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# Between Research Ethics and Other Interests: Challenges for Historians of Education



Jeroen J. H. Dekker and Inge J. M. Wichgers

## Introduction

Much scientific research funded by governments is placed at a distance of possible government interests, especially when governments finance institutions that select research projects and researchers themselves, in particular universities and research funding agencies, among them the Dutch NWO, the Flemish FWO, the British Research Councils, the German DFG, and the French CNRS. Governments also commission research directly, often on request or by pressure of their parliament, and on topics that could easily interfere with the government's interests. When getting such commissions, researchers have to cope with possible tensions between their own research ethics and the interests of the state.<sup>1</sup> Those tensions could manifest itself in various ways, varying from a clash between research ethics and interests of funding agencies to a process of accommodation by researchers with a view to future research commissions. In fact, researchers mostly not only have to cope with interests of funding agencies, but also with interests of other institutions, groups or individuals belonging to the subject of the research.

A case where next to the interests of funding agencies and researchers still other interests are at stake forms the research into historical child abuse, in particular of children placed in homes and foster families, in a number of countries including Ireland, Sweden, Belgium, Norway, Denmark, Canada, and several Australian states (Sköld and Swain 2015a, b). Much of this research was originally triggered by disclosures of incidents of sexual abuse of children within the Catholic Church. Those disclosures, which made public what victims did carry with them as a heavy burden

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<sup>1</sup>As is also the case when funding comes from private funding agencies connected with a commercial company.

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for years, led to research into historical child abuse commissioned by several dioceses world-wide. Soon after, governments became conscious of their own responsibility for guaranteeing a safe situation for children in homes and foster families who were placed out-of-home because of legal measures of child protection. Commissions were installed which did research themselves or let do research by research institutes or universities. This history of legal out-of-home placements of children in homes and foster families contains many potentially conflicting interests, among them the interests of the outplaced children and of pressure groups consisting of care leavers, of their parents, of the professionals working in this sector, of the management of child protection institutions, of the inspectorate, the media, last but not least of the state. In this case, the state became both funding agency of the research and responsible and interested subject of that same research into historical abuse. The investigation of this history therefore implicated the challenge for researchers to cope with those different interests, including the interest of their own research ethics.

In the first section, we turn to discussions between researchers on the relationship between research ethics and interests of funding agencies and on the question which ethical dilemmas do the conduct of research encounter in government funded research.? Then we focus on a specific case, namely research into historical child abuse in post Second World War Dutch child care, and to the various interests and ethical challenges involved in such research (section “[Investigations into historical child abuse: coping with varying and conflicting interests](#)”). In the concluding section “[Conclusion](#)” it will be outlined how interests of various actors within this case, with the state in the dual role of historical actor and research funding agency, could be addressed and coped with.

## **Interests of Research Ethics and of Funding Agencies**

The increase of contractual research, either by private funding or by governments, could result in a shift of power from researchers to funding agencies. In the Netherlands, private funding increased during the past decades, while government funded research through research funding agencies decreased in terms of percentage: in 1990, the Dutch government paid for almost half of research, whereas this was 36% in 2005 (Versleijen 2007, p. 32). Contractual research has strongly increased during the past decades (KNAW (Royal Dutch Academy of Sciences), 2005, p. 44; Köbben and Tromp 1999, pp. 19–20). This shift means a ‘major extension of power and control which those who provide the funding exercise over those who carry out the research in the new contractual relationships’ (Bridges 1998, pp. 594–595) or, as Köbben and Tromp (1999, p. 20) say: ‘he who pays the piper, calls the tune’. The same could occur when governments, instead of funding through research funding agencies, directly commission research on topics that easily could interfere with the government’s own interests.

This shift of power to funding agencies, among them the state when directly commissioning research, could affect the main elements of scientific research: the making of the research design, the choice for methods of analysis of data, the evaluation of the research results, and of course what and how to publish results. Resnik (2000, p. 257) distinguishes between objective and unbiased research: 'To be completely objective, a research result (i.e., hypothesis, theory, etc.) would need to be true (or well proven or correct) independent of human interests, concepts, values, and theories'. While objective research remains an unreachable goal, reduction of bias is not (Resnik 2000).

In the following, the power balance between funding agencies and researchers on the research subject, question, design, results and publication will be explored more generally before turning to the specific case of research into historical child abuse.

### ***Problem Selection and Research Question***

The first elements of research where researchers have to cope with possible tension between research ethics and interests of funding agencies, including the government, are the selection of the subject and the formulation of the research question. Several authors have found that government funding and research subjects and questions are correlated (Kjaernet 2010; KNAW 2005; Resnik 2000; Rowbottom and Aiston 2011; Useem 1976). Sometimes, this is due to lobby groups (Resnik 2000, pp. 267–268). As early as 1976, Useem showed that a substantial part of social scientists (would) change their topics – and their methods – when federal support leveled off. Resnik (2000, p. 269) even points out that since private funding affects the first step of research plans, the entire research progress and outcomes can be biased. However, not every study shows differences because of variety in funding (Gans and Murray 2011; Thomas 1982). And according to Thomas, the researcher's responsibility is essential in such conditions, for: 'If there is a danger in federal sponsorship, it is not located primarily in federal support of the scientific process, but in the ideological, normative, and epistemological characteristics of researchers and in the fundamental conditions that influence them' (Thomas 1982, p. 361).

That public funding of research is important has to do with closing a 'funding gap' or *selection* perspective, in 1962 articulated by Arrow. He argued that since private incentives to fund research are well below social incentives, without public funding the rate of inventive activity [production of knowledge, Arrow 1962, p. 1] would be suboptimal and its direction would be biased towards more applied, 'close to market' outcomes' (Gans and Murray 2011, p. 2). Public funding could also be related to democratic principles, as 'funding priorities, and by implication problem selections, should reflect human values as well as economic and political circumstances [...] in the public's interest'. That means that to 'eliminate these sorts of biases' remains impossible (Resnik 2000, p. 269).

Even more than biased, government funded research could lead to studying non-problems according to researchers (Kjaernet 2010; KNAW 2005; Rowbottom and

Aiston 2011) because of ill-defined research questions and objectives delivered by the funders themselves (KNAW 2005, p. 41) or because ‘researchers may be [...] denied the chance to participate in identifying problems (even within a very specific context)’. Sometimes ‘prescribing exactly what should and should not be evaluated can prove unnecessarily restrictive, e.g. serve to shield government decisions (and the underlying theories) from criticism’ (Rowbottom and Aiston, p. 640). Finally, government funding can lead to not investigating certain subjects and more generally, ‘the desire and need to satisfy sponsors may contribute to creating ‘blind zones’ for research’ (Kjaernet 2010, p. 165).

### ***Research Design and Data Analysis***

The next stages of conducting research, designing and analyzing, can also be influenced by funding agencies (Dowdy 1994; Kjaernet 2010; Resnik 2007; Rowbottom and Aiston 2011; Useem 1976). Several dilemmas between researchers and funding agencies may exist when funders are able to impact methods in different ways and varying degrees, by rigidly specifying or suggesting a methodological approach (Rowbottom and Aiston 2011) or making tight timescales.

When funders prescribe a design, for example a certain type of data collection, which does not match the research design, the answers to the research questions may possibly not be answered at all. Use of inappropriate methods can also be caused by tight timescales that sponsors require (Rowbottom and Aiston 2011). A rigidly specified approach may prevent scientists from being sufficiently critical, for example from using the severest possible tests or questioning received wisdom, while imposed short time scales can take away input from the best researchers and experts. Genuine scientists should also be open to the possibility that existent methods are not sufficient to the task at hand and should be willing to develop new methods as and when appropriate (Rowbottom and Aiston 2011, p. 642). Tight time scales can also squeeze the analysis stage whereby funding agencies can impact related to the content as well (Rowbottom and Aiston 2011, p. 641), for example ‘by insisting on a level of analysis that hides problems on another level, or by supplying the researcher with data that point in a particular direction’ (Kjaernet 2010, p. 166).

### ***Research Outcomes and Publication***

While various pharmaceutical studies have found effects of funding agencies on conclusions and publication, according to Kjaernet ‘there is no reason to believe that social science research is less vulnerable to similar influences’ (Kjaernet 2010, p.165). Indeed, many studies have shown that funding can lead to different research outcomes as well as secrecy of results (Bridges 1998; Dowdy 1994; Kjaernet 2010;

KNAW 2005; Köbben and Tromp 1999; Resnik 2007; Rowbottom and Aiston 2011; Useem 1976).

Challenges concerning research outcomes may arise because of pressure to re-write reports, directly from the sponsor or because of the system, for example with respect to the lack of the anonymity of the funders (Rowbottom and Aiston 2011, p. 644). Also, indirect pressure occurs to formulate research findings in a way that communicates with non-scientists, which can be problematic because it may lead to ignoring other important findings (Kjaernet 2010). Most serious is that a change of future funding could be a reason to falsify or even fabricate research results (Kjaernet 2010; Resnik 2007) because of the special relationship between researchers and funders. According to Kjaernet, this relationship 'is akin to a patron-client relationship. Finding themselves in a situation of asymmetric dependency, researchers may resort to self-censorship in order not to jeopardize future funding (see Andvig 2008)' (Kjaernet 2010, p. 165).

This self-censorship could lead to changes, subtractions and additions, or to more subtle adjustments (Köbben and Tromp 1999, p. 89), for example ignoring findings that are not interesting to non-scientists. Then, it could 'remove the focus from what is a primary concern of most scientists: How research findings can be made publishable in peer-reviewed journals'. For the 'demands from the project (to be brief, and make it specifically relevant to commercial actors)' could then become in 'conflict with the demands of the profession to make research findings relevant in terms of theory'. (Kjaernet 2010, p. 166). When 'a theory has failed a particular test, this is an important scientific finding' and not reporting this 'or worse, to make a refutation appear to be a confirmation – would be a cardinal Popperian sin' (Rowbottom and Aiston 2011, p. 645).

Publishing research outcomes should be a matter of fact, but that is not always the case. One reason may be that the right to publish research results is not always registered well or explicitly in researchers' contracts (KNAW 2005, p. 41). Also, there might be pressure to cope with interests of the research purchaser to keep research results a secret. So the Dutch General Government Terms and Conditions for Public Service Contracts, in Dutch ARVODI (Algemene Rijksvoorwaarden voor het verstrekken van Opdrachten tot het verrichten van Diensten, used for all contracts with the Dutch government), might contribute to such Rapport commissie-Samson. (2012). *Omring door zorg, toch niet veilig. Seksueel misbruik van door de overheid uit huis geplaatste kinderen, 1945 tot heden*. Amsterdam: Boom. pressure as they include demands like secrecy of results, transfer of intellectual property, and even copyright (KNAW 2005, p. 40; General Government Terms and Conditions for Public Service Contracts). Sometimes, also interests of other individuals than researchers are at stake when researchers feel that they have to secure next contracts for themselves and their research assistants or when they would not want to betray relations of trust and respect with colleagues (Bridges 1998, pp. 602–603). Besides, researchers may question whether their work will be oversimplified and whether publicity might embarrass their funding agencies so that a positive change is less likely to happen (Bridges 1998, pp. 602–603). Thus, there are several reasons why secrecy of government funded research is problematic.

This might become an argument in favour of government funding because of the openness of research, for '[...] public-sector researchers can ensure the broad disclosure of research findings that leads to long-term growth' (Gans and Murray 2011, p. 3). 'Disclosure is achieved through the contractual provisions of research funding and, more broadly, because of the norms and incentives for openness found in publish research institutions' [sic] (David 2008, in Gans and Murray 2011, p. 4).

From the perspectives of Kuhn and Popper, to hold information back from the scientific community might impede scientific progress (Rowbottom and Aiston 2011, pp. 645–646). Besides, a democratic government should not deny its citizens access to important information, especially when public money is used to commission research (Bridges 1998, p. 600).

## **Investigations into Historical Child Abuse: Coping with Varying and Conflicting Interests**

The challenges for researchers described above also seem to apply to recent investigations into research into historical child abuse in homes and foster families. Those investigations were funded by governments, which also were among the institutions with specific interests in the outcome of those investigations. Those investigations ask from researchers to cope with varying and potentially conflicting interests. Among them are those from outplaced children, whose protection should be core business of the out-of-home child care system, from care leavers and their pressure groups, from parents, from outplacing institutions among them the juvenile judge and the Guardianship Board, from receiving homes with their management and personnel and from receiving foster families, from the inspectorate, the media, last but not least from the state, next to being the funding agency also responsible for the best interests of out-of-home placed children by guaranteeing them a safe environment. Before turning to the Dutch case, a brief overview will be given of the birth of the international attention for historical abuse of children in out-of-home care.

### ***International Attention for Historical Abuse Focused on Sexual Abuse in Out-of-Home Care***

Since the 1990s, historical abuse of children in out-of-home care was put on the agenda in a number of western countries. It started in Australia in the 1995–1997s with the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission investigating the forced removals of Aboriginal Children from their families in the period 1910–1975. From the late 1990s, historical abuse of other groups of children in out-of-home care was investigated in various countries, including the Netherlands (Sköld and Swain 2015b, pp. 1–2). Those investigations focused on two powerful institutions, who

eventually also became the funders of those investigations, namely the Roman Catholic Church (Parkinson 2012) and the national state. The reported examples of sexual abuse of children within the Roman Catholic Church worked as a catalyst worldwide. Victim groups in various countries exercised major pressure on the church; they appeared in the media and talked with members of parliament. They were strongly motivated, for they asked for the investigation of a dark side of their own childhood and youth. As a result, in various countries and regions worldwide the Roman Catholic Church installed and financed research commissions. Then, governments became conscious – often under pressure of members of parliament approached by members of pressure groups of victims – of the fact that they also played a role – and an important one – in this history, namely of guaranteeing safety to children placed out-of-home under the responsibility of the state, notwithstanding the fact that the majority of those homes was for decades managed by private agencies, often Roman Catholic or Protestant ones. The occurrence of incidents of sexual abuse in homes and foster families meant that this safety was not guaranteed.

Behind the growing attention for historical abuse of children seem to be at least two phenomena. The first phenomenon was the increasing attention for victims generally in historical research, resulting, among other examples, in research into war victims, including the 1990s Balkan wars (NIOD 2002) and several colonial wars, and into victims of oppressive regimes both from the left and the right wing. The topics on the annual conferences of the dialogues on historical justice and memory network are evidence of this increasing attention for victims in history (<http://historicaldialogues.org/>).

The second phenomenon is the increasing attention for child maltreatment, a topic firmly put on the agenda in 1962 by the publication of the article “The Battered Child Syndrome” by medical doctor R. Kempe and his colleagues (1962) in the reputed *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)*. In this article in 2008 called a JAMA classic by Carole Jenny, Kempe and his colleagues focused on physical child maltreatment (Dekker 2010a, p. 45; Dekker 2009). But soon the definition of child maltreatment became more embracing and covered also psychological and emotional maltreatment. This resulted in higher prevalence figures (Finkelhor 1979; Finkelhor 1984). From the late 1970s, also serious attention developed for sexual child abuse, starting in the USA. Jenny (2008) quoted a meta-analysis from 1999 reporting that “30% to 40% of women and 13% of men experienced sexual abuse during childhood”. She concluded that “understanding of the ways children can be maltreated has expanded greatly” (Dekker 2010a, p. 47). The main impulse for this increasing attention for sexual child abuse came from medical doctors, psychologists, therapists, and from the feminist movement, not from politicians or from the media.



## *Attention for Historical Child Abuse in the Netherlands*

Also in the Netherlands, media and politicians gave almost no attention to this phenomenon of sexual abuse of children until the late 1980s (Vasterman 2004; Vasterman 2005). The reasons why differed over time. It was not as if sexual abuse was not observed before, but it was evaluated differently. In the 1950s, this form of child abuse, although known and observed, mostly was considered a problem of adult staff members who were not able to withstand the seduction of youngsters, not a problem for the abused children themselves. In the 1960s and 1970s, lack of attention for sexual abuse by media and politicians could be related to the seemingly rather indulgent approach to sexual contact between adults and youngsters, also in professional-client relationships within child care homes and foster families, because of the influence of the sexual revolution (Dekker et al. 2012; Timmerman et al. 2012). This indulgent approach changed radically from the early 1990s. Then, child sexual abuse in out-of-home living arrangements became an issue in the media and in society. When it eventually in 2010 came to national inquiries into the abuse of children in public care, little or no attention was given to other types of maltreatment, such as physical abuse or emotional neglect. In 2010 in the Netherlands, after the instalment in 2009 of the commission-Deetman for the investigation of sexual abuse in institutions of the Roman Catholic Church, also the commission-Samson for the investigation of sexual abuse of out-of-home-placed children under the responsibility of the state started its work (Deetman et al. 2011a, b, 2013; Rapport commissie-Samson 2012). The attention for historical child abuse was mainly focused on sexual abuse for several years.

For the clarifying of the dual role of the Dutch state as historical actor and research funding agency and how researchers had to cope with that role, it is important to answer the question why child sexual abuse initially dominated the agenda when it came to a national inquiry into the abuse of children in public care. Two elements are crucial in explaining this: (1) the impact on national politics of incidents within the Roman Catholic Church, and (2) the existence of long-lasting legal and moral values on the impermissible and punishable character of sexual child abuse.

1. In response to publicity generated by victim groups, the Dutch episcopate, together with the society of religious congregations responsible for most Catholic boarding schools, established a commission to investigate claims of sexual abuse in catholic institutions in 2009. The commission was mentioned after its chair Wim Deetman, a Protestant and former minister of education, a member and president of parliament, mayor of the city of The Hague, and until now a member of the Constitutional Council: a man of high repute, trusted by Catholics and by the main political parties. In 2011, his Commission published a report on sexual abuse of boys from the late 1940s until the 1970s. In 2013, a supplementary report followed about physical violence against girls, thus on historical abuse next to sexual abuse. This second investigation was triggered by comments from female care leavers, who complained that the 2011 report only reported on cases

of boys (Deetman 2011a, b, 2013). Triggered by the initiative from the Roman Catholic Church, pressure groups of survivors and care leavers convinced members of the Dutch Parliament about the political and societal necessity of an investigation into the government's role for the sexual abuse of children placed out-of-home under the state's responsibility. The pressure groups made clear that part of the sexual abuse cases reported within Roman Catholic institutions, namely in Catholic residential homes, were not only the responsibility of the Roman Catholic Church but also of the state: those children were placed out-of-home because of legal child protection measures. As a result, members of parliament asked for an investigation into the state's responsibility for those children. The government, anxious to minimize the political risk for example of a Parliamentary Investigation with possible consequences for cabinet members, took the initiative well before Deetman reported. In the summer of 2010, an inquiry commission to study child sexual abuse in residential homes and foster families under the responsibility of the state after the Second World War was installed with as its president Rieke Samson, former attorney-general and public prosecutor. The research for this commission was done by several research groups from Dutch universities, including the University of Groningen (Dane et al. 2012; Dekker et al. 2012; Dekker and Grietens 2015; Grietens 2012; Timmerman et al. 2012). Based on the research reports and on the reports of more than 500 survivors, the Commission Samson wrote her final report (Rapport commissie-Samson 2012).

2. The second reason why child sexual abuse initially dominated the agenda when it came to national inquiries into the abuse of children in public care seems to be the existence of long-lasting legal and moral values on the impermissible and punishable character of sexual child abuse (Wiarda 2011). Sexual abuse of children was a crime in the Netherlands since the introduction in 1806 of the French *Code Pénal* (Dekker 2001). Therefore, it was possible to point at responsible and potentially guilty individuals and institutions when sexual abuse against minors was at stake, this in contrast with other forms of child abuse or violence against children, without a long existing legal umbrella until recently with the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the child (Dekker 2011). As we saw above, also sexual abuse was evaluated differently over time in this period. But underlying moral values about which behaviour was morally permitted and which not did less change for sexual abuse than for other forms of historical child abuse, among them violence against children or emotional abuse: its evaluation over time changed much more radically, together with changing ideas on educational styles and the training of discipline.<sup>2</sup>

Together, those two reasons, the example of investigations by the Roman Catholic Church into sexual child abuse and long-lasting legal and moral values on the

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<sup>2</sup>This notwithstanding the fact that the law changed from time to time also regarding sexual abuse: with change of definitions and of age minima for minors to have sexual relationships with adults. These changes in the law mirror changes in underlying values, related to the more libertarian sexual culture from the 1960s and 1970s.

impermissible and punishable character of sexual child abuse, seem to explain the initial focus on sexual abuse. Indeed, in the investigations by the Deetman and Samson committees almost no attention was given to other types of historical abuse than sexual abuse. This was the consequence of the formulation of the commissions that asked for research on sexual abuse only.

### *Coping with Various Interests*

Researchers had to cope with interests of a number of institutions and groups during the investigations for the Samson-committee, namely outplaced children whose protection is core business of out-of-home child care, outplacing institutions among them the juvenile judge and the Guardianship Board, receiving homes with their management and personnel, foster families, supervision agencies and inspectorate, last but not least the state with its responsibility for the best interests of those children and for guaranteeing a safe environment.

Outplacement of children did happen within a professionalizing (Dekker 2016a, b) market of supply and demand with various roles and interests for the institutions and groups mentioned. It is clarifying to look over time at the roles, responsibilities and interests of the various parties within this market characterised by some major ups and downs through its post war history by looking at the number of outplaced children, with a sharp decrease in measures in the 1970s after a very high level in the late 1950s, and a steady recovery from the late 1980s. It seems that this historically changing demand for legal out-of-home placements mirrored a changing societal demand and in its ups and downs affected by the society's changing opinions about good and bad parenting and about belief in the effectiveness of legal interventions (Dekker 2016a, b). Increasingly, in the last few decades, societal interests were expressed by professionals, while members of parliament sometimes played the role of representatives of pressure groups (Dekker 2007, 2016a, b; Dekker et al. 2012, pp. 38–39, pp. 78–80).

The delivering of supply, i.e. outplacement of children, was the task of the admitting institutions. Until the 1970s they were in great majority private, mostly catholic or protestant, with a small number of state institutions for criminal children. From the 1990s this transformed into professionalized consortia becoming powerful market players. Both rather small denominational institutions in the past and big consortia from the 1990s did have a great interest of keeping and guaranteeing their market share, for a decrease of children admitted meant decrease of finance and thus of capacity and personnel (Dekker 2007; Dekker et al. 2012, pp. 38–39).

The role and interests of the state in this market were twofold: on the one hand being sensitive for changing societal ideas about out-of-home placements of children, and on the other hand determining the budget. While the societal demand for legal outplacements as mirrored in the number of legal child protection measures was eventually decided by the juvenile judges, advised by the Guardianship Board, the budgets for the supply available were eventually determined by the state. When

foster families after the 1970s became the first choice for outplacement this was justified educationally (Dekker and Grietens 2015), but also fitted the government's interest of cutting budgets, necessary in those years (Dekker et al. 2012, pp. 78–80, 417).

The role of children (and of their parents) in the working of this market was very limited. While parents have the constitutional right to choose the school for their children and while most mental health clients have the freedom to stop treatment, this is not the case with legal out-of-home placements of children. The main decisions were made by others, although the problems and behaviour of children and families form the *raison d'être* for this market. When in the 1970s figures of out-of-home placements went down, it was not that parenting styles or child's behaviour suddenly changed, but because its assessment about whether or not to intervene changed. It therefore seems that when looking over time not parent's parenting practices or the child's behaviour directed the ups and downs of out-of-home placements, but that both its supply and demand, although according to the law to be taken "in the best interests of the child", were directed primarily by other agencies mirroring a societal need (Dekker et al. 2012, pp. 78–80). For the rest, although children did not play a major role, they did have their own perspective about how they experienced the out-of-home placement. Some research about the child's perspective is available, before the 1970s consisting of experiences of care leavers recorded through questionnaires and published, and for the more recent period consisting of interviews with children when still staying in homes (Dekker et al. 2012, p. 228). Studying those perspectives was not only in the interest of the children and the researchers, but also explicitly asked by the commissioner of the research, the Samson-committee.

Guaranteeing safety by the state means supervising and inspecting the field. As was generally the case, also for the inspectorate sexual abuse of children during out-of-home placements in the sixties and seventies sexual abuse was not on their agenda, as became clear from an interview with one of the circa five inspectors who were active in the 1970s. Exemplary is that although the serious and critical inspectors of the Heldring-institutions in 1973 wrote critically about the risks of psychiatrist Finkensieper becoming too dominant, they were unable to pick up signals of child abuse by this same psychiatrist, for it was out of the question to think about one of the highest ranked professionals in Dutch Child protection as a child abuser (Njiokiktjien and Lucieer 1973). The same happened when a special commission, the commission Dijkhuis, investigated the institution 2 years later. Eventually, however, Finkensieper's arrest and sentencing in 1992 made clear that both inspectors and members of the committee-Dijkhuis were wrong (Dekker et al. 2012, p. 377; Dekker and Grietens 2015, pp. 112–113). Also the fundamental criticism by the Association of Minors' Interests (Belangenvereniging Minderjarigen) and other alternative pressure groups in the 1970s of the psychiatrist's behaviour did not include accusations of sexual abuse. On May 17, 1974 this association started a campaign against the practices on the Heldring Institutions for the treatment of girls with complaints about misuse of power, knocking girls out with sedatives, and

describing the psychiatrist Finkensieper as the embodying person of the new medicalization direction of therapy (Dekker et al. 2012, pp. 411–412).

Also the media before the 1980s only incidentally reported about child abuse. This changed in the late 1980s with attention for among others the Finkensieper-case. The media's publicity was often set in motion by care leavers and victims. By publishing about incidents, they could play a supervising and monitoring role for society. In contrast with the state inspectorate, which was a part of the same ministry that was also responsible for the system they had to supervise, the media could remain outside. Their impact can be influential, for institutions and agencies do never like bad publicity. We also saw this in Sweden and in New South Wales in Australia with TV-broadcastings setting in motion attention for child abuse by the authorities (Sköld and Swain 2015b).

### *From Research on Sexual Child Abuse to Violence Against Children*

During the investigations into child sexual abuse by the Deetman and the Samson committees, it became clear that more went wrong. The publication of the above mentioned second report by Deetman on violence against girls and young women in Roman Catholic Institutions made clear that other forms of violence frequently occurred within Roman Catholic institutions, in particular for girls. During the investigations of the Samson committee, it became clear that most reported incidents of sexual abuse went together with other forms of violence and were part of a broader spectrum of humiliation, misuse of power, and of physical and psychological violence. While not all elements of this spectrum were formally forbidden by the law, they were according to existing educational values after the Second World War educationally and morally not admitted.<sup>3</sup> It became clear that the extraordinary uneven power balance between educators and children in total institutions like residential homes was potentially favourable for stimulating sadistic and immoral behaviour by part of the personnel, also when measured with contemporary norms and values. With Hans Grietens in his report on foster families for the Committee Samson (Grietens 2012) making clear that others forms of maltreatment were represented in foster children's stories too, there is no reason to think that this was basically different for children outplaced in homes.

The question arose what were those other forms of violence. This question, resulting from the Samson investigations, triggered political attention for investigations into other forms of historic abuse of out-of-home children. In the autumn of 2015 a Commission of researchers was set up by the Dutch Minister of Justice with as main task to do a preliminary investigation into violence against children in residential homes and foster families after the Second World War. The results of the

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<sup>3</sup>Research into history of parenting shows that from the sixteenth century, child rearing advice books warned parents against physically punishing their children (Dekker 2010b).

Preliminary studies, published on May, 17, 2016, showed that violence against children in out-of-home child care seemed to be a serious problem and that investigating violence historically was doable in terms of sources and methods (Rapport en Bijlagen 2016). The government in a letter by the Minister of Justice, G.A. van der Steur and the Health Secretary M.J. van Rijn to the Lower House, decided to a follow up of the investigations (van der Steur and Van Rijn 2016).

## Conclusion

When looking at potential tensions between research ethics and other interests when it comes to the formulation of the research subject, question, design, methodology and research methods, and the conclusion and publication of the results, it became clear that increasingly researchers meet tough ethical dilemmas, for example about accommodating results because of the possibility of future funding. They have to cope with a threatening shift of power between them and funding agencies in order to not become situated at the margin or even outside of research ethics. This development occurred both with private agencies and with the state when commissioning research directly and on topics that could interfere with the state's interests. It could be seen both in medical and pharmaceutical sciences and in social sciences. The exception on the rule remained funding which, although eventually paid by the government, is not directed by the government but by universities or research funding agencies that are rather free in their own research policy.

The case of research into Dutch historical child abuse after the Second World War turned out to be an in between case. On the one hand, the government took the initiative for this research and was also the funding agency. Moreover, the government both the departments of Justice and Health and the inspectorate, was subject of the investigations, with strong interests in the outcome of the research. On the other hand, the Samson-committee that commissioned the research was autonomous in asking researchers to develop research projects within the main research question, determined by the government, on sexual abuse of out-of-home placed children. This construction seems to give sufficient counter balance to protect researchers from pressure by interest groups, in this case the state, notwithstanding being paid by this same interest group. It seems to sufficiently prevent the risk of accommodation to the goals of the funding agency. This research situation seems to be rather similar with doing research paid by research funding agencies paid by the state: apart from the research subject and research question, design, methodology and research methods, and the conclusion and publication of the results were and remained the responsibility of the researchers. It is a challenge for researchers in such a situation to remain critical and independent, to maintain their academic ethics, and to resist the temptation to more or less accommodate their research to any interests, among them the interests of funding agencies because of potential new commissions and research grants in the future.

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