are commissioned precisely in order to deliver an open-ended expert opinion and to avoid errors in the criminal proceedings.*
3. The null hypothesis is emphasized and misleadingly interpreted as indicating that experts regard victims as liars who have to prove that they are not lying («Because the court-appointed assessor began with having hypotheses all assuming that I'm not telling the truth,»<sup>7</sup> UBSKM, 2020, p. 11). *Here, no reference is made to the fact that experts have to be neutral and open-ended in their role. There must be no prior assumption that witnesses are lying. This claim is misleading insofar as the ruling of the German Supreme Court (BGH) formulated lying as a possibility and not as a fact.*
4. This is used to claim that the examination of counter-hypotheses must be abolished in order to protect the victim. *However, no reference is made here to the fact that, thought through rationally to the end, this would mean a conviction on demand.*

The desired emotional reaction in the target audience leads to approval for this approach, because it addresses fast, emotional thinking and not slower, logical thinking (Kahneman, 2012). The simple hint that the null hypothesis stands for the open-mindedness of experts is ignored by the critics, because their criticism is designed to abolish the open-mindedness and impartiality of experts without having to state this explicitly. Thus, instead of explicitly demanding that experts exercise partiality to victims, the detour of emotionalizing the debate is chosen, so that the respective target group in lectures (e.g., Fegert, 2018, 2019) or reports in the political context (e.g., Hoffmann & Yalcin, 2019; Nationaler Rat gegen sexuelle Gewalt an Kindern und Jugendlichen, 2021) will classify the open-ended approach as hostile to victims and reprehensible: Victims are allegedly – according to the null hypothesis – considered

<sup>7</sup> This statement is hardly likely to refer to the assessment situation, but rather to the written report. The rather absurd idea suggested here is that experts would begin their exploratory interview with an explanation of their counter-hypotheses. This would be at least neither useful nor a common practice.

liars, and experts are not neutral but assume that victims are not telling the truth (UBSKM, 2020, p. 11–13). Quotations from victims are used to emotionalize and elegantly suggest a need for action without naming the inevitable consequences. This line of reasoning is likely to be intuitively appealing to many readers who are not familiar with the processes of sex offense proceedings. The statement lends itself well to deliberately emotionalizing the debate in order to achieve political goals – a strategy commonly seen in the area of the laws governing sex offenses (Elz, 2022). If one thinks this argumentation through to the end, the only option that remains is the principle of »guilty on suspicion« or as UBSKM commissioner Rörig put it: »in case of doubt, for the victim« (UBSKM, 2020, p. 23, translated from German). This is incompatible with our current legal systems. However, only under this premise, could alleged victims be spared from having to make a statement and having their testimony questioned.

#### 4.2 The Infiltration of Science by the Irrational: »Ritual Violence and Mind Control«

The fourth development (section 3.4) was about the conspiracy narrative. In the following, we shall show how this narrative has become widespread even in academia, and we shall illustrate this with the publications of a group of researchers led by Briken, who were commissioned by the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse in Germany (UBSKM, 2021) to research the extent of ritual violence in Germany. Organized ritual violence is defined as violence with an ideological or religious justification or meaning by, for example, satanist or fascist groups, sects, or cults. In its academic publications (e.g., Nick, Schröder, Briken, & Richter-Appelt, 2019), the research team refers to Alison Miller's (2014) book on mind control – that is, a central work of the conspiracy narrative mentioned in Section 3.4. The influence of Miller (2014) is evident in a study conducted by the research group, the results of which have been published several times (UBSKM, 2021). In the instructions for the questionnaire, participants are first given an introduction to Miller's perspective:

In the context of organized and/or ritual violence, victims report various forms of consciousness splitting and manipulation. They describe how extreme applications of violence in childhood and adolescence split their developing personality into different states. The resulting personality states were specifically trained and used by the perpetrators for their own purposes. In this study, we call this form of control and exploitation mind control. ... The study director, Professor Dr. Peer Briken, is a member of the Inde-

pendent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse in Germany. The study is funded by a grant from the Independent Commissioner on Child Sexual Abuse (UBSKM). (unpublished questionnaire, translated from German)

Such instructions have a high suggestive potential especially for vulnerable individuals that are specifically targeted by this methodological approach. Participants read the suggestive instructions before being asked

The following questions are mainly about when you experienced organized and/or ritualistic violence, how you became aware of this, and to whom you may have shared your experiences with ...  
From what age did you experience organized/ritual violence?  
(unpublished questionnaire, translated from German)

The research group initially suggests the existence and significance of a phenomenon before asking respondents to state from what age they have experienced it themselves. There is not even an answer option that one has not experienced this violence at all. Thus, high approval ratings are generated artificially solely by the methodological procedure. This is probably intended (Schmied-Knittel, 2008); at least, it shows that the authors are so caught up in confirmatory processes that they do not notice the massive methodological errors. Another critical aspect of the study is the mixing together of real and questionable phenomena. Those who deal with organized violence in a scientific context should distinguish between phenomena that unquestionably exist (e.g., child pornography rings, sexual abuse in the church) and those phenomena whose existence (e.g., satanic perpetrator circles that remotely control children via targeted personality splitting and mind control) must be considered improbable from any neutral scientific perspective based on the current state of knowledge. However, Nick, Schröder, Briken, and Richter-Appelt (2018) refer to the work of Miller (2014), in which detailed accounts of blood sacrifices at specific dates of the satanic calendar and also of targeted personality splittings are reported in order to make the victims controllable and, for example, to use them as breeding machines with the help of which infants are bred and then born, raped, killed and eaten on specific festivals, as determined by the satanic calendar.

With its questionable methodological procedure, the research group succeeds in classifying scientifically extremely unlikely phenomena as very probable: 48.5% of the respondents reported having been victims of satanic perpetrator circles and approximately 85% reported a targeted splitting of their personality by perpetrators (Nick et al., 2018). Hence, Nick et al. (2018) seem to be scientifically confirming the professionally highly questionable basic idea of an organized and targeted personality splitting and

remote control of individuals, and they publish this repeatedly, although from a methodological point of view, their findings have no validity at all. This is how scientists with a research mandate from the German government contribute to spreading unscientific concepts and supporting them with seemingly scientific evidence. Unscientific concepts are also gaining in importance in the scientific context in other countries (Patihis et al., 2023).

Nick et al.'s (2018) conclusions claim to describe a real phenomenon, but they do not take into account which persons they might have addressed with their method of collecting data. The methodologically critical issue of an external criterion for the reality content of the data is basically dismissed in both this and other publications by arguing that one is not getting involved in the question of credibility, that one is merely describing a phenomenon, and that one wants to give the victims a voice. However, this is exactly what is not being done. The claim that one wants to describe a real phenomenon implies that one considers the data to be fully based in reality. In other words, the question of credibility is not being left out of the equation. Instead, the research team seems to be aiming to confirm as large a number of victims as possible in order to prove the social significance of an unconfirmable phenomenon (see also Schmied-Knittel, 2008).

Last but not least, the consequences of their own assertions are not reflected (Nick et al., 2018). For vulnerable and thus more suggestible groups of people, this supposedly scientific evidence can lead both directly (via autosuggestion) and indirectly (e.g., mediated via therapists who feel supported by such publications in their assumption of the existence of such a mass phenomenon and induce false memories in supposed victims by letting their clients sense these beliefs) to the formation of false memories. And this is being done by persons who are arguing in the name of victim protection, but unreflectively causing great damage. Here there is a relation to the development in section 3.3 (the possibility of suggestions is not seen). An example will illustrate this in the following.

### 4.3 Irrationality in Practice: The Case of Nathalie from Switzerland

The third example is a case that received media attention in Switzerland and can be assigned to the development in section 3.4 – that is, it is integrated into a conspiracy narrative. The example also shows references to developments in sections 3.2, 3.3 and 3.5.

All content on the »Nathalie case« mentioned here is taken from publications. The summary overview is taken

from an article by Kohler (2022), supplemented by referring to further – without exception – publicly accessible sources. A work authorized by the child's mother (Wahrberg, 2022), available in bookstores since the end of October 2022, reveals that a couple belonging to Nathalie's mother's support group handed over the entire case files with her consent to a journalist from a high-circulation Swiss newspaper, the *Basler Zeitung*, who has since been dismissed. The Swiss Press Council (No. 88/2020) condemned the actions of the journalist, who had posted video and audio recordings of the girl, on which she was easily identifiable, on the internet. The Council<sup>8</sup> saw the publication of highly confidential conversations between a child and her therapist about sexual violence suffered at the hands of her father as a blatant violation of the principles of journalistic ethics.

The case is as follows: The parents of 7-year-old Nathalie had been fighting over custody for years. Nathalie's mother finally accused her father of sexual abuse and demanded that he should be deprived of joint custody, saying that he once took her daughter to a nude beach, showed her his genitals, and that Nathalie always had to go to the bathroom with her father. As evidence for her accusations, she submitted to the prosecution the first of several, still to follow, articles in the *Basler Zeitung* from October 2019 on the »Nathalie case.« The public prosecutor's office began investigating the father on suspicion of multiple sexual acts with a child. Parallel to the ongoing investigations, letters with new details about the alleged assaults arrived at the prosecutor's office over a period of months. According to the child's mother, Nathalie often started talking before going to bed in the evening about how she has been abused and beaten half to death by her father. The descriptions became more drastic from day to day. Most recently, the submitted »interview transcripts« written by the girl's mother and other family members, spoke of cannibalism, torture, and satanic masses. Nathalie had to watch satanists killing babies and drinking their blood or her father catching wild animals in the forest and raping them (Kohler, 2022). The investigation, which lasted almost 30 months, did not deliver a single piece of evidence.

In the style of the earlier disclosure zeal of the 1980s and 1990s and in light of unscientific trauma concepts (reference to the development in section 3.3), numerous conversations between Nathalie and adults about her experiences with her father took place in the isolation brought about by the coronavirus pandemic, and the adults were convinced that the father had done dreadful things. At the same time,

supporters of the child's mother apparently subscribed to the conspiracy narrative, familiar from the QAnon scene, of an internationally networked elite of child molesters operating in the underground that retains its youth by drinking infant blood (Kohler, 2022). Part of this conspiracy narrative is the assertion that elite, internationally networked perpetrators in central positions, who cover for each other, deliberately induce a splitting of the personality in their victims in order to then be able to remotely control them so that they are unable to remember anything when, for example, questioned by the police (mind control; reference to the development in section 3.4).

Nathalie and her mother were being treated by psychiatrist Werner Tschan (mentioned in section 3.4) at the time. In an interview with the *Basler Zeitung*, Tschan, as an expert, publicly underlined the credibility of Nathalie's statements: »Especially in the field of ritual violence, we assume that the victims are skillfully prepared. ... One speaks of mind control and programming« (Kohler, 2022, translated from German). The media reported in a one-sided way, while, at the same time, the child and adult protection authority (KESB) was attacked for not protecting the child from the father and the public prosecutor's office was accused of shielding him from prosecution (reference to development in section 3.5). The national media also took up the topic; the headlines of the alleged »satanic father«<sup>9</sup> shook the whole of Switzerland. The public consternation culminated in a crowdfunding at the end of 2020, through which the mother collected more than 80,000 Swiss francs.<sup>10</sup>

An expert in SVA concluded that Nathalie was subject to extreme influence by her environment, and that her stories showed a »very impressive extent of logical contradictions and fantastic elements« (Kohler, 2022, translated from German). The public prosecutor's office closed the investigation into Nathalie's case. The *Basler Zeitung* apologized publicly for its own misconduct (Rohr, 2022), and one of the two journalists in charge until then took his own life. After this, the circle of supporters spread the rumor that the latter may have been murdered by satanists because he had championed the cause.<sup>11</sup> The child's mother took the case to the next level. All parties to the proceedings who expressed doubts were accused of being offenders. Those who did not support the case were publicly defamed, and there were death threats (Kohler, 2022). Because Switzerland was

<sup>8</sup> [https://presserat.ch/complaints/88\\_2020/](https://presserat.ch/complaints/88_2020/)

<sup>9</sup> One example instead of many: <https://www.blick.ch/schweiz/basel/opfer-aerztin-versaeumt-den-fall-zu-melden-vater-soll-maedchen-8-schwer-misshandelt-haben-id15909721.html>

<sup>10</sup> <https://wemakeit.com/projects/hilfe-fuer-nathalie?locale=de>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.pressestext.com/news/der-fall-nathalie-journalist-balzbruder-ermordet.html>

being infiltrated by satanists, Maximilian Eder, a retired colonel who, according to media reports, was later (in December 2022) imprisoned as one of the suspected heads of the planned Reich Citizens' putsch in Germany, decided he would collect evidence of the satanic activities in the »Nathalie case.« His people would investigate, with photos, with videos, with night vision devices (Kohler, 2022), always on the lookout for the tunnels through which Swiss children were being transported to the bloody rituals. In the meantime, the second instance has upheld the decision to close the case, and Nathalie's mother has now taken the case to the Swiss Federal Court.

According to the *Basler Zeitung*, Nathalie, now 10 years old, and her younger half-sister are still living with their mother despite several reports of the children being at risk. How Nathalie's mother views the situation was published as a book (Wahrberg, 2022). Her accounts indicate that numerous conversations were still held with Nathalie, and that she had now also reported that her father was engaged in hybrid breeding.

The consequences of the aforementioned events weigh heavily, not only for the accused father, but especially for the child victim of these intensive disclosure efforts. In view of the history of suffering of Nathalie and her younger half-sister, who is also growing up in the sphere of influence of these »helpers«, the question arises as to who is actually protecting supposed victims from their »rescuers« – rescuers who apparently see themselves as fighters against the evil of this world but thereby destroy several lives. In part, they do this unintentionally: here that of Nathalie, her younger half-sister, and the children's mother; in part, intentionally and systematically: here criminal charges, threats of murder and kidnapping, as well as primarily systematic character assassination campaigns against employees of the child and adult protection authority and the public prosecutor's office as well as against the Swiss children's ombudsperson advocate and the SVA expert via the press, internet platforms, public calls for private investigations, and defamatory letters to investigating authorities as well as government ministries at home and abroad. In this context, Nathalie's »supporters« argue in a similar way to the previously named psychotraumatological articles that express sweeping criticism of the methodology of credibility assessment: The SVA expert did not take into account »the latest findings« of psychotraumatology, but assumed that the child was lying, she had never even examined the child, she was a pedophile-friendly expert who wrote offender-friendly expert witness statements on behalf of the offender organization, she was a member of the »false memory sect«, she disregarded the fact that traumatic events are only remembered after a period of time, and an

expert should be hired who takes a psychotraumatological approach<sup>12</sup> (reference to the development in section 3.3).

The approach of Nathalie's support group shows clear parallels on the microlevel to Wieviorka's (2006) historical-sociological analysis. Greuel (2022) also reports from Germany of the significant hostility to which forensic experts are now exposed when, for example (methodically correctly and ethically necessary), they refrain from carrying out any further exploration, when it becomes clear that this would not lead to a different assessment. If this development continues, it could become increasingly difficult for law enforcement and courts to find qualified experts who are willing to issue an expert opinion under these conditions. This would leave Germany with the intuitive credibility attributions of lawyers who, as mentioned earlier, no longer acquire specific expertise in their training.

## 5 Outlook: Increasing Erroneous Decisions in Criminal Proceedings Due to Misconceived Victim Protection

Due to catastrophic errors in sex offence proceedings in the 1980s and 1990s, there was an international learning process that led to the use of scientifically sound methods and a reduction in the risk of wrong decisions. Of particular importance for proceedings in German-speaking countries was the establishment of standards for assessing credibility. In order not to jeopardize the progress made, the five factors mentioned at the beginning of this article must continue to be taken into account in sexual offense proceedings, for example, only unbiased persons who have the necessary forensic expertise and who are familiar with the current state of research through regular continuing education courses should be commissioned as experts. In section 3, we identified five developments (e.g., some psychotraumatologists demand an inappropriate approach to criminal proceedings based on scientifically unsubstantiated claims about trauma memories and denial of the false memory phenomenon) that could undermine these five factors and lead to an increase in erroneous decisions and a repeat of the judicial scandals of the 1990s.

We presented three examples to illustrate how the five developments interact. These developments have acquired

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.pressetext.com/news/der-fall-nathalie-informationskrieg.html>; Wahrberg (2022)

a political momentum that could lead to a gradual reversal of the progress made in German criminal proceedings following judicial scandals such as the Worms trials. In Germany, actors are engaging on the political level to bring about a change in the Federal Court of Justice's ruling on credibility assessments. They are also lending weight to this effort by clearly discrediting SVA. These actors include Barbara Kavemann, who denies the existence of scientifically proven false memories and calls them an instrument for denying sexual abuse (Kavemann et al., 2016), as well as Jörg M. Fegert, who, as the most prominent German opponent of the SVA approach, advocates for a psychotraumatological perspective in credibility assessments, and has been striving for several decades to transfer credibility assessments to his own discipline. The flexibility of his argumentation supports the assumption that this is more likely to be about the interests of his own profession than about victim concerns or scientifically sound arguments. For example, he argued initially that a physical examination was necessary to determine the credibility of a statement (Steller, 2020; Steller & Volbert, 2000). Since then, he has made the notable statement that he considered an SVA of the accusation to be entirely appropriate in really important cases (namely, when it came to a physician who was threatened with the revocation of his license to practice medicine because of this) (Fegert et al., 2018). Currently he appears to consider that in the future, psychotraumatologists should be involved in credibility assessments to ensure that no counter-hypotheses are examined.

Kavemann and Fegert are members of the National council to counter sexual violence toward children and adolescents [Nationaler Rat gegen sexuelle Gewalt an Kindern und Jugendlichen]. It is therefore not surprising that this National Council has adopted Kavemann's and Fegert's line of argument in its agenda for 2022/23 within the thematic focus on »child-friendly justice.« The agenda states that it will »discuss the design of credibility assessments in order to arrive at a professional and victim-sensitive further development.«<sup>13</sup> It now remains to be hoped that the announced discussion will take place with the necessary rationality and – unlike in the past – not on the basis of scientifically untenable assertions. Hopefully, it will take into account scientific findings and involve professionally competent SVA experts who have scientific and practical expertise. In any case, the evidence-based approach to policymaking called for by the National Council has not yet been taken to heart with regard to the evaluation of the SVA method by either Barbara

Kavemann (e.g., Kavemann et al., 2016) or Jörg M. Fegert (e.g., König & Fegert, 2009) (for criticism, see Greuel, 2009; Niehaus, 2017, 2019; Volbert, 2009; Volbert, Schemmel et al., 2019). Nevertheless, the National Council (2021) commissioned the University Hospital of Ulm, and Fegert, of all people, to conduct »preliminary studies of empirical findings on credibility assessment« (p. 62, translated from German).

The current development in Germany is embedded in an emotionalized debate that complicates scientific discussions and progress. For example, Elz (2022), in the context of preliminary work on the 2016 reform of German sexual criminal law, complained that it is hardly possible to deal with sexual criminal law in Germany in a scientifically serious manner without being thrown back repeatedly onto ideological statements. In the sense of Wiewiorka (2006), it is thus to be feared that, contrary to scientific rationality, changes will be achieved on the political level (e.g., entry of partiality into criminal proceedings through psychotraumatological concepts) that would have to be described as a step backward and that would result in increased procedural errors (Tavris & Aronson, 2016) – this not least to the detriment of alleged victims who should supposedly be protected (Niehaus, 2018). In Switzerland, a reversal of this irrational trend can recently be observed. Over the course of 2022, both the government and professional associations reacted and took measures to counter the spread of conspiracy narratives as well as harmful treatments of vulnerable persons – treatments that take place under the guise of victim orientation, but cause considerable damage to the persons concerned (LEXPERIENCE, 2022). The Swiss government has clearly condemned such therapeutic practices and noted that the national psychiatry and psychotherapy associations declared that zero tolerance applies to abusive behavior in a therapeutic context.<sup>14</sup>

The president of Swiss Mental Healthcare (SMHC) took a stand on June 3, 2022, stating that false memories can be generated in therapies when therapists confront patients with the proposition that they have been victims of ritual traumatization. Therapeutically generated false memories could lead to traumatization and have serious psychosocial consequences for the persons affected and the people around them. SMHC therefore rejected the use of symptoms to infer precipitating factors, as well as interventions that could induce false memories, and warned of the dangers of false memories for patients.<sup>15</sup> Two clinics were subjected

<sup>13</sup> [https://www.nationaler-rat.de/fileadmin/user\\_upload/dokumente/agenda\\_nationaler\\_rat\\_2022-2023\\_.pdf](https://www.nationaler-rat.de/fileadmin/user_upload/dokumente/agenda_nationaler_rat_2022-2023_.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.parlament.ch/de/ratsbetrieb/suche-curia-vista/geschaefft?AffairId=20223618>

<sup>15</sup> [https://swissmentalhealthcare.ch/smhc/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Ritueller-Gewalt-Stellungnahme-der-SMHC\\_2022-06-03\\_final.pdf](https://swissmentalhealthcare.ch/smhc/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Ritueller-Gewalt-Stellungnahme-der-SMHC_2022-06-03_final.pdf)

to external investigations commissioned by their respective cantons. Both investigations revealed significant problems. Subsequently, supervisory measures were taken, including the withdrawal of one psychiatrist's license to practice with immediate effect. Further proceedings are ongoing.<sup>16</sup>

In Germany, on the other hand, the risk of erroneous procedural decisions is likely to increase considerably in the coming years due, on the one hand, to an accumulation of the problems resulting from the aforementioned developments in legal training in Germany; and, on the other hand, to the emotionalized discussion over examining the experiential relevance of statements made by alleged victims. There is still a chance to prevent this foreseeably erroneous development politically.

There is certainly a need for research to further develop the SVA method, to close gaps in our knowledge, and to optimize the method as far as possible (e.g., Maier et al., 2018; Oberlader et al., 2021; Rönspies-Heitmann, 2022; Rohmann, 2018; Volbert, Schemmel et al., 2019). However, a distinction must be made between the quality of the implementation of a method in practice and the fundamental usefulness of that method. With regard to the former, adequate qualification of the professional groups working in the legal system, including experts, seems appropriate; in particular, the introduction of a systematic quality assurance procedure for expert opinions (e.g., Banse, 2017; Kannegießer, 2022). However, any modifications to a method should be based exclusively on scientific findings and not on an emotionalized discourse. Currently, there are no scientifically validated empirical findings that could be used to fundamentally modify SVA (Gallwitz & Gubi-Kelm, 2022; Greuel, 2022; Volbert, Schemmel, et al., 2019).

Regarding the discussion over the use of the term »null hypothesis,« it can be confirmed that SVA practitioners have pointed out repeatedly that the term is misleading, and, insofar, an unfortunate choice that should be dropped (Greuel, 2009, 2022; Niehaus Volbert, & Fegert, 2017; Steller, 2020). This, however, refers solely to the terminology, not to the underlying principle. Political efforts currently go beyond the topic of integrating the traumatological perspective in order to promote the main topic of »child-friendly justice.« They want to change the ruling of the German Federal Court of Justice (BGH) that has been in force since the turn of the millennium or abolish the fundamental principle of examining alternative explanations. This would seem to be highly questionable from both a scientific and a rule-of-law perspective (see also Greuel, 2022; Gallwitz &

Gubi-Kelm, 2022; Steller, 2020). Critically commenting on such attempts to question the methodology of the falsification principle, a BGH judge wrote (Hohoff, 2020, p. 388) that there should not be a legal principle of »in doubt, for the victim« in criminal law. »Strengthening the protection of victims should not lead to a shift in the rule-of-law standard for sentencing« (p. 390, translated from German). The principle of investigating alternative explanations for the existence of an alleged victim's testimony is without alternative in criminal proceedings (Gallwitz & Gubi-Kelm, 2022; Greuel, 2009, 2022; Steller, 2020; Volbert, 2009; Volbert, Schemmel, et al., 2019) – both scientifically and in terms of the rule of law. Moreover, abolishing this principle would also not be in the interest of alleged victims (Niehaus, 2018). The court's reasoning in the Nathalie case captures this concept well:

When ... purported criticism of credibility assessments is presented with a victim-centered view, it is particularly disconcerting. Because the following is misunderstood: Credibility assessments help make the testimony of victims more substantive, and there are no other scientifically approved ways to overcome the presumption of innocence in the absence of evidence outside of the incriminating testimony. (Superior Court of Solothurn, January 23, 2023, BKBES.2022.74, 3.4.2, translated from German)

In contrast to the 1990s, we now have the necessary scientific knowledge that needs to be considered in order to make a repetition of historical mistakes fundamentally avoidable. However, a basic precondition for this would also be to take this knowledge into account (Watters, 2022). It remains to be seen whether Germany's politicians are willing to return to an appropriate level of rationality in good time before new judicial catastrophes occur.

## References

- Banse, R. (2017). Qualitätssicherung von rechtspsychologischen Sachverständigengutachten durch ein moderiertes Peer-Reviewverfahren: Ein Vorschlag zur Diskussion. *Praxis der Rechtspsychologie*, 27(2), 113–130.
- Barth, J., Bermetz, L., Heim, E., Trelle, S., & Tonia, T. (2013). The current prevalence of child sexual abuse worldwide: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *International Journal of Public Health*, 58(3), 469–483.
- Barton, S., & Kölbel, R. (Eds.) (2012). *Ambivalenzen der Opferzuwendung des Strafrechts. Zwischenbilanz nach einem Vierteljahrhundert operativer Strafrechtspolitik in Deutschland*. Baden-Baden: Nomos.
- Berlinger, A. (2014). *Glaubhaftigkeitsbegutachtung im Strafprozess: Beweiseignung und Beweiswert*. [Doctoral dissertation]. Rechtswissenschaftliche Fakultät Universität Luzern, Schweiz.
- Breitenbach, G. (2011). *Innenansichten dissoziierter Welten extremer Gewalt: Ware Mensch – die planvolle Spaltung der Persönlichkeit*. Kröning: Asanger.

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.woz.ch/2208/satanic-panic/der-teufel-im-therapie-zimmer>

- Breitenbach, G. (2019). Die Leugnung von Traumata hat viele Gesichter. *Trauma – Zeitschrift für Psychotraumatologie und Ihre Anwendungen*, 17(1), 6–12.
- Brewin, C. R., & Andrews, B. (2017). Creating memories for false autobiographical events in childhood: A systematic review. *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, 31(1), 2–23.
- Bryant, R.A. (2023). Controversies in posttraumatic stress disorder. In C. L. Cobb, S. J. Lynn & W. O'Donohue (Eds.), *Toward a science of clinical psychology* (pp. 347–375). Cham: Springer.
- Bublitz, J. C. (2021). Entwicklung und Kritik der höchstrichterlichen Rechtsprechung zur Glaubhaftigkeitsanalyse. *Zeitschrift für Internationale Strafrechtsdogmatik*, 16(3), 210–221.
- Bublitz, C., Geneuss, J., & Rüter, J. N. (2022). Konzeption einer Veranstaltung zum Sexualstrafrecht als Anwendungsfall traumainformierter und depolarisierender Hochschullehre. *Zeitschrift für Didaktik der Rechtswissenschaft*, 9(1), 1–22.
- Bublitz, C., Geneuss, J., Rüter, J. N., Papenfuß, J., & Grimm, M. (2020). *Erfahrungsbericht zum Lehrlabor-Bericht: Konzipierung einer traumainformierten Vorlesung zum Sexualstrafrecht*. Hamburg: Universität. <https://www.universitaetskolleg.uni-hamburg.de/publikationen/praxisberichte-lehrlabor/lehrlabor-pb-trauma-informierte-vorlesung-bublitz-geneuss.pdf> [Accessed 29 Jan 2023].
- Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend (2018). *Sexualisierte Gewalt in organisierten und rituellen Gewaltstrukturen – Prävention, Intervention und Hilfe für Betroffene stärken: Empfehlungen an Politik und Gesellschaft*. Berlin: BMFSFJ.
- Daber, B., & Müller, R. (2022). Die aussagepsychologische Analyse einer Zeug:innenaussage bei Vorliegen einer Persönlichkeitsstörung und einer dissoziativen Identitätsstörung. *Praxis der Rechtspsychologie*, 32(2), 35–63.
- Deckers, R. (2019). Glaubhaftigkeitsprüfung 2018. In R. Deckers (Ed.), *Die Erhebung und Bewertung von Zeugenaussagen im Strafprozess* (pp. 181–204). Berlin: Wissenschaftsverlag.
- Dessecker, A. (2020). Rituelle Gewalt: Forschung und ihre Grenzen. *Recht und Psychiatrie*, 38(3), 138–143.
- Ehlers, A., Ehring, T., & Kleim, B. (2012). Information processing in posttraumatic stress disorder. In J. G. Beck & D. M. Sloan (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of traumatic stress disorders* (pp. 191–218). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Ehlers, A., Ehring, T., Wittekind, C. E., & Kleim, B. (2022). Information processing in posttraumatic stress disorder. In J. G. Beck & D. M. Sloan (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of traumatic stress disorders* (2nd ed., pp. 367–414). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Eickmeier, K. (2020). *Of liars and deniers: The credibility-concealed information test as a response time-based measure for credibility assessment in suspects and witnesses*. [Doctoral dissertation]. Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn.
- Elz, J. (2022). *Freisprechende Urteile in Fällen sexueller Gewalt*. Wiesbaden: Eigenverlag Kriminologische Zentralstelle.
- Fegert, J. M. (2018). *Bestandsaufnahme – Kindgerechte Justiz in Deutschland?* Vortrag bei der Fachtagung Kindgerechte Justiz – Zugang zum Recht für Kinder. [https://www.dkhw.de/fileadmin/Redaktion/1\\_Unsere\\_Arbeit/1\\_Schwerpunkte/2\\_Kinderrechte/2.19\\_Kindgerechte\\_Justiz/Impuls1\\_Fegert.pdf](https://www.dkhw.de/fileadmin/Redaktion/1_Unsere_Arbeit/1_Schwerpunkte/2_Kinderrechte/2.19_Kindgerechte_Justiz/Impuls1_Fegert.pdf) [Accessed 23 Jan 2023].
- Fegert, J. M. (2019). *Diagnostik und Begutachtung – für Betroffene eine Zumutung? Anwendungsbereiche und Grenzen einer Methode*. [https://www.uniklinik-ulm.de/fileadmin/default/Kliniken/Kinder-Jugendpsychiatrie/Praesentationen/FE\\_2019\\_10\\_10\\_Begutachtung\\_Wien.pdf](https://www.uniklinik-ulm.de/fileadmin/default/Kliniken/Kinder-Jugendpsychiatrie/Praesentationen/FE_2019_10_10_Begutachtung_Wien.pdf) [Accessed 23 Jan 2023].
- Fegert, J. M., Andresen, S., Salgo, L., & Walper, S. (2016). Hilfeangebote und strafrechtliche Fallbearbeitung bei sexueller Gewalt gegen Kinder – Vom Kind her denken und organisieren. *Zeitschrift für Kindschaftsrecht und Jugendhilfe*, 11(9), 324–334.
- Fegert, J. M., Gerke, J., & Rassenhofer, M. (2018). Enormes professionelles Unverständnis gegenüber Traumatisierten. *Nervenheilkunde*, 37(7/8), 525–534.
- Fegert, J. M., & Plener, P. L. (2016). Auswirkungen von Gewalterfahrungen auf die Wahrnehmung und das Handeln betroffener Kinder. In S. Völkl-Kernstock & C. Kienbacher (Eds.), *Forensische Arbeit mit Kindern und Jugendlichen* (pp. 23–36). Wien: Springer Vienna.
- Fischer, T. (2008). Aussagegawahrheit und Glaubhaftigkeitsbegutachtung. Anmerkungen zum Beweiswert von Glaubhaftigkeitsgutachten im Strafverfahren. In H. Schöch, H. Satzger & G. Schäfer (Eds.), *Strafverurteilung, Revision und die gesamten Strafrechtswissenschaften. Festschrift für Gunter Widmaier* (pp. 191–222). Köln: Heymanns.
- Fisher, R. P., Schreiber Compo, N., Rivard, J., & Hirn, D. (2014). Interviewing witnesses. In T. J. Perfect & D. S. Lindsay (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of applied memory* (pp. 559–578). Los Angeles: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Fliß, C. (2012). Konditionierung und Programmierung von Nachfolgegenerationen in Kulturen. *Trauma & Gewalt*, 6(4), 330–341.
- Fliß, C., & Igney, C. (Eds.) (2010). *Handbuch Rituelle Gewalt*. Lengerich: Pabst Science Publishers.
- Frances, A. (2013). *Saving normal. An insider's revolt against out-of-control psychiatric diagnosis, DSM-5, big pharma, and the medicalization of ordinary life*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers.
- Galatzer-Levy, I. R., & Bryant, R. A. (2013). 636,120 Ways to Have Posttraumatic Stress Disorder. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 8(6) 651–662.
- Gallwitz, S., & Gubi-Kelm, S. (2022). Leitgedanken zu aktuellen Herausforderungen in der Aussagepsychologie. *Praxis der Rechtspsychologie*, 32(2), 5–33.
- Geraerts, E. (2010). Posttraumatic memory. In G. M. Rosen & B. C. Frueh (Eds.), *Clinician's guide to posttraumatic stress disorder* (pp. 77–95). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons Inc.
- Gray, J. M., & Horvath, M. A. H. (2018). Rape myths in the criminal justice system. In E. Milne, K. Brennan, N. South, & J. Turton (Eds.), *Women and the criminal justice system: Failing victims and offenders?* (pp. 15–41). Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Greuel, L. (2001). *Wirklichkeit, Erinnerung, Aussage*. Weinheim: Beltz, PVU.
- Greuel, L. (2009). Was ist Glaubhaftigkeitsbegutachtung (nicht)? Zum Problem der Dogmatisierung in einem wissenschaftlichen Diskurs. *Kindesmisshandlung und -vernachlässigung*, 12(2), 70–89.
- Greuel, L. (2022). Glaubhaftigkeitsbegutachtung im Kontext des Opferentschädigungsgesetzes (OEG). *Praxis der Rechtspsychologie*, 32(2), 65–91.
- Gysi, J. (2021). *Diagnostik von Traumafolgestörungen* (1st ed.). Bern: Hogrefe.
- Gysi, J. (2022). »Der Teufel mitten unter uns«. Kommentar zur SRF-Sendung »rec.« über »Verschwörungserzählungen«. *Trauma – Zeitschrift für Psychotraumatologie und ihre Anwendungen*, 20(1), 86–92.
- Haas, H. (2022). Ein Vorschlag zur methodischen Aktualisierung der Beweiswürdigung in aussagenpsychologischen Gutachten. *Kriminalistik*, 76(10), 567–573.
- Hänert, P. (2014). Rechte und Pflichten des psychologischen Sachverständigen. In T. Bliesener, F. Lösel, & G. Köhnken (Eds.), *Lehrbuch Rechtspsychologie* (pp. 271–287). Bern: Huber.
- Hoffmann, H., & Yalcin, K. (2019). *Kindgerechte Justiz – Rechtliche Anforderungen und deutsche Rechtswirklichkeit im Vergleich*. Berlin: Deutsches Kinderhilfswerk.

- Hohoff, U. (2020). Aktuelle Fragen der aussagepsychologischen Begutachtung von Opferzeugen in Strafverfahren. *Neue Zeitschrift für Strafrecht*, 40(7), 387–390.
- Howe, M. L., Knott, L. M., & Conway, M.A. (2018). *Memory and miscarriages of justice*. London: Routledge.
- Huber, M. (2023). *Wege der Traumabehandlung: Trauma und Traumabehandlung: Teil 2*. Paderborn: Junfermann Verlag.
- Igney, C. (2022). Organisierte sexuelle Gewalt – Annäherung an ein komplexes Themenfeld. *Trauma – Zeitschrift für Psychotraumatologie und ihre Anwendungen*, 20(2), 6–15.
- Igney, C., & Ehmke, J. (2016). Das Opferentschädigungsgesetz – eine gute Idee mit Reformbedarf. *Trauma – Zeitschrift für Psychotraumatologie und ihre Anwendungen*, 14(4), 64–72.
- Jansen, G. (2021). *Zeuge und Aussagepsychologie* (3rd. ed.). Heidelberg: C. F. Müller.
- Kahneman, D. (2012). *Thinking, fast and slow*. London: Penguin.
- Kannegiesser, A. (2022). Qualitätssicherung in der Begutachtung. *Praxis der Rechtspsychologie*, 32(2), 159–180.
- Kavemann, B., Graf-van Kesteren, A., Rothkegel, S., & Nagel, B. (2016). *Erinnern, Schweigen und Sprechen nach sexueller Gewalt in der Kindheit: Ergebnisse einer Interviewstudie mit Frauen und Männern, die als Kind sexuelle Gewalt erlebt haben*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Kessler, R. C., Aguilar-Gaxiola, S., Alonso, J., Benjet, C., Bromet, E. J., Cardoso, G., ... Koenen, K. C. (2017). Trauma and PTSD in the WHO World Mental Health Surveys. *European Journal of Psychotraumatology*, 8(5), 1353383.
- Kohler, M. (2022). Der »Fall Nathalie« – die Hölle im Kopf. *Basler Zeitung (BaZ)*, 09.11.2022. <https://www.bazonline.ch/der-fall-nathalie-die-hoelle-im-kopf-734515579503> [Accessed 28 Dec 2022.]
- Köhnken, G. (2019). Fehlerquellen in aussagepsychologischen Gutachten. In R. Deckers (Ed.), *Die Erhebung und Bewertung von Zeugenaussagen im Strafprozess* (pp. 25–69). Berlin: Wissenschaftsverlag.
- Köhnken, G., & Steller, M. (1988). The evaluation of the credibility of child witness statements in the German procedural system. *Issues in Criminological & Legal Psychology*, 13, 37–45.
- König, C., & Fegert, J. M. (2009). Zur Praxis der Glaubhaftigkeitsbegutachtung unter Einfluss des BGH-Urteils (1 StR 618/98). *Kindesmisshandlung und -vernachlässigung*, 12(2), 16–41.
- Korkman, J., Antfolk, J., Fagerlund, M., & Santtila, P. (2019). The prevalence of unfounded suspicions of child sexual abuse in Finland. *Nordic Psychology*, 71(1), 39–50.
- Körner, C. (2016). *Alexander Stevens Buch »Sex vor Gericht«: »Juristen haben von Sex keine Ahnung«*. Legal Tribune Online, 19.04.2016. [https://www.lto.de/persistent/a\\_id/19124/](https://www.lto.de/persistent/a_id/19124/) [Accessed 24 Dec 2022].
- Kullmann, S. (2020). Rituelle Gewalt in politischen Gremien thematisieren. In CARA (Ed.), *Das Schweigen brechen. Rituelle Gewalt mitten in unserer Gesellschaft* (pp. 126–129). Gutenswil: CARA.
- LEXPERIENCE (2022). *Untersuchungsbericht in Sachen Clenia Littenheid AG*. Zürich: Lexperience AG. <https://www.tg.ch/public/upload/assets/137238/Untersuchungsbericht.pdf?fp=1> [Accessed 21 Jan 2023].
- Lynn, S. J., Krackow, E., Loftus, E. F., Locke, T. G., & Lilienfeld, S. O. (2015). Constructing the past: Problematic memory recovery techniques in psychotherapy. In S. O. Lilienfeld, S. J. Lynn, & J. M. Lohr (Eds.), *Sciences and pseudoscience in clinical psychology* (pp. 210–244). New York: The Guilford Press.
- Lynn, S. J., Polizzi, C., Merkelbach, H., Chiu, C. D., Maxwell, R., van Heugten, D., & Lilienfeld, S. O. (2022). Dissociation and dissociative disorders reconsidered: Beyond sociocognitive and trauma models toward a transtheoretical framework. *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology*, 18, 259–289.
- Maier, B. G., Niehaus, S., Wachholz, S., & Volbert, R. (2018). The strategic meaning of CBCA criteria from the perspective of deceivers. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 9, 855.
- Makepeace, J. (2021). Tücken der Glaubhaftigkeitsbegutachtung: Gibt es einen Ausweg aus dem Aussage-gegen-Aussage-Dilemma? *Zeitschrift für Internationale Strafrechtsdogmatik*, 16(9), 489–498.
- Maniglio, R. (2009). The impact of child sexual abuse on health: A systematic review of reviews. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 29(7), 647–657.
- Mauz, R. (2020). Ein Fenster zur Innenwelt. In CARA (Ed.), *Das Schweigen brechen. Rituelle Gewalt mitten in unserer Gesellschaft* (pp. 81–83). Gutenswil: CARA.
- Miller, A. (2011). *Healing the unimaginable: Treating ritual abuse and mind control*. London: Karnac Books.
- Miller, A. (2014). *Jenseits des Vorstellbaren: Therapie bei Rituellicher Gewalt und Mind-Control*. Kröning: Asanger.
- Monecke, L. (2022). Ihre Aussage? Angeblich wertlos. *ZEIT ONLINE*, 04.11.2022. <https://www.zeit.de/gesellschaft/2022-10/geistige-behinderung-aussagebeurteilung-sexuelle-uebergriebe> [Accessed 28 Dec 2022.]
- Nationaler Rat gegen sexuelle Gewalt an Kindern und Jugendlichen (2021). *Gemeinsame Verständigung des Nationalen Rats gegen sexuelle Gewalt an Kindern und Jugendlichen. Arbeitsphase Dezember 2019 bis Juni 2021*. Berlin: Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend. [https://www.nationaler-rat.de/fileadmin/user\\_upload/dokumente/gemeinsame\\_verstaendigung\\_nationaler\\_rat\\_0308.pdf](https://www.nationaler-rat.de/fileadmin/user_upload/dokumente/gemeinsame_verstaendigung_nationaler_rat_0308.pdf) [Accessed 23 Jan 2023].
- Nick, S., Schröder, J., Briken, P., & Richter-Appelt, H. (2018). Organisierte und rituelle Gewalt in Deutschland: Kontexte der Gewalterfahrungen, psychische Folgen und Versorgungssituation. *Trauma & Gewalt*, 12(3), 244–261.
- Nick, S., Schröder, J., Briken, P., & Richter-Appelt, H. (2019). Organisierte und rituelle Gewalt in Deutschland – Praxiserfahrungen, Belastungen und Bedarfe von psychosozialen Fachkräften. *Trauma & Gewalt*, 13(2), 114–127.
- Niehaus, S. (2008a). Merkmalsorientierte Inhaltsanalyse. In R. Volbert & M. Steller (Eds.), *Handbuch der Rechtspsychologie* (pp. 311–321). Göttingen: Hogrefe.
- Niehaus, S. (2008b). Richterliche Urteilsbildung: Glaubwürdigkeitsattribution. In R. Volbert & M. Steller (Eds.), *Handbuch der Rechtspsychologie* (pp. 497–506). Göttingen: Hogrefe.
- Niehaus, S. (2017). Besonderheiten der Einvernahme und Aussagebeurteilung bei Personen mit einer geistigen Behinderung. In R. Ludewig, S. Baumer & D. Tavor (Eds.), *Aussagepsychologie für die Rechtspraxis: Zwischen Wahrheit und Lüge* (pp. 427–456). Zürich: Dike Verlag.
- Niehaus, S. (2018). Im Interesse kindlicher Opfer. *Praxis der Rechtspsychologie*, 28(2), 99–120.
- Niehaus, S. (2019). Im Interesse kindlicher Opfer. In Stadt Wien (Eds.), *Zwischen Verdacht und Vertrauen – Forensische Aspekte der Jugendamtspsychologie. Bericht über die 66. Tagung der österreichischen Kinder- und Jugendhilfepsycholog(inn)en* (pp. 147–162). Wien: Eigenverlag.
- Niehaus, S., Caviezel Schmitz, S., & Krüger, P. (2014). Zur Situation geistig behinderter Opfer sexueller Gewalt im Strafverfahren: Unwissen erschwert die juristische Arbeit. *CuraViva*, 11, 16–19.
- Niehaus, S., Krüger, P., & Caviezel Schmitz, S. (2013). Intellectually disabled victims of sexual abuse in the criminal justice system. *Psychology*, 4(3A), 374–379.

- Niehaus, S., Volbert, R., & Fegert, J. M. (2017). *Entwicklungsgerechte Befragung von Kindern in Strafverfahren*. Heidelberg: Springer.
- Nijenhuis, E. (2018). *Die Trauma-Trinität: Ignoranz-Fragilität-Kontrolle: Enaktive Traumatherapie*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- Oberlader, V. A., Naefgen, C., Koppehele-Gossel, J., Quinten, L., Banse, R., & Schmidt, A. F. (2016). Validity of content-based techniques to distinguish true and fabricated statements: A meta-analysis. *Law and Human Behavior, 40*(4), 440.
- Oberlader, V. A., Quinten, L., Banse, R., Volbert, R., Schmidt, A. F., & Schönbrodt, F. D. (2021). Validity of content-based techniques for credibility assessment: How telling is an extended meta-analysis taking research bias into account? *Applied Cognitive Psychology, 35*(2), 393–410.
- Odebralski, N. (2020). *Strafverteidigung in Sexualstrafverfahren*. Berlin: Springer.
- Oeberst, A., Wachendörfer, M. M., Imhoff, R., & Blank, H. (2021). Rich false memories of autobiographical events can be reversed. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 118*(13), 1–8.
- Okulicz-Kozaryn, M., Schmidt, A. F., & Banse, R. (2019). Worin besteht die Expertise von forensischen Sachverständigen, und ist die Approbation gemäß Psychotherapeutengesetz dafür erforderlich? *Psychologische Rundschau, 70*(4), 250–258.
- Ost, J., Easton, S., Hope, L., French, C. C., & Wright, D. B. (2017). Latent variables underlying the memory beliefs of chartered clinical psychologists, hypnotherapists and undergraduate students. *Memory, 25*(1), 57–68.
- Otgaar, H., Curci, A., Mangiulli, I., Battista, F., Rizzotti, E., & Sartori, G. (2022). A court ruled case on therapy-induced false memories. *Journal of Forensic Sciences, 67*(5), 2122–2129.
- Otgaar, H., Howe, M. L., & Patihis, L. (2022). What science tells us about false and repressed memories. *Memory, 30*(1), 16–21.
- Otgaar, H., Howe, M. L., Patihis, L., Merckelbach, H., Lynn, S. J., Lilienfeld, S. O., & Loftus, E. F. (2019). The return of the repressed: The persistent and problematic claims of long-forgotten trauma. *Perspectives on Psychological Science, 14*(6), 1072–1095.
- Patihis, L., Pendergrast, M. H. (2019). Reports of recovered memories of abuse in therapy in a large age-representative U.S. National sample: Therapy type and decade comparisons. *Clinical Psychological Science, 7*(1), 3–21.
- Patihis, L., Otgaar, H., Lynn, S. J., Loftus, E. F., & McNally, R. (2023). The recovered memory debate: Wins, losses, and creating future open-minded skeptics. In C. Cobb, S. J. Lynn, & W. O'Donohue (Eds.), *Toward a science of clinical psychology: A tribute to the life and works of Scott O. Lilienfeld* (pp. 377–394). Cham: Springer Nature.
- Petermann, A., & Greuel, L. (2009). Dissoziative Identitätsstörung und ritueller Missbrauch – Möglichkeiten und Grenzen der polizeilichen Ermittlungstätigkeit und Beweisführung. In L. Greuel & A. Petermann (Eds.), *Macht-Familie-Gewalt (?). Intervention und Prävention bei (sexueller) Gewalt im sozialen Nahraum* (pp. 183–209). Lengerich: Pabst Science Publ.
- Posch, L., & Kemme, S. (2021). Zur Bedeutung von Vorannahmen für die Beurteilung der Glaubhaftigkeit von Zeugenvernehmungen: Ergebnisse eines Experiments mit Kommissaranwärtern und Kommissaranwärterinnen. *Rechtspsychologie, 7*(4), 515–547.
- Rehmann, R., & Stämpfli, I. (2021). *Satanistische Verschwörungstheorie im Umlauf – »Satanic Panic 1«*. rec. SRF Dok. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dF7XJ50Zn44> [Accessed 19.05.2023].
- Rehmann, R., & Stämpfli, I. (2022). *Jetzt reden die Opfer – »Satanic Panic 2«*. rec. SRF Dok. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4GK0DEWYPQ> [Accessed 28 Dec 2022].
- Rehmann, R., & Stämpfli, I. (2023). *Satanic Panic in der Schweiz – der Fall Leonie*. rec. SRF Dok. <https://www.srf.ch/sendungen/dok/rituelle-gewalt-mind-control-leonies-fall-zeigt-die-tragischen-folgen-von-satanic-panic> [Accessed 23 Jan 2023].
- Rönspies-Heitmann, J. (2022). *Kriterienorientierte Inhaltsanalyse von Zeugenaussagen*. Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien.
- Rohmann, J. A. (2014). Trauma und Folgen. In R. Deckers & G. Köhnken (Eds.), *Die Erhebung und Bewertung von Zeugenaussagen im Strafprozess* (pp. 193–241). Berlin: Berliner Wissenschafts-Verlag.
- Rohmann, J. A. (2017). Verletzendes Erlebnis und Gedächtnis. *Rechtspsychologie, 3*(1), 48–67.
- Rohmann, J. A. (2018). Erlebnis und Gedächtnis. *Praxis der Rechtspsychologie, 28*(1), 23–60.
- Rohr, M. (2022). Die BaZ bittet um Entschuldigung. *Bazonline.ch*, 19.05.2022. <https://www.bazonline.ch/die-baz-entschuldigt-sich-315267023391> [Accessed 31 Dec 2022].
- Schemm, K. v., & Köhnken, G. (2008). Voreinstellungen und das Testen sozialer Hypothesen im Interview. In R. Volbert & M. Steller (Eds.), *Handbuch der Rechtspsychologie* (pp. 322–330). Göttingen: Hogrefe.
- Schemmel, J., & Volbert, R. (2021). Therapie oder Glaubhaftigkeit? Psychotherapeutische Behandlung bei laufenden Strafverfahren. *Report Psychologie, 46*(10), 14–24.
- Schmied-Knittel, I. (2008). *Satanismus und ritueller Missbrauch: Eine wissenschaftssoziologische Diskursanalyse*. Würzburg: Ergon.
- Schneider, R. U., & Wanner, A. (2022). Der Glaube an satanistischen Missbrauch breitet sich in der Schweiz aus. *NZZ*, 21. Mai 2022. [Accessed 28 Dec 2022].
- Schoon, W., & Briken, P. (2019). Zur Anwendbarkeit der Glaubhaftigkeitsbegutachtung unter spezifischen Begutachtungsumständen – eine narrative Übersichtsarbeit. *Forensische Psychiatrie, Psychologie, Kriminologie, 13*(2), 125–135.
- Schröder, J., Behrendt, P., Nick, S., & Briken, P. (2020). Was erschwert die Aufdeckung organisierter und ritueller Gewaltstrukturen? Eine qualitative Inhaltsanalyse der Erlebnisberichte von Betroffenen und Zeitzeug\_innen. *Psychiatrische Praxis, 47*(5), 249–259.
- Schwander, M. (2019). *Das Opfer im Strafrecht*. Bern: Haupt.
- Shaw, J., & Vredevelde, A. (2019). The recovered memory debate continues in Europe: Evidence from the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, France, and Germany. *Clinical Psychological Science, 7*(1), 27–28.
- Smith, O., & Skinner, T. (2017). How rape myths are used and challenged in rape and sexual assault trials. *Social & Legal Studies, 26*(4), 441–466.
- Sommer, T., & Gamer, M. (2018). Einfluss traumatischer Ereignisse auf das Gedächtnis – neurowissenschaftliche Befunde. *Praxis der Rechtspsychologie, 28*(1), 97–121.
- Sporer, S. L., & Antonelli, M. (2022). Psychology of eyewitness testimony in Germany in the 20th century. *History of Psychology, 25*(2), 143–169.
- Steller, M. (2008). Glaubhaftigkeitsbegutachtung. In R. Volbert & M. Steller (Eds.), *Handbuch der Rechtspsychologie* (pp. 300–310). Göttingen: Hogrefe.
- Steller, M. (2015). Qualitätssicherung bei Gerichtsgutachten: Ein andauernder Prozess. *Praxis der Rechtspsychologie, 25*(1/2), 49–52.
- Steller, M. (2018). Justizirrtümer. Zur Rolle der Psychowissenschaften. *Praxis der Rechtspsychologie, 28*(2), 121–136.
- Steller, M. (2020). Stand und Herausforderungen der Aussagepsychologie. *Forensische Psychiatrie, Psychologie, Kriminologie, 14*(2), 188–196.
- Steller, M., & Köhnken, G. (1989). Criteria-based statement analysis. In D. C. Raskin (Ed.), *Psychological methods in criminal investigation and evidence* (pp. 217–245). New York, NY: Springer.

- Steller, M., & Volbert, R. (2000). Anforderungen an die Qualität forensisch-psychologischer Glaubhaftigkeitsbegutachtungen. *Praxis der Rechtspsychologie*, 10(1), 102–116.
- Stevens, A., & Merten, T. (2007). Begutachtung der Posttraumatischen Belastungsstörung: konzeptionelle Probleme, Diagnosestellung und negative Antwortverzerrungen. *Praxis der Rechtspsychologie*, 17(1), 83–107.
- Stiller, A., & Niehaus, S. (2019). Menschen mit einer Autismus-Spektrum-Störung als mögliche Opfer und als Beschuldigte im Strafverfahrenskontext. *Praxis der Rechtspsychologie*, 29(2), 5–32.
- Tavris, C., & Aronson, E. (2016). *Mistakes were made but not by me!* London: Printer & Martin.
- Tschan, W. (2019). *Trauma verstehen – erkennen – behandeln: Diagnostik und Behandlung der Traumafolgestörungen – eine aktuelle Übersicht*. Norderstedt: BoD–Books on Demand.
- Tschan, W. (2020). Rituelle Gewalt – mitten unter uns? In CARA (Ed.), *Das Schweigen brechen. Rituelle Gewalt mitten in unserer Gesellschaft* (pp. 54–60). Gutenswil: CARA.
- Unabhängige Kommission zur Aufarbeitung sexuellen Kindesmissbrauchs (2020). *Empfehlungen zur Verbesserung der Situation von sexueller Gewalt in Kindheit und Jugend betroffener Menschen in Ermittlungs- und Strafverfahren*. <https://www.aufarbeitungskommission.de/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/2020-Empfehlungspapier-Strafverfahren-Sexuelle-Gewalt-DE.pdf> [Accessed 22 Jan 2023].
- Unabhängige Kommission zur Aufarbeitung sexuellen Kindesmissbrauchs (2021). *Sexueller Kindesmissbrauch in organisierten und rituellen Gewaltstrukturen*. [https://www.aufarbeitungskommission.de/wp-content/uploads/Zusammenfassungen-\\_Forschungsprojekt-Organisierte-Rituelle-Gewalt.pdf](https://www.aufarbeitungskommission.de/wp-content/uploads/Zusammenfassungen-_Forschungsprojekt-Organisierte-Rituelle-Gewalt.pdf) [Accessed 23 Jan 2023].
- Unabhängige Kommission zur Aufarbeitung sexuellen Kindesmissbrauchs (2022). *Wege zu mehr Gerechtigkeit nach sexueller Gewalt in Kindheit und Jugend: Abschlussbericht des Forschungsprojekts*. [https://www.aufarbeitungskommission.de/wp-content/uploads/Wege-zu-mehr-Gerechtigkeit\\_Abschlussbericht\\_bf.pdf](https://www.aufarbeitungskommission.de/wp-content/uploads/Wege-zu-mehr-Gerechtigkeit_Abschlussbericht_bf.pdf) [Accessed 22 Jan 2023].
- Van der Kolk, B., & Fessler, R. (1995). Dissociation and the fragmentary nature of traumatic memories: Overview and exploratory study. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 8(4), 505–525.
- Volbert, R. (1995). Glaubwürdigkeitsbeurteilung bei Verdacht auf sexuellen Missbrauch von Kindern. *Zeitschrift für Kinder- und Jugendpsychiatrie*, 23(1), 20–26.
- Volbert, R. (2004). *Beurteilung von Aussagen über Traumata. Erinnerungen und ihre psychologische Bewertung*. Bern: Huber.
- Volbert, R. (2008). Glaubhaftigkeitsbegutachtung – mehr als Merkmalsorientierte Inhaltsanalyse. *Forensische Psychiatrie, Psychologie, Kriminologie*, 2(1), 12–19.
- Volbert, R. (2009). Glaubhaftigkeitsbegutachtung: Wie man die aussagepsychologische Methodik verstehen und missverstehen kann. *Kindesmisshandlung und-vernachlässigung*, 12(2), 52–69.
- Volbert, R. (2010). Aussagepsychologische Begutachtung. In R. Volbert & K.-P. Dahle (Eds.), *Kompandien Psychologische Diagnostik, Band 12: Forensisch-psychologische Diagnostik im Strafverfahren* (pp. 18–66). Göttingen: Hogrefe.
- Volbert, R. (2011). Aussagen über traumatische Erlebnisse Spezielle Erinnerung? Spezielle Begutachtung? *Forensische Psychiatrie, Psychologie, Kriminologie*, 5(1), 18–31.
- Volbert, R. (2012). Qualitätssicherung in der Glaubhaftigkeitsbeurteilung. *Forensische Psychiatrie, Psychologie, Kriminologie*, 6(4), 250–257.
- Volbert, R. (2014). Sexueller Missbrauch. *PID-Psychotherapie im Dialog*, 15(1), 82–85.
- Volbert, R. (2018). Scheinerinnerungen von Erwachsenen an traumatische Erlebnisse und deren Prüfung im Rahmen der Glaubhaftigkeitsbegutachtung: Eine rein traumatologische Perspektive ist irreführend. *Praxis der Rechtspsychologie*, 28(1), 61–95.
- Volbert, R. (2022). Was ist eigentlich Aussagetüchtigkeit? In M. Lammel, S. Lau, S. Rückert, T. Voß, & F. Wendt (Eds.), *Forensische Psychiatrie. Erfahrungswissenschaft und Menschenkunde. Festschrift für Hans-Ludwig Kröber* (pp. 281–292). Berlin: Medizinisch Wissenschaftliche Verlagsgesellschaft.
- Volbert, R., Schemmel, J., & Tamm, A. (2019). Die aussagepsychologische Begutachtung: eine verengte Perspektive? *Forensische Psychiatrie, Psychologie, Kriminologie*, 13(2), 108–124.
- Volbert, R., Skupin, L., & Niehaus, S. (2019). Belastungen Minderjähriger durch Strafverfahren aus Perspektive der Opferberatung. *Praxis der Rechtspsychologie*, 29(2), 81–108.
- Volbert, R., & Steller, M. (2014). Is this testimony truthful, fabricated, or based on false memory? Credibility assessment 25 years after Steller and Köhnken (1989). *European Psychologist*, 19(3), 207–220.
- Volbert, R., & Steller, M. (2020). Die Begutachtung der Glaubhaftigkeit. In H. Dreßing & E. Habermeyer (Eds.), *Psychiatrische Begutachtung* (pp. 757–792). München: Elsevier.
- Wahrberg, R. v. (2022). *Der Fall Nathalie: Rituelle Gewalt und Satanismus in der Schweiz und in Deutschland*. Independently published.
- Watters, E. (2022). The forgotten lessons of the recovered memory movement. *The New York Times*, 27. September 2022. [Accessed 28 Dec 2022].
- Weisser Ring (2021). *Sozialrechtliche Forderungen des Weissen Rings zur Verbesserung der Entschädigung für Opfer von Gewalttaten*. [https://weisser-ring.de/system/files/domains/weisser\\_ring\\_dev/downloads/sozfordjuli2021.pdf](https://weisser-ring.de/system/files/domains/weisser_ring_dev/downloads/sozfordjuli2021.pdf) [Accessed 23 Jan 2023].
- Wieviorka, M. (2006). Die Geburt des Opfers. In M. Wieviorka (Ed.), *Die Gewalt* (pp. 81–108). Hamburg: Hamburger Edition.
- Wirtz, U. (2005). *Seelenmord. Inzest und Therapie*. Stuttgart: Kreuz Verlag.
- Wolf, T. (2019). Scheinerinnerungen und »false memory« – aktuelle rechtliche Fragen an die Aussagepsychologie. *Forensische Psychiatrie, Psychologie, Kriminologie*, 13, 136–141.