

Linköping University Medical Dissertations No. 1027

THE PARENTING OF SOCIETY

A study of Child Protection in
Sweden – from Report to Support

Madeleine Cocozza



Linköping University
FACULTY OF HEALTH SCIENCES

Division of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Department of Clinical and
Experimental Medicine, Faculty of Health Sciences. Linköping University,
SE-581 85 Linköping, Sweden

Linköping 2007

© Madeleine Cocozza, 2007

Coverdesign: Per Lagman & Madeleine Cocozza

ISBN: 978-91-85895-55-7

ISSN: 0345-0082

Printed by LiU-Tryck, Linköping Sweden, 2007

To the children I met in my profession advocating the parenting of society, it was the shared suffering with you that generated the questions in this study.

CONTENTS

SVENSK SAMMANFATTNING.....	7
ABSTRACT	11
LIST OF PAPERS	13
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	15
INTRODUCTION	19
Explanation of Key Terms	20
OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH FIELD	22
Introduction.....	22
Mandatory Reporting	23
The Failure to Report.....	24
The Nature of Child Maltreatment	26
The Designing of Different Child Protection Systems	28
The Filtering Process and the Gate-keeping Points	29
Theoretical Perspectives	30
The Ideology and Framing of Child Protection.....	31
The Legislation	32
Report	34
Investigation and Support	35
Administration.....	36
The Specification of Professionals	36
PURPOSE OF THE THESIS	39
METHODS AND MATERIALS	41
Paper I: The Filtering Process	42
Paper II: The Report and Content	43
Paper III: The Initial Assessment	43
Paper IV: The Influence of Socio-Economic Load.....	43

Material	44
Procedure	44
Follow-up Study	45
The Filtering Process Study – Paper I.....	45
Background.....	45
Material and Procedure.....	46
The Content of the Reports.....	47
The Reporter and Content – Paper II.....	48
Background.....	48
Procedure and Material.....	48
Content of Reports.....	49
The Initial Assessment – Paper III.....	49
Background.....	49
Material	49
Procedure	50
The Impact of Socio-Economic Factors – Paper IV	51
Background and material	51
Procedure	51
Statistical Methods.....	52
Missing data	52
Discussion of Method	53
The Validity and Reliability.....	54
Ethical Considerations.....	55
SUMMARY OF RESULTS.....	57
Paper I: Child Protection in a Family Service Organization in Sweden – What is the Outcome for Maltreated Children?	57
Paper II: Who Suspects and Reports Child Maltreatment to Social Services in Sweden? Is there a Reliable Mandatory Reporting Process? ...	59
Paper III: Child Protection in Sweden - Are Routine Assessments Reliable?	60
Paper IV: The Impact of Socio-Economic Factors in Family Service Organized Child Protection	61
DISCUSSION.....	63
The Filtering Process	63
The Reporter and the Content of Reports.....	64
The Initial Assessment.....	66
Socio Economic Aspects	66
Limitations and Possible Criticisms of the Findings	67
CONCLUSIONS.....	69
REFERENCES	72

SVENSK SAMMANFATTNING

Barn som misshandlas fysiskt eller psykiskt, utsätts för sexuella övergrepp eller omsorgsvikt är beroende av olika former av skydd från samhället. När och hur detta skydd skall ges regleras i lagstiftning och utformas på olika sätt i olika länder. I Sverige finns ingen specifik myndighet som ansvarar för barns skydd. Barns skydd är organiserat som en bland andra välfärdstjänster inom ramen för Socialtjänstlagen och brukar benämnas den sociala barnavården. Familjer vänder sig till Socialtjänsten med önskemål om hjälp med exempelvis kontaktfamilj och familjehem. Vid misstanke om att barn far illa blir socialtjänstens uppdrag mer tvingande och inte sällan i konflikt med familjen. Barns skydd är utformat som en del av socialtjänsten och utgörs av tre nivåer i lagstiftning: *anmälan, utredning och insatser*. Lagstiftaren har organiserat arbetet inom ramen för kommunal verksamhet, med den Sociala förvaltningen som verkställande myndighet och Socialstyrelsen som tillsynsmyndighet. Det är genom detta sociala system som samhället går in i barnets värld, gör bedömningar av barnens föräldrar och vid behov försöker ge barnen ett bättre föräldraskap än vad de har – samhället blir förälder. Syftet med denna avhandling är att beskriva och analysera hur barns behov av samhällets skydd är tillvarataget i Sverige.

Det saknas nationell statistik avseende barns skydd. Vi vet inte vilka barn som anmäls, vad som anmäls eller utfallet av anmälningarna. Det saknas även kunskap om hur många barnavårdsutredningar som genomförs. Kunskapsbristen innebär att det på en nationell nivå idag inte går att utvärdera skyddet till ”barn som far illa”.

Avhandlingens empiriska del utgörs av en akt- och register studie bestående av det totala antalet anmälningar som gjordes till Linköpings kommun under 1998. Anmälningarna följdes till ett beslut var taget. Totalt gjordes 1 570 anmälningar avseende 1 051 barn, vilka utgjorde 4 % av det totala antalet barn i kommunen. År 2003 genomfördes en uppföljningsstudie för att undersöka hur många barn som hade varit aktuella under uppföljningsperioden. Fyra delstudier har genomförts.

- I den första delstudien beskrivs anmälningarna utifrån följande: Vilka barn som anmäldes (kön, ålder, adress), antalet gånger som varje barn var anmält, om barnen redan hade kontakt med socialtjänsten eller andra myndigheter, som exempelvis barn och ungdomspsykiatri? Anmälningarna följdes igenom de tre nivåerna i lagstiftningen som reglerar barns skydd: Vem anmälde och på vilken grund? Hur många anmälningar utreddes? Hur många ledde vidare till insats? Ett annat syfte i denna delstudie var att jämföra utfallet av anmälningarna med utfallet i andra länder.
- Den andra delstudien beskriver och analyserar följande: Vilka gjorde en anmälan? Vilka professionella anmälde? Vad var orsaken till anmälan? I vilken utsträckning innehöll anmälan en misstanke om att barn för illa? Vad var utfallet av de olika anmälarnas anmälningar?
- En beskrivning och en analys av bedömningarna som ledde till beslutet att inte utreda genomfördes i en tredje delstudie: Vilka kontakter tog socialarbetaren? Träffade socialarbetaren barnet? Kontaktades anmälaren? Analys av tillförlitligheten i beslutet att inte utreda genomfördes.
- Den fjärde delstudien analyserade om socio- ekonomiska faktorer påverkade att barn anmäldes och utreddes.

Tonåringarna utgjorde 58 % av alla anmälningar och ett större antal pojkar (548) än flickor (471) var anmälda. Den vanligaste registrerade anmälan (30 %) avsåg en tonåring 13-18 år som begått ett brott. Studien visar att inte alla anmälningarna innehöll misstanke om att barn för illa. I de fall då det klarlagts att barn begått brott, skickar polisen brottsregistreringarna till Sociala förvaltningen, där de registreras som en anmälan enligt kap 14 Socialtjänstlagen. Av alla gjorda anmälningar ledde 16 % till en insats, (14 % frivilligt och 2 % med stöd av tvångslagstiftning). En stor andel av anmälningarna (41 %) föranledde inte vidare utredning. Skälet till att inte utreda var i 128 fall att barnen redan var kända av Sociala förvaltningen. Vid en jämförelse med en liknande population anmälningar i en engelsk studie (Gibbons et al., 1995) var antalet barn, som fick en insats ungefär lika.

Polisen gjorde flest anmälningar (35 %), följt av gruppen professionella (skola, barnhälsovård, barn och ungdomspsykiatrisk klinik) som hade gjort 33 %. Av 1 051 barn hade professionella anmält 348. Av dessa hade skolan anmält 100 barn, barn och ungdomspsykiatrisk klinik hade anmält 25 och barnhälsovården samt barnomsorgen 11. De professionellas anmäl-

ningar ledde till utredning i 76 % av fallen, 22 % ledde inte vidare, 2 % utgjordes av anmälningar som avsåg fall i vilka en utredning var pågående.

Anmälningarna studerades och delades in i tre olika kategorier: indikerar barn som far illa, indikerar inte barn som far illa och falska. Ingen anmälan befanns vara falsk, 68 % kategoriserades såsom indikerande att barn far illa. Socialarbetaren använde sig i 74 % av bedömningarna, som ledde fram till att utredning inte inleddes, endast av familjen som informations källa, i 6 % av fallen använde sig socialarbetaren av någon utanför familjen. Socialarbetaren träffade inte barnet alls i 53 % av bedömningarna. Den anmälda misstanken om att ett barn behövde samhällets skydd, bedömdes efter beslut att inte inleda utredning tagits kvarstå i 76 % av fallen. Vid 2003 års uppföljning återfanns 45 % av alla barn, som inte utredes primärt, i sociala förvaltningens register och hade således blivit föremål för utredning under uppföljningstiden. Av de professionellas anmälningar, som inte ledde vidare till utredning återfanns 53 % i uppföljningsstudien.

Hur den socioekonomiska belastningen i det geografiska område där barnen bodde påverkade besluten om att inleda en utredning studerades. Barnets adress registrerades därefter kategoriserades de geografiska områdena utifrån tre variabler: andelen socialbidragstagare, ohälsotalet samt inkomstindex. Andelen anmälningar var högst i högt socioekonomiskt belastade områden, 4,3 % jämförd med medel 3,1 % och de lågt belastade 2,3 %. Andelen anmälningar som föranledde en utredning i de olika områdena var (53 %, 48 %, 43 %). En logistisk regressionsanalys visade, att den socioekonomiska belastningen i det område som barnet bodde i inte förklarade beslutet om inleda utredning. Det var faktorer som anmälningsfrekvens, om professionella anmälde och allvarlighetsgrad i anmälan, som påverkade beslut om utredning.

Avhandlingen ger en bild av hur samhällets skydd till barn som far illa fungerar i Sverige och pekar på förändringar som behöver göras:

- De olika nivåerna (anmälan, utredning och insats) som utgör skyddet till barn som far illa behöver kunna skiljas ut så att arbetet som utförs i de olika nivåerna kan utvärderas.
- Anmälningar måste registreras på ett enhetligt sätt över hela landet. Ett sätt att möjliggöra detta är att införa en nationell blankett för registrering.
- En nationell databas för att följa processen att skydda barn från anmälan till insats behöver upprättas.

- Mottagandet av professionellas anmälningar behöver kvalitetssäkras. Säkerheten för att professionella som anmäler inom ramen för anmälningsplikten, får ett kvalitativt bra bemötande kan ökas genom att utarbeta riktlinjer för hur en anmälan ska bedömas och vilka kontakter som ska tas.
- Fler studier av processen att skydda barn behöver genomföras. Detta i syfte att ytterligare utvärdera hur säkerställt skyddet till barn som far illa är.

ABSTRACT

Child protection is the process that aims to find, investigate and help maltreated children. In many countries this process is initiated by professionals who compile mandated reports that are then submitted to a designated agency that in many cases is part of a separate child protection system. In Sweden there is no separate child protection system. In Sweden, the child protection process is part of the family-service organization system. The system has two main objectives, one is voluntary (provide family service), the other coercive (provide child protection). This system is administered by the municipal social services agencies (referred to throughout as Social Services).

Aim: The overall purpose of this study was to gain knowledge of the child protection process in Sweden. The aim was two fold, one to carry out an in-depth study of a population of reports, the other to analyse the results of the findings in relation to the child protection system. The child protection system consists of elements outlined in the macro system: the underlying ideology and the framing of the problem, and the legislation, administration and the demands placed on professionals.

Method: A total population of reports made to one municipality during 1998 was followed to a final decision. The reports were collected in 2000. There were 1 570 reports made regarding 1 051 children, which composed 4 % of children age 0-18. This initial study was used in four papers where data were analysed covering four different issues. In 2003 a follow-up study was conducted in order to determine the extent to which the child appeared in the database of Social Services. In the first paper the children's age, gender and contacts with Social Services were described as were the content of the reports and the outcome of reporting. The objective of the second paper was a description of the reporter, and the measurement of the extent to which the reports indicated child maltreatment. The third paper aimed at analysing how the first decision, the decision not to investigate reports, was made in the child protection process. Then a re-evaluation of these decisions was made to see how well the decision was justified. The contacts taken were described. In the fourth paper the influence of the socio-economic load on the child protection process was measured.

Findings: Few reports (16 %) led to an intervention being provided, and 41 % of the reports were not investigated further. In the follow-up study 61 % of all 1 051 children appeared in the files of Social Services. As Sweden lacks a juvenile delinquency system these cases are automatically passed from the police to Social Services and are there registered as mandated reports. Hence the police became the largest report group of reporters, followed by professionals. Of the professionals' reports 22 % were not investigated. In the follow-up study 53 % of these re-occurred at the Social Service and were then investigated. Seventy six percent of the reports not investigated were when re-evaluated found to indicate child maltreatment. The social worker used the parents as the main source for information in 74 % of the cases. The social worker did not contact the child at all in 53 % of the cases and only nine of the reporters were contacted. In the follow-up study 45 % of the children investigation re-appeared in the files of Social Services. Children from high socio-economic load districts were more often reported than those from middle or low (4.3%, 3.1% 2.3%). The socio economic load when measured in logistic regression was not found to correlate with the decision to investigate.

A main finding in this study was that the child protection process was difficult to separate from other systems within the family service. This makes it much more difficult to evaluate the child protection process.

The reports filed by professionals were not investigated adequately, and the lack of criteria of specifying how reports are to be evaluated creates a risk that maltreated children will not be found. The professional reports were handled in a way that increased the risk that professionals will have negative experiences with Social Services that consequently can lead them to refrain from filing reports.

Conclusion: These findings suggest the following: Pass new legislation that makes it easier to separate each of the three systems from the other. Create a national database in which data on the handling of child-protection cases is systematically recorded. Develop a national reporting form that is to be used by all who file mandated reports of suspected maltreatment. Create clear criteria that specify how a report is to be handled to ensure that the reporting professionals are met with appropriate respect and that the quality of the decisions is guaranteed all over the country.

LIST OF PAPERS

This thesis is based on the following publications, which are referred to in the text by their Roman numerals:

Paper I

Cocozza, M., Gustafsson, P.A., & Sydsjö, G. Child Protection in a Family Service Organisation in Sweden-What is the Outcome for Maltreated Children? *Children and Youth Services Review* (accepted for publication, 20070731).

Paper II

Cocozza, M., Gustafsson, P.A., & Sydsjö, G. Who suspects and reports child maltreatment to Social Services in Sweden? Is there a reliable mandatory reporting process? *European Journal of Social Work*, 2007: 10:209-223.

Paper III

Cocozza, M., Gustafsson, P.A., & Sydsjö, G. Are routine assessments reliable? *Acta paediatrica*, 2006: 95:2006: 1474-1480.

Paper IV

Cocozza, M., Gustafsson, P.A., & Sydsjö, G. The Impact of socio - economic load in Family Service Organized Child Protection. (Submitted).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The training to become a researcher has taken place in two scenes of my life; one is my public world and the other is my private one. I would like to express my deepest feelings of gratitude to the following persons for having supported me in this work:

My supervisor **M.D. Per Gustafsson**, for having had the courage to make this study with me as the PhD student, and for his ability to catch the high level of idealism, politics, anger and frustration in this work and transform them into science by expressing few but necessary sharp words.

To my co-supervisor **Professor Gunilla Sydsjö**, for having agreed to take the responsibility for this study. Your certainty in the scientific word in combination with your understanding of what a PhD-student experiences have made this journey easier to live.

To **The Social Services** in Linköping: the team secretaries, **Ann-Chatrine Johansson**, **Inger Bohlin**, **Maria Byström** and **Eva Philipsson** and all personnel that helped me to find the reports. **Gunilla Bohlin** for her positive attitude to research and for all the practical help with the permissions and to **Christer Elb** for the help in 2000 with the data collection. A special thank to **Arne Linder**, for his broad knowledge of the social legislation and its interpretation and for having with his polite and kind way answered all my questions during these years.

Dr. Björn Lundin, who was the chef of the Child and Adolescent Department during 1992-2000 and in this position created the financial base for this study during the initial phase. Thank you for believing in me becoming a researcher and for your commitment to the production of this thesis, but most of all, thank you for 23 years constantly sharing the same ideological work with maltreated children.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To my colleague and friend **Psychologist Gunilla Nyström**, without someone like her, with the same ideological spirit of helping children, taking on the conflicts whenever needed, I would have become crazy. Thank you for having shared your knowledge with me and for always demanding of me to think and act sharp in our professional world, but to always try to understand me in the private one.

To the members of the extraordinary team at the Child and Adolescent Department; **BUP-Kommunal**. I would like to cite Leonard Cohen; “This is not a time for ideological work, this is a time to duck,” I will remember our team with proudness.

Dr. Gunilla Jarkman-Björn, chef of the Child and Adolescent Department during 2000-2007 you headed the responsibility for this research, thank you for always being supportive, encouraging and proud of the research produced at our Department.

To my special PhD group, **Charlotta Lindell** and **Teresia Ängarne-Lindberg**. Thank you for having made this journey that I thought of as a strictly academic, and humor less one into something else, thank you for help with the reading of the final text, all your sincerely moral support, and for having made me burst into laughter so many times.

To my PhD- student group, **Malin, Per, Eva- Maria, Doris Christina, Maria** and **Nicolas** for all the interesting and knowledge creating meetings we have had being on the same voyage, I certainly will miss our meetings.

To the Division of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, **Carl-Göran Svedin, Marie Wadsby, Elisabeth Arvidsson** and **Ingbeth Larsson**. Thank you for all your support. A Special thank to Elisabeth for your research assistance.

To **Larry Lundgren**, thank you for all your extremely patience in reviewing my English in my papers as well as in this thesis.

Professor **John Carstensen**, for expert assistance with the statistics, and Professor **Tommy Svensson**, for expert assistance to the sociological thinking.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In my private world I wish to thank:

My parents, **Giuseppe Coccozza** and **Anna Coccozza**, thank you both for always having encouraged me to study, as you have understood the importance of knowledge. I also want to thank you both that you early in my life demanded of me to have a social pathos, of which this work is a result. Thank you for making my life so much richer and to have encouraged me to develop to become what I am, even when it was difficult for you.

My own angel, **Filomena Palombo**. What would I have done without you? Thank you for all your practical help during these years, there is no way in which I ever can pay you back; I can only express my gratitude in this way; Thank you.

My siblings **Michael** and **Helene**, for being my first play mates in our first little world and ever after, continuing to support me in the big world. Thank you for supporting me in this work. A special thank to all in my extended family, **Adam**, **Josephine**, **Daniela**, **Rebecca**, **Simon** and **Catharina** for giving me love, all in your own special way.

Finally my two Jewels, **Sebastian** and **Stella**, my biological children. Being your mother has been the most wonderful thing I have experienced in my life. Thank you both for having assisted me in this work with support and so much patience, **I love you!**

Linköping i oktober 2007

Madeleine Coccozza

INTRODUCTION

Children are born into a social environment they cannot choose. One of the most fundamental parts of this social environment is the child's parents and the abilities that these parents have. The child's parents should, in the best of all possible worlds, be the people the child can rely on, but this is not always so and some children actually need protection from one or both parents. This circumstance has led countries throughout the world to intervene in the private lives of families. Such interventions is of concern for many in the society as different points of view are presented when debates are held regarding this issue. The points cover, for example, children's right to be protected, the justification for the state to intervene in the affairs of families, parents' right to receive support from society in order to remain with their children, and what is best for the child.

Since 1902 there is a legislation (SFS 1902:67) in Sweden that allows the state to take children into custody without the consent of the parents. This process is referred to as the child protection process. The consequence of such legislation is that the state not only expresses the capability to identify the maltreated children but also takes on responsibility for providing parenting. Maltreated children are to be protected within the child protection process, with if necessary, you could say, the state as their new parents.

The child protection process is full of complications. The conditions that have to exist when the state intervene are by no means static. They are a manifestations of the current state of norms, values and knowledge (e.g. Lundström, 1993; Lagerberg & Sundelin, 2000; Lundström & Vinnerljung, 2001). Furthermore, the child protection process is a course of action that is built out of a conflict, the conflict between the child and the parent. The conflict arises because the parents, for a variety of reasons, are often not able to see their own destructive behaviour towards their children. The legislation of child protection aims to identify, investigate and protect/help these children in this stressed conflict. Studies of the child protection process in Sweden are few, so this study was conducted with the aim of describing and analysing the child protection process in Sweden.

Explanation of Key Terms

Children

In this study the term children is used for the age –group covered by the Social Service Act, children aged 0-18 year.

Maltreated Children

The legislation indicates the following situations when a child could be in need of protection: physical violence, psychological violence, sexual abuse, and emotional and/or practical neglect (Government bill, 2002/03:53). There are four categories of maltreatment that are recognized: physical abuse, sexual abuse, psychological abuse (or emotional maltreatment) and neglect. In the following, the term child maltreatment will be used for all these categories.

Child Protection System

The child protection system is the system that outlines the child protection process. Issues that are central in the child protection system are the framing of the problem, the organization of the protection to be provided and the professional demand of those taking responsibility (Bronfenbrenner, 1977: Gilbert, 1997: Lagerberg & Sundelin, 2000).

Child Protection Process

The child protection process denotes two levels. One is in legislation where the process is structured -the ideal level, the other is the social practice that depart from this written expression. The child protection process is determined by three levels in the Social Service Act (2001: 453) and Care of Young Persons Act (1990:52). First, mandated reporting (chapter 14 §1) second, the investigation (chapter 11), third, the intervention service that can be given both voluntarily (chapter 4) and under compulsion (Care of Young Persons Act).

Social Childcare

The social work that targets children that are in contacts with Social Services, of which the child protection process is a part.

Gate-keeping

The points at which decisions are made if a report regard a maltreated child or not. Generally there are three gate-keeping points recognized: the decision to investigate, the decision to substantiate a report after investigation and the third to provide service (Wells, 1987).

Filtering Process

The process that describes the inflow of reports to Social Services and the filtering of reports at the different gate-keeping points leaving at the end, the children that receive assistance. Because the filtering of reports was an essential part of the study, the figure used here (see figure 1) is different from the figure that originally was used by Parton (1997). The proportion between inflow and outcome and what happens at the different gate-keeping points are the central issues of the filtering process.

OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH FIELD

Introduction

The child protection process of today has in most western countries its origin in the early 1960ies. It was an article by Kempe et al (1962) that marked the beginning of modern interest in child maltreatment. Child maltreatment was then revived as a public concern, after having been an issue that had disappeared from the public policy agenda some 40 years earlier (Parton, 1997: Zellman & Faire, 2001: Sundell & Egelund, 2000). The findings of Kempe et al (1962) that parents could cause injuries of the severest kind to their children led them to argue that child maltreatment was the consequence of violent behaviour of some seriously disturbed parents. This was assumed to be a problem affecting some hundred children. The researchers proposed a law that required health professionals to report those cases to public authorities. With this argument there emerged a belief that the obligation for professionals to report suspected cases of abuse would prevent these cases from occurring (Zellman & Faire, 2001: Melton, 2005). As far as known, all western countries have legislation designed to protect maltreated children (Hiatt et al., 1998). The concept of child maltreatment has expanded substantially since the early 1960s to cover physical abuse but also psychological and sexual abuse as well as neglect (Hacking, 1991: Parton, 1997: Sundell & Egelund, 2001). Melton (2005) argues that Kempe made two fundamental mistakes in his efforts to reduce child maltreatment. One was to underestimate the scope of the problem of child abuse and neglect, and the other to underestimate the complexity of the problem. The incidence of suspected maltreatment today is not measured in the hundreds but in the millions in the USA each year. Therefore the policy of reporting has increased and affects many more than what the system originally was intended to take care of. As concerns complexity, Melton maintains that there are actually few cases of child maltreatment of the sort that Kempe and his colleagues' study was concerned with, i.e., battered

child syndrome. Today most child maltreatment cases are reported because of suspected neglect of the child. The usual situation today is, according to Melton, that maltreatment occurs in a family with severe personal, social and/or economic problems.

Mandatory Reporting

Not all countries have mandatory reporting. When Hiatt et al (1998) collected data of 47 countries' way of handling child maltreatment, they reported that 22 countries had mandatory legislation, 13 had an voluntary and for 12 it was not known. In some countries mandatory reporting has resulted in an explosion of reports to the child protection agencies. An international overview shows that reporting has increased dramatically since the 1960s in the USA leading to a 225 % increase since 1976 (Zellman & Faire, 2001). In 1993 almost 3 million reports of suspected maltreatment were received by state agencies (Daro & Mcurdy, 1994). Flaherty & Sege (2000) state that 1,8 million cases were reported to CPS in 2002 in the USA. In the Netherlands, child abuse reports to confidential doctors' offices (where the reporters identity can be withheld) rose from 3,179 to 13,220 between 1983 and 1993. In Belgium there was a 70 % increase between 1986 and 1992, in Canada 100 % (1982 to 1989), and in Australia from 517 in 1977 to 26,622 in 1993, (Gilbert, 1997; Parton et al., 1997).

There are differences throughout the world regarding the extent to which governments maintain official annual count of child abuse and neglect cases. Hiatt et al (1998) reported that 26 out of 47 countries maintained such counts. Sweden is not one of those. The responsibility for maintaining data on the child protection process is delegated to the 289 municipalities. An attempt was made to create a national overview of report data but the lack of uniform standards for registering data made it impossible to create such an overview. The conclusion of the 1998 investigation was that a necessary instrument for evaluating the protection given to maltreated children in Sweden was missing (Socialstyrelsen, 1998: 4). There is, however, still no uniform standards registration procedure for use in the Swedish child-protection system. Wiklund (2006) explained the lack of municipal coherence as a result of poor routines on the part of municipalities, the semi professional nature of work and an all too broad legislative definition. Researchers (Ohlsson Hort, 1997; Sundell & Egelund, 2000; André Löffholm et al., 2003; Khoo et al., 2003) in Sweden have pointed out that the lack of report data render evaluation of the child protection process difficult. Some studies of report

data have been made in order to measure the scope of reports. In one county (Länstyrelsen Götaland, 2003) 1/1 000 children were reported during the first quarter of 2003. Kauntiz et al (2004) found that 13/1 000 children were reported in Stockholm during the first quarter 2004, Wiklund (2006) found in investigating report data in 100 municipalities that the overall referral rate was 42/1 000 children.

The legislation effectiveness has been discussed and Ainsworth (2001) arrived at the conclusion by comparing support given in Western Australia Western Australia (7.5/1,000 children) with no mandatory reporting with New South Wales with mandatory reporting (4.2/1, 000) and came to the conclusion that mandatory reporting systems have to be characterized as ineffective. He argued that a mandatory system is likely to lead to an overwhelming demand for services that are supposed to target families with children at risk and therefore these at-risk children will receive less attention and help (Ainsworth, 2001).

Lindsey (1994) argues that the efficacy of mandatory reporting should be measured in relation to child abuse fatalities. According to the researcher the increase in child abuse reporting brought about by mandated reporting has not had effect on the amount of fatalities. Measuring the efficacy of mandatory reporting, states with higher reporting rates would have fewer child fatalities than those with lower reporting rate. According to the findings of Lindsey mandatory reporting has not had that outcome. UNICEF (UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre 2003) made an overview of children that died due to abuse and neglect in 27 of the richest countries in the world and found that 3 500 fatalities from abuse or neglect. The highest amount occurred in the USA, Mexico and Portugal. Sweden was in a midrange position. Since 1990, about seven children dies every year due to violence. Most of the children, 20 % are have not reached the age of one year (Hindberg, 2001).

The Failure to Report

The increase in reporting rates does not mean that all children for whom there is a reason to suspect maltreatment are reported. Several studies (see below) of professionals reporting patterns have shown that mandated reporters do not file a report for every child they suspect of being maltreated.

- Alvarez et al (2003) made a review of studies of mandated reporting in the USA and found that approximately 40 % of those professionals who are required by law to file reports have failed to do so at some point in their career, 6 % consistently fail to file a report.
- Zellman (1990) found in a study of randomly selected paediatricians in 15 states in the USA that 30% of the paediatricians said they had failed to report suspected maltreatment sometime in their career.
- When Van Haeringen (1998) surveyed Australian paediatricians in a similar study, 43 % were found to have suspected child abuse or neglect and decided not to report despite a legal mandate to do so. The reasons for not reporting were perceived problems on the services available for the child and family once the report was made.
- Kenny (2001) investigated 197 teachers' report patterns in Florida, 73 % responded that they had never made a report to the Child Protection agencies, 11 % answered that they had failed to file report when they believed abuse might have occurred.
- Flaherty et al (2000) investigated primary care providers' experience in identifying and reporting suspected child abuse to child protection services and variables affecting reporting behaviour. Of 85 providers, 8 % did not report a child they had suspected being abused. The reasons for not reporting were past negative experience with the Child protection agencies and perceived lack of benefit for the child. Education was found to increase the probability of reporting.
- Lazenbatt & Freeman (2006) investigated 979 doctors and dentists working in primary care in Northern Ireland. Answering a questionnaire, 251 stated that they had a suspicion of a child abuse case, 201 had reported the suspected case to the authority leaving a 20 % gap in reporting.

Swedish professionals also seem to refrain from their duty to report:

- Sundell (1997) found that child-care personnel reported only 37 % of the cases in which maltreatment of children was suspected. Explanations found to account for the low reporting rate was the unawareness of the directors of their obligation to report, few of the reports led to investigation, negative experience of previously reporting and the absence of proof that a report actually helps the child.

- Lagerberg (2001) found in investigating child-health nurses' identification of abuse/neglect that out of 6 044 children that the nurses categorized as possibly being maltreated 11 % were reported to Social Services. Investigating (Lagerberg, 2004) determinants of nurse reporting to Social Services, determinants found to correlate with the reporting were small district populations, regular contact with Social Services and personal interest.
- Borres & Hägg (2007) conducted a study of the experience of reporting child abuse and neglect among primary care and hospital-based physicians. The professionals answered a questionnaire regarding their attitude and experience of reporting child maltreatment 80 % stated that they had filed a report regarding child abuse or neglect to Social Services, two thirds had suspected and decided not to report, 20 % had never reported a child abuse or neglect suspicion during their working career. The professionals claimed a lack of confidence in Social Services as the main reason for not reporting.

Using factor analyses Zellman & Faire (2001) identified three clusters of reasons for failing to report. One cluster focused on the perceived cost of reporting to the reporter: reporting procedure takes too much time, fear of a lawsuit for reporting discomfort with the families. A second cluster included a range of criticism of the Child protection agencies and the respondents' beliefs that they can do more for the child than Child protection agencies could. The third cluster included lack of sufficient evidence that abuse had occurred which they found was the most frequently endorsed reason for failing to report.

That reporters do not fulfil their reporting duty is a serious threat to children's safety. The reasons for not filing reports have been poorly studied and more knowledge is needed about what makes professionals refrain from filing reports.

The Nature of Child Maltreatment

In its earliest conceptualisation child abuse was viewed within a paradigm of parental deviance (Gelles, 1993). Since then there has been a re-conceptualisation from a focus on clinically defined parental pathology towards a view that various forms of child maltreatment were best understood along a more general continuum of child care relation (Freisthler et al., 2006). Today it is an ecological model that is mainly used to explain the occurrence of child maltreatment that is dominating (Garbarino, 1992: Garbarino & Kostelny,

1992: Sundell & Egelund, 2001). This model derives from the ecological model of Bronfenbrenner (1977). The model proposes different systems interacting to create child maltreatment, beginning with the individual and expanding to include family neighbourhood, communities and larger socio-political environments. Four systems are defined in the ecological model: microsystem (child, parents, friend), mesosystem (systems of connected micro parts), exosystem (local structures, access to economic resources, health care, child care and other services), macrosystem (norms, ideologies, political decision). The conceptualisation of child maltreatment has then, to use Bronfenbrenner's model, moved from the explanation within the microsystem to conditions in other systems to explain the occurrence of child maltreatment. In North America there has emerged a body of empirical research that deals with neighbourhood characteristics in relation to child maltreatment and to report data, the exolevel in the ecological model. Social and economic characteristics of the geographic living area were found to correlate to the child maltreatment (Garbarino, 1976: Garbarino & Crouter, 1978: Spearly & Lauderdal, 1983: Zuravain & Taylor, 1987: Albert & Bart, 1996: Coulton et al., 1999). Coulton et al 1995 found that neighbourhoods with higher impoverishment score had higher rates of child maltreatment. Zuravain (1987) found that neighbourhood poverty was found to be one of the stronger predictors for both neglect and child abuse. Drake & Pandey (1996) found a positive relationship between neighbourhood poverty and sexual abuse. Other studies have shown that the families that are reported for maltreatment have a multiplicity of social and economic troubles (Garbarino & Sherman, 1980: Gelles, 1993).

In Sweden researchers has identified factors related to socio- economic load to correlate to families that have contact with the social childcare system (Hollander, 1985: Hessle, 1988: Vinnerljung, 1996: Andersson, 1995: Sydsjö, 1996: Lindell, 2005). Lundström & Sallnäs (2003) found that class, gender and ethnicity are strong markers that indicate future clientship in the social childcare system. With the perspective of Bronfenbrenner's ecological model factors such as poor social resources, neighbourhood poverty, and other social problems generate difficulties at the family level and create conditions leading to child maltreatment. Other researchers Lagerberg & Sundelin (2000) point out that most of these studies are concerned with an aggregate level and that socio-economic deprivation has poor predictive power in individual cases. Cawson (2002) states that most people experiencing these social problems do not maltreat their children, while maltreatment also is found in sectors of society that experience none of these disadvantages.

The Designing of Different Child Protection Systems

The re-conceptualisation of child maltreatment from parental deviancy to be understood as the result of strong pressure of social problems in families' daily life has strengthened the belief that an increase in child welfare resources is the best way to prevent child maltreatment from occurring. A major debate emerged during the 1990s of how policies and practices in child protection are integrated with and relate to policies and practices concerned more generally with child welfare and intervention in families (Agathonos-Georgopoulou, 1998: Parton and Mathews, 2001: Melton, 2005: Parton, 2006: Collins, 2006). The discussion concerned the balance between protecting children on the one hand and offering services to families on the other hand. Parton (2006) discusses the shift in England from protection to prevention where the passage of the Children's Act in 2004 marks a significant watershed in thinking about children's services in England. Thus practice in England represents a shift from a distinctive child protection system to a more service-oriented and preventive approach dealing with maltreated children. Parton argue that the most fundamental mistake that the designers of modern child protection systems make is to grossly underestimate the scope of child abuse and neglect and question whether communities have the resources needed to deal with these new ambitions. There are few that argue that the child welfare system should operate at one extreme or the other, but there is a debate regarding appropriate emphasis on one approach or another (Collins, 2006). For example, Lawrence -Karski (1997) discusses the two needs in resolving the problem of child maltreatment. She argues that preoccupation with the size of the maltreatment problem, the high rates of unsubstantiated cases, the specificity of the laws and the media obsession with the horror of the most extreme cases, distracts attention away from the inequalities in the system. There is a need to provide service to parents as the association between abuse with poverty, women in poverty and the overrepresentation of minority racial groups goes unnoticed. She proposed a community framework in which parenting would be conceptualised to provide support services to all parents, this support should be clearly separated from services that investigate abuse of children. Lindsey (1994) argued that due to agencies mixed legal roles, the public is not ensured a legal due process. He proposed a clear separation of functions between social service agencies providing assistance to troubled families and criminal justice dealing with criminal offenders.

The question of how child maltreatment is related to poverty and other socio-economic factors is important for how the child protection process is

designed. The expansion of the concept of child maltreatment has increased the number of families that become targets for the child protection process. Researchers and policymakers are involved in discussions and proposals of how to frame child maltreatment in order to give children the best help.

The Filtering Process and the Gate-keeping Points

Parton et al (1997) described the handling of reports as filtering processes. The reports were organized into a top level representing the inflow and a bottom level representing children receiving services. They found when comparing filtering patterns in the USA, Canada, Western Australia and the UK that despite different legislation and organisational settings that the filtering patterns were quite similar. These patterns showed that the majority of referrals for child maltreatment received few services.

The authority when having received report has to determine whether a case reported as suspected maltreatment can be supported as a true case of maltreatment. Gate-keeping activity helps agencies do this (Zellman & Faire, 2001). These procedures vary between countries. Generally there are three decisions recognized as taking place at three gate-keepings points. First there is the decision to investigate a report, second the decisions to substantiate a report after investigation and finally the decision to provide intervention. Screening takes place at the first gate-keeping point. The final outcome of such screening is the decision whether to investigate the case or not (Zellman & Faire, 2001). The out-screening at the first gate-keeping point has in several studies been found to be approximately 30 %. In the USA for example 30.3 % were filtered out in 2002 (U.S Department of Health and Humans services, 2002), in England 26 % (Gibbons et al., 1995). In Sweden, Kaunitz et al (2004) found that 29 % of the reports made to Stockholm counties were not investigated, and Wiklund (2006) found a out-screening rate of 35.7 % when investigating 100 municipalities (the number was estimated by personnel).

There is sparse knowledge of what cases are out- screened. Research has shown that practice varies widely, and systematic evaluations are lacking (see below). Besaharov (1990) has argued that more specific guidelines could improve the decision making, as the social workers often have to fall back on value judgments and personal interpretations. Dissatisfaction with this vagueness has led researchers (Sundell, 1997: Zellman & Faire, 2001) to argue that screening should be more formalized and that child protection agencies should develop policies to specify what criteria will determine which reports are to be accepted for investigation. For example, Khoo et al

(2003) compared decision-making in Sweden and Canada and found the process in Canada to be highly formalized, regulated and carried out by social workers that were primarily child protection workers. In Sweden the boundary between ongoing services and what is to be done at this gate-keeping point was blurred, and social workers in Sweden could fail to recognize cases of child maltreatment. They argued that improvements could be made by using risk assessment tools. Sundell (1997) finds in the study of child-care personnel's reports that 35 % of the children reported were investigated in connection with the report and 60 % of the reports resulted in no help for the child. Further he claims that there is a need for research concerning the interactive influence between reporters and social workers at Social Services as the lack of confidence in Social Services influence the decision to report. He argues that the investigative procedures of Social Services must be enhanced e.g. faster investigation, interviewing the children, supplying reporters with feedback concerning the investigation.

Knowledge of the screening process in Sweden is poor. Since there is no national risk assessment tool, the screening at the first gate-keeping point leaves a wide scope for local interpretation in each municipality.

The second decision made about a report is whether an investigation should lead to an intervention or not. The purpose of the investigation is to determine if the report of suspected maltreatment is confirmed. Giovannoni (1989) labelled the cases opened for service "substantiated" and the cases closed as "unsubstantiated". Trocmé et al (2003) found that 45% from a random sample of child maltreatment cases in Canada were substantiated. In Sweden the substantiation rate has been found to vary from one municipality to another, Sundell & Karlsson (1999) found in a study of 10 Swedish municipalities that half of the 193 investigations lead to an intervention and the others were found unsubstantiated. Sundell & Ege-lund (2000) make an overview of different percentages of substantiation of reports: Australia, 56%: Netherlands, 47%: California, 48%: USA, 48 % for physical abuse, 39 % for sexual abuse, 28 % for neglect: Ontario Canada 28%: England 18%. Findings of the high percentage of screened report at gate-keeping point one and of investigations not substantiated has led to the questioning of the efficacy of the system (Parton, 1997: Melton, 2005).

Theoretical Perspectives

This theory section will be based on Bronfenbrenners' ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). This model was interpreted for use in dealing with

child maltreatment by for example Garbarino & Eckenrode (1977) and Lagerberg & Sundelin (2000). The macrosystem consists of, for example, ideology, norms and legislation (Lagerberg & Sundelin, 2000). Gilbert (1997) outlines some of these factors and their relevance for the designing of a child protection system (see below). The child protection process as it occurs in social practice is determined by what is outlined in the macrosystem, here called the child protection system. This child protection system in Sweden will be described in this section of theory: the ideology, the legislation, the administration and the state of professionals. The system outlines the child protection process on an ideal level resulting in a practical child protection process. To summarize, the child protection system at the macrolevel outlines a child protection process that is to operate at meso and micro levels. The child protection process then operates at two levels, one where the child protection process is as outlined in legislation, and the other as it actually takes place at Social Services, child protection in practice.

The Ideology and Framing of Child Protection

Gilbert et al (1997) published an overview of the child protection process in nine countries (table 1). The systems were found to be grouped around two central dimensions. One emphasized child protection and the other family service orientation. The first difference found was in how the problem was framed. In countries that emphasize child protection, the child maltreatment problem is perceived as a problem that demands the protection of children from harm by potentially harmful relatives, “the child saving approach” (Lawrence-Karski, 1997). In countries with family service orientation, child maltreatment problems are conceived as expressions of family conflict and dysfunction deriving from social and psychological difficulties that are responsive to service and public aid. In the family service orientation the parents’ psychological, marital and socio-economic problems are considered. The second difference concerns the reporting system, which was found to operate according to how the problem is framed in the different approaches. Preliminary intervention in the child protection system was found to correlate to an investigatory process, in contrast with the therapeutic family-need assessment of the service-oriented system (Gilbert, 1997). A third characteristic that Gilbert distinguishes is that representatives of public authority in the family services oriented system function more in partnership with parents compared to the child protective system.

Table 1. Different ways of framing Child Protection

	Child protection	Family Service
Problem frame	Individual/Moralistic	Social/Psychological
Preliminary intervention	Legalistic/Investigatory	Therapeutic/needs assessment
State-parent relationship	Adversarial	Partnership
Out -of -home placement	Involuntary	Voluntary

Source: Gilbert et al., 1997

The presence of mandatory legislation was not found to be linked to child protection or family service orientation.

Table 2. The Organization of Child Protection and the presence of Mandatory Reporting

	Separate Child Protection system	Family Service Organisation
Mandatory reporting	USA, Canada	Denmark, Finland, Sweden
No mandatory reporting law	England	Belgium, Netherlands, Germany

Source: from Gilbert et al., 1997

Child protection in Sweden is - using Gilbert's classification - family service oriented with mandatory reporting. The problems are framed as social and psychological and the primary interventions are therapeutic and assessment of need. The relationship between state and parent is characterized as working in partnership.

The Legislation

History

The first legislation that targeted social childcare in Sweden was introduced in 1902 (SFS 1902:67). This legislation concerned children who behaved unacceptably and made it possible for the state to place them under care without the consent of the child or the family. This first legislation represented an effort to protect society from the acts of delinquent children under the influence of a belief in social control (Lundström, 1993; Ohlsson Hort, 1997). In 1924 the categories abuse and neglect were added into the

legislation and this made it possible to use compulsory care to protect children. The child protection laws have been modified in 1960 and in 1982. A mandatory reporting law for professionals was introduced in 1960 (Höjer-Widén 1992). In 1966, the law was extended to apply to all citizens: anyone who suspected that a child could be in need of government protection/support was thereafter required to report to a government agency (Law 1966: 309).

The framing of problem in legislation

With the law of 1982 named The Social Services Act, child protection came to form a part of the social legislation that concerned family service. Ideas that were related to social control were with this law abandoned in favour of offering individual citizen's social rights (e.g. Ohlsson Hort, 1997). This law has been amended several times, but the general aims and fundamental principles set forth in 1982 years legislation are the same in the legislation valid today. The Social Service Act (2001:453) valid today is a "frame law" regulating different areas of social support and interventions, such as financial assistance, pre- school child- care, care of elderly and handicapped and care of substance abusers (Hessle & Vinnerljung, 1999). The family service orientation of the system is expressed in chapter 1 and 5 (Social Service Act). In the legislation it is stated that the local Social Service authority shall work in partnership with families to support children's personal, psychosocial and social development. In addition, Social Services shall monitor children who show signs of unfavourable development and work in partnership with families to make sure that the children at risk get protection and support. When it is determined to be in the best interest of the child, Social Services shall place the children in care outside their families (Hessle & Vinneljung, 1999). The legislation has two-fold objectives, one is voluntary (family service), the other coercive (child protection). The two objectives result in two different kinds of inflow to Social Services. The first type is a results of someone asking for help with a problem, the second when someone files a mandated report.

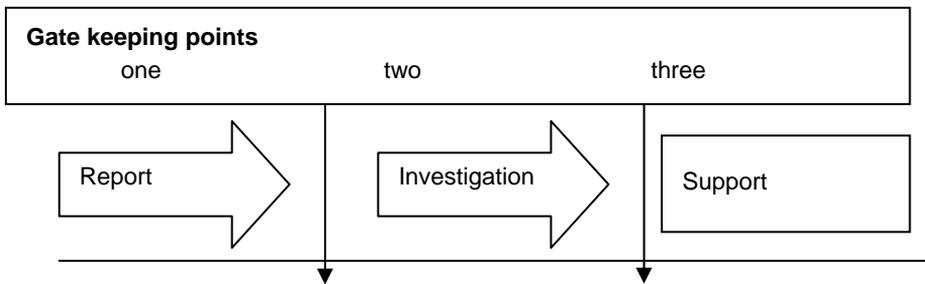
Another condition that is set out in the macrosystem is the lack of juvenile court. The inflow to the Social Services hence will concern cases that for example in the United States would be handled by a juvenile court (Sundell & Egelund, 2001). Swedish children who possibly have committed a crime are taken into custody by the police and then are handed over to Social Services. The same authority then handles families' applications for support, juvenile criminality and child protection. With this construction

the child protection process as a whole is difficult to distinguish from the system simply providing supportive measures.

The child protection process in legislation

The child protection process in Sweden is composed of the three levels in Social Service Act (se figure 1), report (chapter 14), investigation (chapter 11) and voluntary (chapter 4) or compulsion care (Care of Young Person Act) (The National Board of Health, 1998).

Figure 1. Gate-keeping points in the Child Protection Process



The gate keepings points in the child protection process defined by the following chapters in Social Service Act: chapter 14, chapter 11 and chapter 4. At the third level when care under compulsion is to be given the legislation of Care of Young Person Act is used.

Report

The legislation (chapter 14 Social Service Act) states that:

“Any person receiving information of a matter, which can imply a need for the social welfare committee to intervene for the protection of a child should notify the committee accordingly. Authorities whose activity affect children and young persons are duty bound, as are other authorities in health care, medical care other forensic psychiatry investigation service and social services, prison and probation services to notify the social welfare committee immediately of any matter which comes to their knowledge and may imply a need for the social welfare committee to intervene for the protection of a child ...” (translation by Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, 2005).

It is a rather unusual approach to call for all citizens to act simply on the basis of suspicion and direct them to inform Social Services about children

or youths who may need help or protection. As a citizen reporter you have the right to remain anonymous, if you want to. The whole community is involved in the process of protecting children. Mandated reporters are professionals that have professional contact with children, personnel at: school childcare, child health care, child and adolescent psychiatry departments, paediatric departments, social services etc. As mandatory reporting is based on the professional suspecting maltreatment, not all cases reported will prove to be cases of maltreatment. The first gate-keeping point where the validity of the report of possible child maltreatment is evaluated is in the initial assessment. This initial assessment is important: if the social worker decides that the report does not present evidence that meets the legal standards for child maltreatment then the case will no longer be followed by the authorities. Reports that do not fit legal standards for a judgment of child maltreatment are supposed to be sorted out. There is no formal requirement to register the cases where the reports did not lead to investigation e.g. that is out-screened at this first gate-keeping point. Such reports do not figure in Swedish national statistics neither in the archives of the local social welfare department (Ohlsson Hort, 1997; Wiklund, 2006).

Investigation and Support

Reports that are determined to indicate genuine cases of child maltreatment are to be passed on to the next gate-keeping point: the investigation, chapter 11§1 Social Service Act:

“The social welfare committee shall without delay open an investigation of matters which have been brought to its knowledge by application or otherwise and which may occasion action by the committee. Information emanating from an investigation and material to the determination of a matter shall be securely stored.” (translation by Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, 2005).

This section of Swedish law applies both to investigations initiated by a parent and to investigations initiated by a mandated report. Children who are abused or neglected are first the subjects of processes outlined in the Social Service Act. The ambition is to provide help to the children by offering additional help or care. The legislation allows the authorities to look into a family's life and to decide if the child has been maltreated or not. If the investigation substantiates that the child has been maltreated, the child must get support. The case will then pass to the third gate-keeping point: the intervention level where the authorities decide what interventions the child needs. If par-

ents agree to the intervention that the social worker finds necessary then the help is given voluntarily. If a parent or youth refuses the help that the social worker calls for then the coercive legislation -Care of Young Persons Act (1990:52)- is applicable and care can be given involuntarily:

“A care order is to be issued, if due to physical or mental abuse, exploitation, neglect or other circumstance in the home, there is a palpable risk of detriment to the young person’s health or development.” (translation by Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, 2005)

Administration

Legislation states that the system is to be administered by the municipal Social Service agencies. The child protection process is carried out in the 289 municipalities that Sweden is divided into. The municipalities are free to organize their services as they like and consequently services may differ from one local authority to another. (Hessle & Vinnerljung, 2005; Wiklund, 2006). Social service is the legal and financial responsibility of the municipalities. As long as the basic standards of the legislation are respected, local authorities have the right to arrange their child welfare as it suits them. No cost levels are regulated for child welfare by law. Each municipality has an elected council that make decisions on a wide range of matters, and in every specific case of when e.g. a child is to be separated from its parents. This is in Sweden not a professional decision but a political and juridical one. The work of the municipalities is supervised by one of the 21 counties that Sweden is divided into. These 21 counties have county administrative boards which are the governments representative at the regional level. The utmost responsibility for supervising the child protection process lies on The National Board of Health and Welfare.

The Specification of Professionals

The professional level is outlined in the macrosystem. The professionals who work in the child protection process are not specified in the legislation. In chapter 3 § 3 Social Service Act it is stated that:

”Measures within social services shall be of god quality. Suitably trained and experienced personnel shall be available to perform the tasks of the social welfare committee. The quality of activities shall be systematically and continuously developed and assured.” (translation by Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, 2005)

The reasons for the vague specifications in the Social Service Act have been discussed by, for example, Olsson Hort (1997) arguing that in Sweden the role of professionalism in the social welfare sector is not yet firmly grounded. According to Olsson Hort, the very nature of Swedish welfare sector is a mix of areas of interests and therefore requires a weak professional state. The decisions made are not only made on the basis of professional knowledge but also on political and economic grounds. For example, although professionals prepare the investigations in the child protection process, the final decisions are first made by elected laypeople in the child welfare committees and if the decision concerns compulsion then the juridical system also acts. Not all legislation in Sweden specifies the professional level in this way. For example in the Health and Medical Services Act (1982:763), the legislation that specifies the health and medical services, the professionals are specified. A nurse or a doctor is required to have specific specialisations within the health and medical care (Health and Medical Services Act, 1998:1513).

Even though the professional level is not specified in legislation, municipalities seem to mostly employ social workers. The National Board of Health and Welfare (2000/2003) made an enquiry to 100 municipalities and found that four out of five workers within the social childcare system had completed the degree in Social Work. In 15 % of the municipalities the requirement of degree in social work was found to be politically determined. Bergmark & Lundström (2000) investigated the professional level of 12 municipalities with 442 professionals within the social childcare system. There were 77,5 % that had a degree in social work, 89.9 an academic degree and 11.1 did not have an academic degree. During the last decades there has emerged a discussion about the shortcomings of the professional level in the social childcare system (Egelund et al., 2000: Wiklund, 2006: Hindberg, 2006). The National Board of Health (2004) states that there is a consensus about the fact that social work education in Sweden does not provide the specific knowledge that is needed to work within the social child care system and that the social work degree is to be regarded as generalist education. Egelund et al (2000) investigated teachers view of the education at the universities of social work. They stated that the education of social workers in Sweden is a generalist education and is not adequate

training for those engaged in such difficult work as child protection without some form of sub specialization.

To summarize, the professional level is not specified in legislation, but most of those employed to carry out the child protection process are social workers. There is an ongoing discussion whether existing university programs educate adequately for child protection work or not.

PURPOSE OF THE THESIS

The aim in this thesis is to describe and analyse the system of child protection in Sweden. This has been done by conducting an in-depth study of the Swedish child protection process as a social practice. The results are discussed in relation to the Swedish child protection system. The main questions examined are:

- What children were reported (age, gender)? How many were previously known to Social Services?
- How many times has the same child been reported? What is the most common reason for a child to be entered into the child protection process?
- How does the Swedish system of filtering out reports operate and what is the outcome at each gate-keeping point in the system?
- How many cases of possibly maltreated children are filtered out without being investigated? How many are taken to the next stage to be investigated but are then filtered out? What percentage of cases is concluded with decisions to require compulsory care? What are the similarities between the filtering pattern seen in Sweden and the pattern in other countries?
- Who reports to Social Services? What professionals report? What is the content of the reports? Is there any difference between the outcome of cases initiated by professionals and cases initiated by other reporters?
- What is done at gate-keeping point one when reports are judged not to qualify as indicating child maltreatment? Who does the social worker meet? Does the social worker contact the child? Does the information the social worker get clear the alleged perpetrators of suspicion?

PURPOSE OF THE TEHSIS

- Are children from high socio-economic load districts reported more often than those from low? Does the socio-economic load of the district influence the decision to investigate?

METHODS AND MATERIALS

Initially this study was designed as a social epidemiological study. Cwikel (1994) defines such a method as “the systematic study of social conditions and problems and their risk factors and effects on the well-being, health and welfare of populations, using methods of the social sciences and epidemiology to develop interventions, social programs and policy that may reduce the extent, adverse impact or incidence of health or social problem” (p.26). One basic premise in epidemiology is that no social condition can be expected to be the result of a single factor. The epidemiological triangle stipulates a combination of host, agent and environmental factors (*see below*) that interact to create health or social problems. The assumption in classic epidemiology is that disease and conditions that affect the well-being of populations are more than random events. It is possible to identify characteristics by time, place and person.

To systematize the collection of data a schedule was created that identified 21 variables covering the three components of a social epidemiological study: host, agent and environment data. The host data are the age and gender of the child, the frequency of being reported and the child’s living situation. The environment data comprise information about the children and their: family situation, the geographic district the child lived in, previous contact with Social Services and contact with child and adolescent psychiatry. The agent data comprise information about the reporter, the content of the report, and the outcome of each case. This agent data also indicates if the social worker contacted the children and if the social worker filed a report to the police. When all the reports were categorized the first step in the social epidemiological method, the descriptive phase (see methodological discussion) could follow.

The method used in this thesis is descriptive. The empirical data are composed of reports from a register. The study consisted of all reports made to Social Services in Linköping during one year, 1998, the reports were located in 2000. Each case was then followed to the point at which a

final decision was recorded. In addition, a five-year follow up was conducted in 2003.

This initial phase of the investigation of the child protection process will be labelled the Initial study in the following presentation. When the Initial Study was completed, in-depth studies were carried out resulting in four papers in which different aspects of the child protection process were described and analysed.

Table 3. Papers and Information on Participants and Methods

	Paper 1 The Filtering process	Paper II The Report and Content	Paper III The Initial assessment	Paper IV The Impact of socio economic load
Population 1 570 reports on 1 051 children				
Participants	Reports n = 1 570	Children n = 1 051	Cases n = 220 out of 651 not investigated re- ports	Children n = 1051
Missing data	117 not found	96 not found 15 content	20 sources used by the so- cial worker	168 with no ad- dress
Included in analysis	1 453	940	200 sources/220 assessments	883
Follow up data used	yes	yes	yes	no
Methods and statistics	Descriptive	In-depth descriptive	In-depth descriptive	Multiple regres- sion

Paper I: The Filtering Process

This first paper had two objectives. One was to compile data regarding the children in the population such as age, gender and contact with Social Services. The study design allowed us to investigate the duplication rate; how many times a child had been reported. The second objective was to determine the outcome of the reports at each gate-keeping point in the “filtering process”. First the number of cases that were filtered out at the first gate-keeping point without being investigated was determined. Second the number of cases that passed this step that were then investigated was established. For these, two outcomes were possible: one to be filtered out at the second gate-keeping point and the other to passed to the third gate-keeping point so that either a voluntary or a compulsory intervention was or-

dered. This filtering pattern was analysed and then compared with a study in England (Gibbons et al., 1995), a country with a specific child protection system.

Paper II: The Report and Content

The objectives were to characterize the reporter and to determine the content of the report. The reporters were categorized into five different groups. The outcome of reports by each different group were determined and then compared. Analyses of the content of the reports were conducted in order to know to which extent the reports indicated cases of maltreatment. The reports were assigned to three categories: indicating, not indicating and false. Follow-up data were used in order to find out to what extent the children in cases not investigated re-appeared during the five year of follow-up period.

Paper III: The Initial Assessment

The first study showed that 651 reports were filtered out at the first gate-keeping point. As few studies have been conducted to evaluate the “safety” of decisions not to investigate, the safety of the decisions at this gate-keeping point was evaluated. The inclusion criteria for this study were the reports indicating child maltreatment (n= 375). When we re-evaluated the assessments we found that 128 were filtered out because the social worker had previous knowledge of the child, 18 reports were parents themselves had made an application and another 9 contained other reasons for not being investigated so these were excluded from the evaluation of safety. This left 220 reports indicating child maltreatment that had been filtered to be analysed.

Paper IV: The Influence of Socio-economic Load

In this study the impact of socio- economic factors on the child protection process was measured. The following factors were analysed: the relation between the frequency of cases of reported maltreatment of children and the socio-economic load of their living district, and also the relation between the decision to investigate further and the socio-economic load of

each district. Three socio-economic factors were used to characterize the socio-economic load for each district in the municipality: the index of income, percentage of recipients receiving support from Social Services and a "Poor health" statistic. Addresses were available for 883 children, and these addresses were assigned to one of three groups identified on the basis of the socio-economic load measure.

Material

The studied population derives from a municipality of 131 948 inhabitants of which 29 476 were children age 0-18 in 1998. It is the 5th largest city in Sweden with a university and high tech industry. At the time for data collection there were 289 municipalities in Sweden, ranging from 2, 652 to 758, 311 inhabitants (median = 15,133), (Kommunförbundet, 2004). All the reports registered at Social Services according to chapter 14 Social Service Act in the municipality in 1998 were manually located and studied. In total there were 1 570 reports made regarding 1 051 children. This means that 4 % of the children in the municipality were reported as having been subjected to possible suspected maltreatment. Some of the reports were registered on a parent and therefore data (e.g. gender and age) of the child were missing. This study thus concerns two populations, the population of reports $n = 1\ 570$, and the population of children in these reports $n = 1\ 051$.

Procedure

The first year possible to study was 1998, as earlier populations of reports that had not been investigated had been sorted out and destroyed, following a directive by the municipality. Permission to study the reports was obtained from the Social Board of the Social Services. The reports were manually located and studied in 2000. The legislation does not specify, that the registration of a report must proceed in some distinct way, so the registration of a mandatory report follows the same procedures as for the documentation of all errands at Social Services. This means that documentation for the identification of a child is required (in Sweden each citizen has an identification number that consists of the date of birth and four additional digits), as well as for the content of the errand and the decision that is made. As Social Services does not use a specific formula or schedule to define each report, a schedule was created to make it possible to categorize the data in the reports. There were two possible final destinations for

the reports: 1) the child's folder, 2) the general files at Social Services. If the report led to an investigation being initiated or if the reports concerned a child whose case was already under investigation, then the report was found in the child's folder. These reports were located by studying a list provided by Social Services. This list contained 1, 030 reports. To obtain the reports, the secretaries at the Social Services searched for the children's folders and handed the folders over to the researcher. Reports, that in the Initial assessment were found not to concern child maltreatment, were kept in general files. In addition to these reports the files contained all statements filed or applications made to Social Services that had not led to an investigation. To find all mandatory reports made according to chapter 14 Social Service Act, these files (n = 28) were gone through by the researcher and another 540 reports were found.

There were three possible outcomes for a report: 1) "investigated" if an investigation according to chapter 11:1 Social Service Act was being initiated, 2) "not investigated" if the report did not lead to an investigation. 3) "complementary" when the report regarded a child for whom an investigation was ongoing. The outcome for each report and the outcome for each child were registered. If the child was reported more than once during the studied year we did the following registration: If any report led to an investigation the outcome for the child was "investigated". If the reports never led to an investigation the outcome for the child was "not investigated". If the reports were always registered as complementary, the outcome was registered as "complementary".

Follow-up Study

In 2003, a follow-up study was conducted with the goal of determining which children re-appeared in the data register at Social Services. For each child so identified, it was determined if an investigation according to chapter 11 §1 Social Service Act had been initiated during the follow-up period. (If a new report had been filed, that did not lead to an investigation then the child was unfortunately not registered. The same was true if the child moved out from the commune).

The Filtering Process Study- Paper I

Background

This first examination of the total population of reports had two objectives. One was to increase knowledge of the reported children, to compile data re-

garding the children's age and gender, report frequency and their contact with Social Services. Social Services employ rather broad categories in its registration of report content, so there was a need to describe more precisely what the reports contained. Therefore qualitative categorizing was conducted, in order to increase knowledge of what is reported in the child protection process. The other objective for this study was to examine the filtering of reports. The child protection process in Sweden is part of a family service organization, the study aimed at separating a total population of reports of suspected child maltreatment from other errands at Social Services and follow them through the gate-keeping points to determine the filtering pattern applied to this population. This made it possible to compare the filtering process in a city in Sweden with the filtering process in other countries. As many western countries seem to be moving towards systems that are preventive and service oriented in an effort to better protect children from maltreatment, this study of the child protection process operating for a relatively long period within a family service organization could be useful in a comparative evaluation of different systems. England has a distinct child protection system (Gilbert et al., 1997) and the filtering pattern in Sweden was therefore compared with the pattern in an English population of reports. In order to evaluate the reliability of the filtering process, the re-occurrence of reported children in the files of Social Services was looked for during five years after the initial report occasion. Re-occurrence was one criterion for believing that a case had been filtered out too early.

Material and Procedure

In this study all 1 453 reports were included in the analysis of the filtering pattern (the 117 not found are shown in table 3) and followed through the gate-keeping points to a final decision, irrespective of the year in which the decision was made. The outcome was registered as "none", if the child was given no social service support and thereby dropped out of the child care system. If the child got some kind of support this was recorded. The legislation does not separate citizens who themselves apply for help so they are generally included in the statistics of mandatory reporting. This was the case for 61 families.

To compare the filtering process in this study internationally, a study carried out by Gibbons, Conroy and Bell (1995) was chosen. That study had the same character as our study: a total cohort was followed from report to the final outcome. In the English study the children were identified in eight Area Child Protection Committees at the point of referral and then

tracked through the system. Children referred for investigation were identified under a period of 16 weeks in 1992. For 26 weeks the children were tracked through the system and the outcome was registered. The gate-keeping points were described in the study according to the work conducted (telephone calls, check ups, child protection conferences) at the different levels. These levels were compared to the Swedish system according to the work carried out at the different gate-keeping points.

Table 4. Comparable levels of the English and Swedish Child Protection System

England	Sweden
Gate-keeping point one- Report	
Entry point - Reports registered	Entry point - Reports registered
Lost cases- Reports that were never found	Lost cases- Reports that were never found
Checks	Reports where no contact was established between the family or authorities
Investigation	Initial assessment
Gate-keeping point two-Investigation	
Child protection conference	Investigation according to Chapter 11 of the Social Service Act.
Gate-keeping point three- Support	
Retained in system- Children given support	Retained in system- Children given support

The Content of the Reports

The reports had been coded by Social Services according to a list with the following categories: physical abuse, sexual abuse, own conduct, neglect, other, parents' application for help, LOB (children taken by the police for having been too drunk to take care of themselves). These categories were found to comprise too many different kinds of content to be useful in describing what is reported. For example, "own conduct" could refer to a child doing something as minor as pilfering a chocolate bar or as serious as a child using drugs. Therefore the exact content of what was reported was written down and then additional qualitative categories (see paper II) were created.

The Reporter and Content – Paper II

Background

Mandatory reporting is the legislative measure introduced to ensure that maltreated children are given the attention they need. This law requires of professionals that they report, when they suspect that a child is in need of protection and also places a demand on members of the public to report. The objective of this study was to examine the reports to determine: 1) Who files these reports? 2) What do these reports contain? In paper I, it was found that the reports indicated a variety of grounds for filing of reports: in this study the content of each report was evaluated to determine the extent to which the content indicated child maltreatment. The accuracy of these assessments was measured by determining the frequency of re-notification to Social Services of cases involving children whose cases had been filtered out the first time. The five-year follow-up study was applied to the cases that had not been investigated further after the first report had been filed.

Procedure and Material

The population in this study was the children $n = 1051$. For the children that were reported more than once, the person who filed the report that led to an investigation was registered as the reporter for the case, and the content of that report was registered. In the Initial study all reporters had been registered into their specific professions resulting into 29 different designations. To facilitate analysis of these original designations they were assigned to one of five major groups that were created. The basis for this categorization was the legislator's division between professionals and the public. The categories were: *Professional*: personnel at school, childcare centre, child health clinic, hospital and social service. *Public*: neighbours or other acquaintances and anonymous reporters. *Kin*: parent reporting their own child and relatives. *Parent application*: a parent making an application for help. *Child application*: child/youth seeking help themselves. *Police*: reports that were automatically passed from the police to Social Services when a child had allegedly committed a crime. In these cases the police did not file a report according to the mandatory reporting legislation (chapter 14 Social Service Act). When the police did file such a report, they were registered in the group Professional.

Content of Reports

The social worker registers all reports made by using a set of official codes and do not at that point make an evaluation of the content. These codes were labeled “official codes”. An evaluation of the extent to which the reports indicated child maltreatment according to the legislation of chapter 14 §1 Social Service Act was made. The written text in the report was the basis for this evaluation. Three categories were used: “indicating”, “not indicating”, or “false”. The term “indicating” was used if the report indicated that a child could have been maltreated. The legislation defines the following situations for a child to be in need of protection: physical violence, psychological violence, sexual abuse, violation, physical neglect and emotional and/or practical neglect (Prop.2002/03:53). The term “not indicating” was used if the content was not in line with the legislation, and the reporter had not any intention of making a mandated report. The term “false” was used if the report appears to be fictitious or based on inappropriate referrals e.g. family law cases, school truancy cases or unfounded complaints designed to harass (Lawrence-Karski, 1997).

The Initial assessment – Paper III

Background

The filtering process study found that one third of the reports ($n = 651$) were filtered out at the first gate-keeping point as not being indicative of suspected child maltreatment. This third study, was conducted to determine the validity of those decisions. To ensure a safe child-protection process, knowledge of what is done in the initial assessment and what reports are filtered out is needed. These initial assessments and the nature of the reports filtered out have been little studied. Another reason for conducting this study was that legislative guidance in assessing reports to be investigated is vague. The municipalities are given a wide interpretative scope in defining screening criteria. There is in principle no risk assessment tool in Sweden to be used at this gate-keeping point (Khoo et al., 2003; Wiklund, 2006). The objective of this study was to find out what sources the social workers used in the initial assessment and to re-evaluate the decision made.

Material

Of the 1570 reports 651 (regarding 483 children) were not investigated, i.e. the social worker closed the case after making an initial assessment. In pa-

per II these (n=651) reports were classified according to their content. Three categories were created: indicating maltreatment, not indicating child maltreatment and reports that were deliberately false. The reports examined in this third study were the reports that were classified as indicating child maltreatment (n = 375). There were 128 reports that were not investigated due to the fact that the social worker had previous knowledge about the child, and these reports were excluded from the total of 375 as were 18 that were initiated by applications from parents and 9 reports that had other implications. Thus 220 reports (regarding 202 children not previously known to the Social Services) indicating possible child maltreatment were the subjects of this third study. There were slightly more boys (53 %) than girls, and 49 % were less than 13 years old.

Procedure

All written documented material available from the initial assessment process was investigated to find out what sources the social worker used. The assessments were re-evaluated by the author; one-third was checked for reliability (see below under the heading Validity and Reliability). The assessments were classified into two categories:

1. “Unsubstantiated”- the information gathered by the social worker was evaluated as sufficient to clear the report and the sources used were evaluated good enough to enable clarification.
2. “Still indicating” suspected maltreatment – when the information in the report was confirmed or/and the assessment process gave new information, that rendered the written judgment of the social worker insufficient to clear the case from suspicion of possible maltreatment.

In the follow-up study in 2003 the re-occurrence of children, for whom the initial reports had not led to investigation was searched for. The children were identified in the data register of the Social Services and they were registered if an investigation according to chapter 11 §1 Social Service Act had been initiated during the follow-up period (a new report not investigated is unfortunately not registered).

The Impact of Socio- economic Factors – Paper IV

Background and Material

This study was conducted to find out if the socio-economic load in the geographic district the children lived in had an impact on the child protection process. The link between socio-economic load and child maltreatment has been found in several studies (Garbarino & Sherman, 1980: Zuravain & Taylor, 1987: Garbarino & Kostelny, 1992: Coulton et al., 1995: Drake & Pandey, 1996). But researchers have also questioned the linking of child maltreatment too closely with socio-economic load, by criticizing report data as being systemically biased due to alleged underrepresentation of affluent families. These critics, (Gelles, 1993: Finkelhor & Baron 1986: Cawson, 2000) have argued that the child welfare system is focused on identifying abuse in lower social strata leading to the under representation of other social groups. In Sweden, it has been argued, that families receiving recipients of social security are more likely to be reported to Social Services simply because such families are more visible to the child welfare agencies (Lundström & Wiklund, 2000).

In this study the aim was to investigate the following three possible sources of distortions in the population of reports (Drake & Zuravain, 1996). 1) *Visible* bias: Are children in contact with mandated reporters (Social Services, paediatric or child and adolescent psychiatry departments etc) more frequent among the children that are reported? 2) *Labelling* and *Reporting* bias: Were the children from high socio-economic loaded districts more frequently reported than those from lower? What is the distribution of reported children from different socio-economically loaded districts? 3) *Substantiation* bias: Is the investigation rate correlated to socio-economic load in the districts? What factors influence the decision to open an investigation? For this purpose all children for whom an address could be registered (n = 883) were included in the analyses.

Procedure

Three socio-economic factors were used to characterize the socio-economic load for each district in the municipality: the index of income, percentage of recipients of social security and a “Poor health” statistic (by summing the total number of person-sickness benefit days, early retirement pension person days, and person days for people on temporary disability pension). The municipality publishes an annual review of the geographic districts in the municipality, where the data of the index income and the percentage of

recipients of social security were found. This “Poor health statistic” is published in Linköpings Kommun, Statistik och utredningar, (2000). The children’s addresses were registered and then assigned to their actual districts according to the division made in Linköpings Kommun, Områdesbeskrivningar (1999). Each district was ranked in order for each measure and finally a total rank number (range 3-62) was summarized. First all districts were analysed separately. Then the districts were divided into three groups based on the total rank number of the three measures: group 1, low socio-economic load districts, group 2, intermediate socio-economic load districts, and group 3, high socio-economic load districts. The dispersion of the 29 476 children living in the municipality in relation to the three socio-economic loaded groups was 37 % in high, 31 % in intermediate and 32 % in low socio-economic loaded districts.

Statistical Methods

The relationship between each of the three groups of socio-economically loaded districts and the proportion of children reported as well as investigated was analysed with Spearman’s rank correlation, chi-square test and linear multiple regression. The distribution of the three socio-economic variables in children that were/were not investigated was investigated with t-test and ANOVA. Since there was co-variation between the analysed variables, a logistic regression was done (OR with 95% confidence interval) with the dependent variable if an investigation of the child’s social situation had or had not been made. The statistical software SPSS v. 13 for Macintosh was used.

Missing Data

The reports in the children’s folders were located by studying a list provided by Social Services: the list contained 1,030 reports. To find all reports made in 1998, the files (n= 28) were searched through and another 540 reports were found. There were two different types of missing data in the list provided by Social Services. For 87 reports the child should have had a file, but no file was found. Another 30 reports were according to the same list to have been made for which the files of the child was found but not the report. That leaves a total missing data of 117 reports regarding 96 children in study 1 (see Table 3).

When an analysis of the missing data was made, no systematic selection was found regarding gender (53 boys, 42 girls, 5% parents), or age (53% 13-18 yrs: 28 % 7-12 yrs, 14% 0-6 yrs: parents 5%). The report codes were distributed as follows: abuse 3%, neglect 35 %, own conduct 45 %, LOB 6%, other, 12 %.

In paper II there were another 15 reports in which the content of the report was missing leaving the content in 940 cases. In the paper III regarding the Initial assessments, there was missing data in 20 of the 220 cases that regarded what source was used. As for the paper IV the total of 168 addresses could not be found.

For 473 children their contact with mandated reporters, was available in their folder. These were probably the most troublesome children for whom the social worker found it important to register the contact. But as the data is missing for so many, the interpretation for the visible bias must be made with caution. The reports were located in the list received from the Social Services, the 117 reports that were in the list but not found could be missing because the researcher failed to find them. The Social Services explained the missing reports as due to internal organization deficiencies. The files that were gone through were manually collected and there could have been reports that were not found by the researcher.

Discussion of Method

When dealing with maltreated children there is a strong need for not only working with the specific individual situation but to seek for prevention. Some researchers (McClelland & Battle, 1984: Cwikel, 1994: Vinnerljung, 1996) have stressed the argument that an epidemiological model could be as applicable in social work as it has been in public health for many years. The answer to the target of finding a model for prevention in social work has been the social epidemiology approach. Initially the method attempted to be used in this study was a social epidemiological one. To conduct social epidemiological studies the concepts that are to be studied must be carefully defined. During the collection of data evidence of much confusion about the definitions used was found. This finding demanded the need to go back to the first step in social epidemiology research design, the descriptive epidemiology (e.g. Cwikel, 1994).

The aim of this study was two-folded. The first was to conduct an in-depth study of one child protection process in order to increase knowledge of how the process operates. The purpose of such description is not to gen-

eralize for the country as a whole but to outline questions that should be further studied. Therefore the findings in this study cannot be generalised to make statements about how the child protection process works in Sweden. The Social Services Act is operated by each of the 289 municipalities as each one chooses, and the decentralisation of the process leaves many questions of how to organise the service to families up to the municipalities themselves. The other objective was to describe and analyse the child protection system in relation to the outcome of a child protection process in order to increase knowledge of the macrosystem. This system is designed on the basis of different values, norms and ideology that might be challenged when the system is described. One objection to the findings in this study is that the Swedish system not primary deal with protection. This results in discussions that are more political than scientific which is a difficult task for sociological science, to balance between science and politic. In this study the child protection process was defined by the legislations itself, the child protection process that the state has outlined.

The Validity and Reliability

A possible validity problem concerns the extent to which the collecting of data succeeded in including all the reports and decisions made. The level of success in finding the reports and following them through the filtering process is thought to have been met satisfactorily. In 2002 there were 1,130 children reported, a number similar to the number in this study. A strength of this study is that even the reports filtered out at the first gate-keeping point were analysed, increasing probability that the population comprises all reports made. The reliability could be questioned as the list from Social Services contained applications from families meaning that they themselves had made a request for help. As there was uncertainty about the content of these as well as a lack of clarity of what the reports from the police concerned all were included. These different grounds for reports were nevertheless clearly distinguished in the descriptions. Several of the variables collected could not be analysed as data was lacking in many cases, f. ex the living situations of the children, 566/1051, custody, 585/ 1051, and contact with child and adolescent psychiatry department 598/1051.

In the third study an analysis of content was conducted. In order to test for the reliability of the re-evaluation the inter-rater reliability was checked. A number of reports (82/220, 37%) were randomly selected and control coded independently by a research assistant. The research assistant had no other connection with the research process and was not a social worker. In-

ter-rater reliability was checked for the following variables: if there had been a meeting with the child (97% agreement, $\phi = 0.95$, $p < 0.001$): what information sources that had been used (94% agreement, $\kappa = 0.88$, $p < 0.001$): if any contact had been taken with the reporter (95% agreement, $\phi = 0.87$, $p < 0.001$): and if the report was unsubstantiated or considered still indicating suspected maltreatment (84% agreement, $\phi = 0.63$, $p < 0.001$). It should, however, be noted that the control coder in most of the cases of disagreement (67%) thought that the information still indicated suspected maltreatment. When the socio-economic load was evaluated, three variables were used. The study did not allow an evaluation of how the socio-economic load of the specific family influenced the child protection process as the data was collected on an aggregate level.

Ethical Considerations

This study was conducted without the consent of the families involved. The ethical consideration consisted in evaluating the effects of contacting the families to ask for their consent or not. The collection of data concerned several aspects of the families' lives, the know about afterwards that you had participated in a study without having given your permission could be offensive. Different possibilities to resolve this part were considered. Written or oral permission from the families could have been asked for, or- if contact with the families was thought to be intrusive- the permission could have been obtained by writing in the local newspaper, and that had been reported during the actual year to contact the research group if they did not want to participate.

The report occasion is to be regarded as an intrusion in families' personal lives. For the ones concerned it is to be considered as a severe event. Contacting the family could create a revival of the report occasion e.g. create doubt about the termination of the contact. Another possible source of harm that was considered was the disturbance of an ongoing contact between families and the Social Services. The harm that would be caused by contacting the families was measured in relation to the harm that would be caused families got to know they had been object for this study afterwards. The result of this measuring, considering the design of the study and the levels of intrusion and publicity, was that the contacting would be more harmful. The results of this study were to be presented in an aggregate manner: no personal data were to be presented. The study was conducted by collecting data on individuals but the individuals could not be identified

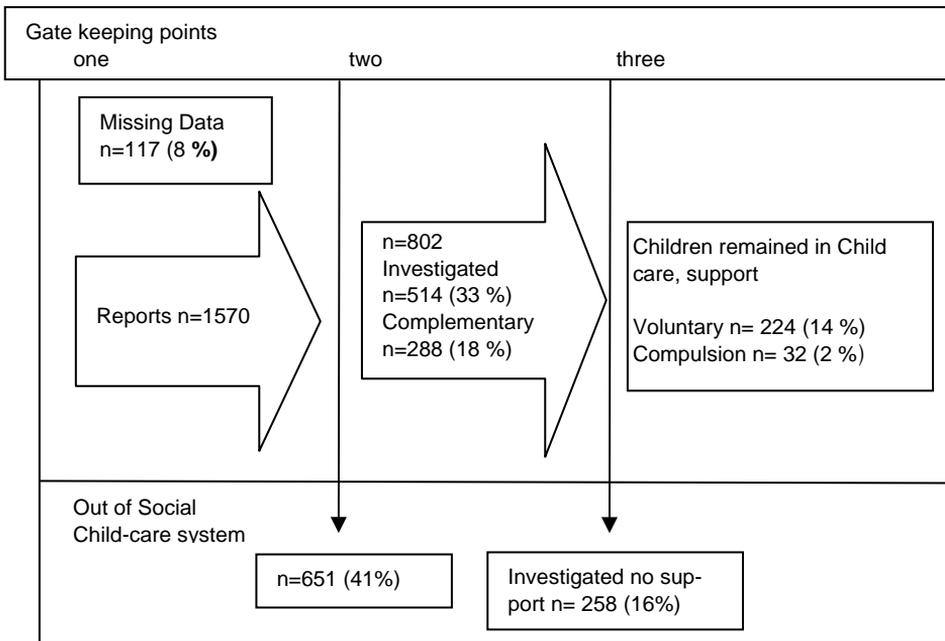
by anyone but the researcher. No personal identification number was used in the study database.

Another ethical consideration that was considered was the effects of the study for the professional social workers. The decisions they made were a part of the study, but the individual decision made by each professional was not the subject. The study regarded an aggregate level of social work and therefore the social workers were not contacted. Permission to conduct this study was asked for and approved by the Social Welfare Board of the municipality and the Human Research Ethics Committee at the Faculty of Health Science at the actual University, number 99125.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

Paper I: Child Protection in a Family Service Organization in Sweden – What is the Outcome for Maltreated Children?

Figure 2. Result of the Filtering Process



A total of 1,570 reports were filed regarding 1,051 children. Fifty-eight percent of the children were between 13 and 18 years old. There were slightly more boys (52%) than girls (45%), and some reports were registered in the name of the parents. There were 139 children who were receiving ongoing help from Social Services. This study design allowed us to see that the relation between the frequency of reporting and children the reports concerned was that one third of the reports regarded the same children. One child had been reported 14 times, but most of the children had been reported only once (76 %) or twice (14 %).

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

The results show that 41% of the reports were filtered out at gate-keeping point one. There were 802 reports that were processed into gate-keeping point two, 288 were complementary as an investigation was ongoing regarding the children, and 514 were new investigations. Out of these another 16 % were filtered out after investigation was completed. These children were not judged to be have been maltreated at the level specified in the Care of Young Persons Act and the parents did not want assistance from Social Services. Few children remained in the child-care system when the process was completed at gate- keeping point three: intervention was provided for 16 % of the cases 14% of the cases on a voluntary basis and 2% on a compulsory basis.

The filtering pattern was similar to that seen in the English study. When the filtering process was completed, 17 % remained in the English study compared to 18% in this study (when the filtering was made according to the English model, se table 5). Reports filtered in a family service organization do not seem to result in more intervention being given. The filtering pattern resembled that what other researchers had found in other countries.

Table 5. Comparison of Filtering process between Sweden and England

Country	No. of cases at each stage	No. filtered out at each stage	Country	No. of cases at each stage	No. filtered out at each stage
ENGLAND			SWEDEN		
Gate- keeping point one	1 888	42 lost cases	Entered Reports	1 570	117 lost cases
Entered Reports					
Checks	1 846 (100%)	478 (26 %)		1 453 (100 %)	78 (5 %)
Investigation	1 368 (74 %)	925 (50 %)	Initial assessments	1 375 (95 %)	573 (39%)
Gate-keeping point two					
Child protection Conference	443 (24 %)	128 (7 %)	Investigation	802 (53 %)	546 (38%)
Gate-keeping point three					
Retained in system after conference	315 (17 %)		Support	256 (18 %)	

In paper one the reports were categorised into qualitative categories according to their content. This resulted in eight categories: Children who had committed crimes 34 %, Parent-related trouble 13 %, Neglect 12 %, Abuse 9 %, Parent's application 6 %, Child on drugs 5 %, Child-related trouble 5 %, Family conflicts 3 %, Other 3 %. There was missing data in 10 % of the reports.

Children aged 13-18 that had committed a crime composed the most common group, 30 % of the population. The second largest group had the same age range and consisted of children that had been drunk or using drugs, 5 %. The third largest group (5%) was children aged 0-6 for whom the report concerned parent-related problems. Fourth were children aged 7-12 who were reported on the suspicion of neglect. The fifth largest group (4%) consisted of children aged 7-12 who had possibly been subject to abuse. When the social worker suspect that a crime towards a child has been committed a police report shall be made. This was done in 38 % of the cases regarding sexual or physical abuse

In the follow-up study we found 61 % of the 1,051 children in the data files of Social Services. There are two different reasons for the re-occurrence of a child in the data files:

The child could have had an ongoing contact since 1998 or the child could have been investigated due to a new report or a new application. Looking at the different clusters mentioned above the following percentage had still an ongoing contact or had been investigated: 45 % of the children aged 13-18 that had committed crime, 35 % of the children aged 13-18 that were reported for use of drugs or had been taken in for being drunk in public places, 96 % of children aged 0-6 for whom the report concerned parent related problems, 85 % of the neglected children aged 7-12 and finally 89 % of the abused children 7-12 years old.

Paper II: Who Suspects and Reports Child Maltreatment to Social Services in Sweden? Is there a Reliable Mandatory Reporting Process?

The automatized police reports composed the largest group of reporters, 35 %. Professionals had filed 33% of the reports and most frequently in this group it was school personnel that filed the report, 29%. Institutions meeting small children (child health centres and childcare centres) reported only 11 children (2%) during the studied year. The institution meeting parents with mental disorders reported only one case.

When evaluating to what extent the reports indicated child maltreatment, none of the reports was found to be designed to harass, to be fictitious or to represent an inappropriate referral. The two types of content evaluated as “**not indicating**” child maltreatment were parental applications 61/940 (6%) and 245/940 (26%) “crime reports”. The other reports were all evaluated as “**indicating**”. In this study we used the nature of the crime to evaluate the “crime reports” as indicating or not indicating that a child could be at risk for maltreatment. “Crime reports” evaluated as “**not indicating**” child maltreatment were reports of petty crime: children/youth who had pilfered, committed forgery, e.g. used someone’s identification paper to enter a discotheque, or painted graffiti, children found drunk in public places, and children who had being travelling by train without a ticket. “Crime reports” that were registered as “**indicating**” possible child maltreatment were crimes of more serious nature as: children prostituting themselves, children using drugs, children who had escaped from home. If the “crime report” report concerned a child less than 13 years of age then this was evaluated as “**indicating**” due to the minor age of the child. When comparing to the official coding 180/432 (41%) of the “*official code*” own conduct consisted of reports “**indicating**” possible child maltreatment. None of the cases registered using the “*official code*” as LOB (children found at public places being too drunk to take care of themselves) was evaluated “**indicating**” possible child maltreatment.

Professional’s reports led to investigation most often (76%), but more than half of the reports from the Public (55%) and the Kin of the child (56%) also led to investigation. Of the “crime reports” made by the Police, 13% led to an investigation being initiated.

The follow up study shows that of the non-investigated cases for which the report was evaluated “indicating” maltreatment in 1998 (n=236), there were 107 (45%) children that had been subjects for an investigation (chapter 11§ 1 Social Service Act) during the follow-up period (1999-2003). The children reported by the professionals not investigated (n=77) were those who most frequently were the subjects of re-notification (53 %).

Paper III: Child Protection in Sweden – Are Routine Assessments Reliable?

When the decisions were re-evaluated the report still was found to indicate possible child maltreatment in the majority of cases (76%). Only in 24 % were the sources used deemed sufficient to state that maltreatment could not be substantiated. The proportion of unsubstantiated reports was 30/95

(37%) for reports from the police: 9/64 (14%) from other professionals (health care, social workers, etc) 7/34 (21%) from the public and 7/27 (26%) from other family members. The social worker used the family as the main informant. The family was used in 74 % of the cases as informant, in 6 % the social worker contacted someone outside the family and in 11 % no further information in addition to the report was collected. In 9 % data regarding information sources was missing. Contact between the social worker and the original reporter in each case seems not to have been regarded as essential in the assessment. Nine reporters were contacted in the assessment process. In 25/220 (11 %) of the cases no further information (in addition to the report) was collected: 21 of these reports concerned children who had committed crimes, 2 concerned suspected sexual abuse and 2 suspected cases of neglect. A letter in which help was offered might have been written, and the lack of an answer from the family was taken as an indication that the family did not want help and the case was closed.

Most of the children (53%) were never seen in person by the social worker, 36 % were seen together with the parent and just 5 % were seen individually. For 6 % information indicating if the child was seen or not was not available in the files. In the five-year follow-up study we found 91 of the 202 (45%) children in the data register. Out of these 91 children, 73 were children for whom their report was evaluated “still indicating” and 18 were children for whom the report was evaluated “unsubstantiated”.

Paper IV: The Impact of Socio-economic Factors in Family Service Organized Child Protection

The clear finding was that children from high socio-economic load districts were more frequently reported than those from low or intermediate. This could be due to visibility and labelling bias as children from high socio-economic load districts had more contact with mandated reporters. There were 473 for which the information was available; 222 had an ongoing contact with institutions. Out of these 32 % were from low, 15 % from middle and 48 % from high socio-economic loaded districts. The average proportion of reported children was lowest in the low socio-economic load districts (2.3 %), in the middle, in intermediate socio-economic load districts (3.1 %) and highest in high socio-economic load districts (4.3 %). On the other hand, no correlation between socio-economic load and the decision to investigate was found. Thus no substantiating bias was identified, as the proportion of investigated children was quite similar in all three groups, 43 %, 48 % and 53 % respectively. Socio-economic load influenced

the amount of reports made but once the report was made it lost importance. The factors that influenced the decision to investigate were: the frequency of report, children who were reported more than once were more likely to be investigated (OR 5.50<9.45<16.25, $p<0.001$) 2). If a professional reported the child an investigation was more likely to be started compared to if the report was from public or family (OR 2.54<3.92<6.04, $p<0.001$). A third factor was the content of the report. If the report contained information about any of the following situations, then the report was followed up more frequently than if it had been a report from the police: 1) Economic problems were investigated somewhat more often (OR 0.90<2.36<6.21, $p=0.082$), 2) Reports of child problems were investigated more often (OR 0.80<1.90<4.53, $p=0.145$), 3) Reports of parental psychiatric illness and/or drug abuse significantly more often (OR 2.29<4.11<7.38, $p<0.001$), 4) Reports that regarded children that had been reported for severe criminality significantly more often (OR 2.33<6.34<17.27, $p<0.001$).

DISCUSSION

The Filtering Process

The examination of the filtering process showed that many children were filtered out at the different gate-keeping points. It was found that 16 % remained in the social childcare system at the end. There are different interpretations for the small amount of children receiving an intervention as a result of the child protection process. One possibility is that families were helped in other ways during the child-protection process (e.g. talks, referred to other institutions), and this is one of the purposes of a child protection system organized in family service. Another interpretation is that the number who received services is linked to the resources that are designated for the purpose and that the number receiving services reflects this factor. Ainsworth & Hansen (2006) and Parton (2006) when discussing the relation between the high inflows to the agencies relative to the outflows, argued that the vague criteria in legislation dealing with “suspicion of maltreatment” and the extension of child protection into the domain of child welfare has resulted in an overwhelming demand for services. The result according to the researchers is that resources that are intended to help maltreated children are “used up” in the filtering process, and therefore these at-risk children receive less attention and help 0-17. Sundel et al (2004) studied the appearance of 2 229 children 0-1 year in social childcare in Stockholm. A support had been provided for 3 % of the children; according to the researchers only in the USA and Norway this amount of children in social childcare is found. For example England, Germany and Netherlands states only 1 %. The researchers raise the question if this is due to children in Sweden are in more need than in other countries, or if this could be an effect of the “diagnostic inflation” that Ainsworth & Hansen (2006) or Parton (2006) suggests. The mandatory reporting creates an inflow that brings more children to the notice of Social Services. The social workers then provide children with support, in an attempt to help. Then more children than maybe needed are in Social childcare.

In this study when compared internationally, the Swedish system did not provide more services. The child protection process in a family service organisations whose character strongly emphasises offering help and assistance and working in partnership with parents (Lawrence-Karski, 1997), did not provide more services than in other countries with different systems (Parton et al., 1997). One explanation for this finding lies in the child protection system. The Social Service Act covers both the family service and child protection process; chapter 11 §1 Social Service Act are used for both. One question that arises after the finding that few children get assistance is if the organization of child protection may counteract the intended aim of the family service organization. Families might turn down the assistance offered to avoid contact with a controlling authority. However the findings of Sundel et al (2004) and the finding in this study are somewhat conflicting. This could be due to the objection the researchers raise regarding their results; social childcare data in the capital has been questioned if representative of the country as a whole. For example, out- of home placements represents the double than in the rest of the country, and children are likely to receive support during a longer period of time. However these finding emphasizes the point that very little is known about the child protection process organized as family service and that further research is needed, using more refined measurements of the outcomes.

The percentage of filtered out cases at the first gate-keeping point was similar to percentages reported in other studies in Sweden. Wiklund (2006) found in an investigation of reports made to 100 municipalities that the mean of the estimates was 35.7 % with substantial dispersion. The screening rate varied between 0 and 83 (standard deviation = 18.3). Kaunitz et al (2004) found 63 % of all reports made to 16 of Stockholm districts during 2004 resulted in an investigation being initiated. It is difficult to stat the extent to which the out-screened reports do not represent cases of child maltreatment due to the poor quality of information on how the screening was done. The out-screened cases at gate-keeping point one were therefore analyzed in order to investigate the reliability of the filtering process, see below.

The Reporter and the Content of Reports

The information on who files reports must be regarded as indispensable in the effort to find maltreated children. Professionals had reported 1/3 of the cases representing 1% of the children in the municipality.

The findings of this study showed that professionals meeting young children had made very few reports (11 of 10 898 children aged 0-6 year) and

that clinicians meeting adults with mental disorders reported even less (only 1 case). Lundén (2004) found in investigating the report pattern of child healthcare nurses and pre-school childcare personnel that they reported 24 % respective, 11 % of the suspected cases of maltreatment. That means that the 11 children is $\frac{1}{4}$ of the children they suspect. Lindell (2005) found that 35 % of the parents abusing their children had a psychiatric diagnosis and Svedin & Gustafsson (1994) found that 32 % of 22 children hospitalised due to abuse had parents with psychiatric diagnoses. This finding then rises questions about what clinicians meeting adults with mental disorder know about their report duty. The low professional reporting rate could be the result of good child welfare politics and an indication that the country has succeeded in creating social environments in which child maltreatment seldom occurs. But results from studies of mandatory reporting oppose such an interpretation. In Sweden Sundell (1997) and Lagerberg (2004) has found that mandated reporters meeting small children only report a small percentage of the children they suspect of being maltreated. In other studies approximately 1/3 of the children who mandated reporters suspected having been maltreated were not reported (Zellman, 1990; Alvarez, 2004). The experience that mandated reporters have had after filing reports has been found to influence their decision to file future reports. If they have a negative experience this will increase their unwillingness to report maltreatment (Sundell, 1997; Van Haeringen, 1998; Flaherty et al., 2000). The finding in paper II, that 22 % of the professional's reports were not investigated is worrying. It could be an indication that the professionals had negative experience of filing report. The study that followed strengthens that interpretation (see below the discussion of the initial assessment).

The most common case in the child protection process was that a child aged 13-18 that had committed a crime. This was not unexpected as several studies have shown that 1/3 of the reports made to Social Services are made by the police (Sundell & Egelund, 2001; Kaunitz et al., 2004). What this finding highlights is that the crime reports are registered as mandated reports according to chapter 14 and may distort the report data. If the police reports are included in the professional report group the number of professionals' reports is 715, without the police reports, this number is only 348. Another finding from this study is that these police reports did not indicate child maltreatment and that only 13 % were investigated.

The Initial Assessment

Out-screened cases cannot be regarded as being fully cleared from the suspicion of child maltreatment. When the out-screened cases were re-evaluated (Paper III), 76 % were found to indicate child maltreatment; these reports concerned 150 children. Another finding that supports this view concerned how the decision was made. The social worker usually met the parents (74%), did not contact the child (53%) and rarely contacted the reporters (9 cases). It must be stressed that there was nothing legally wrong in the way that the social worker did these initial assessments. The legislation only indicates that the authorities are to contact the persons they find necessary for making the decision and there is no assessment tool to use at this first gate-keeping point (Cocozza, 1997; Khoo et al., 2003; Wiklund, 2006). The consequences of this have been pointed out by, for example, Besharov (1990) who argued that decisions are made on the basis of personal judgment and are not necessarily those providing security for the child. In the follow-up study, 45 % of the out-screened children had been investigated meaning that the decision not to investigate could have been unjustified.

Socio Economic Aspects

The finding that children from high socio-economic load districts were more frequently reported than those from low or medium was expected as this was found in other studies (Kaunitz et al., 2004) of how socio-economic load influenced the child protection process. Drake & Zuravain (1996) discuss in their article the reasons for the findings that child protection caseloads are disproportionately comprised of people from poorer communities. They discuss that if this is not reliable evidence that child maltreatment is higher in socio-economic high load families, then it could be due to bias in the system. Possibly child maltreatment is more likely to be masked, be mislabelled or be unreported in wealthy or middle-class areas. One bias to explain such disproportion is labelling and reporting bias. The abundance of children from high socio-economic loaded districts could be due to circumstances within the child protection system. As in Sweden the reports made are handled by Social Services and this is an authority that is directed towards families with high socio economic load, this could make it more difficult to file reports that regard families with middle or low socio-economic load. Professionals may have prejudices about clients within Social Services, or professionals will connect maltreatment with socio-economic load, as Social Service normally deals with social problems

(e.g. recipients of social security, drug abuse) and reports are by the child care system directed towards Social Services. In future reporting bias should be further studied to investigate if the organization into the Social Service system makes it more difficult for children in low or middle groups to get help. The finding that the socio-economic load did not influence the decision to investigate shows that the severity of cases has more influence in the further process than socio-economic load of the living district.

Limitations and Possible Criticisms of the Findings

This is a register study, so it is always possible that the social workers could have had access to other information that they did not write down when making decisions. For example, the social worker could have had personal knowledge of a particular child's situation and might therefore have decided not to investigate a report further. Another consequence of using register data is that it was not possible to measure the quality of the conversation between the social worker and the family when the initial assessment was made. The documented material might not present the entire basis on which the social worker made a decision not to investigate.

What the findings of this study show is that the juvenile delinquent system is integrated into the child protection process in a way that makes it difficult to separate the two processes. There might be a benefit of integrating these two systems. The conversation between social worker, child and parents may help to prevent further juvenile delinquency. However this study does not deal with that question.

International comparisons must be made with caution. There are differences that influence the filtering pattern. One concerns the inflow that is composed of different kinds of cases. This study included cases in which the parents had made applications for help. This constitutes a difference between the Swedish system and that in England. The number of such cases was small though and was therefore not believed to cause significant distortion in the data. Another difference is that the inflow in Sweden contains cases that the English do not include, e.g., juvenile delinquency. The majority of "crime reports" were found not to indicate child maltreatment. Many of the juvenile-delinquency cases were therefore filtered out along the way. This may have distorted data since cases filtered out in England could have been more severe than those in Sweden. This could indicate that the Swedish system provides a higher level of safety for the children. Findings in study II, however, oppose such interpretations, since filtered-out cases still were evaluated to indicate child maltreatment. When the filtering

process was compared, the levels in the processes were compared as for similarities in the social work that was done. The study of Gibbons et al (1995) contains clear descriptions of what was done at the different gate-keepings points, and the authors' knowledge of the Swedish system was thought to make the comparisons of the different levels reliable. These levels are not clear-cut in the Swedish or in the English system, which may have allowed cases to be filtered out in a different way than the filtering pattern shows. The comparisons between filtering processes are made on a structural level and the content of the reports are not compared.

The limitation in the study of socio-economic load is that the data are collected at an aggregated level. The apparent conclusion that the report population consisted of more children from high socio economic load districts but that this did not influence decisions made to investigate may be misleading. Another result could have been obtained if the study was carried out at an individual level. Then the socio-economic load of each family would have been registered and this could have given other results.

CONCLUSIONS

- This study has shown the difficulties met in describing and evaluating the protection provided to children who have possibly been maltreated. The Department of Social Services provides three separate systems that are intended to help children. Each system has its own distinctive character as indicated by the names used to describe them: child protection, social service, and juvenile delinquency. These three systems were created for a variety of different reasons and, in the future, it must be possible to distinguish each one of them from the others. For example, the following actions could be taken: 1) pass new legislation that makes it easier to separate each of the three systems from the other two, 2) create a national database in which data on the handling of child-protection cases is systematically recorded, 3) develop a national reporting form that is to be used by all who file mandated reports of suspected maltreatment. The availability of such a form would make the task of filing a report much easier and would, itself, facilitate the process of putting data into the national database. From the child's point of view, this separation is necessary for four reasons: 1) one must be able to see how each case is handled given the laws that govern this process, 2) the institutions reporting each case must be clearly recorded, 3) the exact nature of the incident(s) being reported must be recorded 4) and a description of the final outcome of each case must be readily accessible.
- The reports filed by professionals are the cornerstone on which the child-protection process is built. An important and disturbing finding of this study is that the number of reports filed by professionals is small in relation to the apparent frequency of cases of maltreatment of children. Previous studies have shown that if professionals have negative experiences when filing a report they will much less likely file reports to Social Services in the future. This demonstrates

that for the system to function well, it is essential that each report filed must be given a proper reception followed by fully professional handling of each case. The vague legislation and the absence of clear criteria in social work for decisions in the initial assessment creates a risk that the professional who files a report will be disappointed by the process. Two sources of such disappointment are the failure of Social Services to make contact with the professional and the failure of the process to take a case to a conclusion that the professional believes might be justified. In addition, clear criteria must be developed that specify how a report is to be investigated in accordance with chapter 14 of The Social Services Act. The primary goal of providing such criteria, in this aspect, is to ensure that the reporting professionals are treated with appropriate respect and that the quality of the decisions is guaranteed all over the country. The overall purpose is to ensure children protection. The findings of this study indicate that a national standard is needed to ensure that the professional can be confident that it is worth filing reports.

- More studies of the interaction between the idealized world as described in the law and the real world of the social practice are needed as findings in this study showed that the child protection system might not be safe. In the initial assessment the rather vague language in existing legislation and the absence within the Social work profession of clear criteria to be met in the initial assessment was found to create a risk for maltreated children not to be identified even when reported by professionals. These studies are needed in order to determine just how much security is given to maltreated children.
- One of the primary purposes behind making child protection part of a family- service system is that it can offer support and help in advance to prevent children from being maltreated. More children from high socio-economic loaded districts were reported as having possibly been maltreated, but the reports led to relatively few actions to aid the children. Future studies are needed in order to investigate how the double nature of Social Services' tasks influences the families' willingness to seek help and the social workers readiness to take firm action in order to protect the children.

CONCLUSIONS

These findings show that very little is actually known about the degree to which the child-protection system has succeeded in designing a model that provides adequate levels of security for maltreated children. Further research is needed of various types of child-protection processes in order to find out what is needed to create an efficient system.

REFERENCES

- Agathonos-Georgopoulou, H. (1998). Future outlook for child protection policies in Europe. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 22, pp 239-247.
- Ainsworth, F. (2001). Mandatory reporting of child abuse and neglect: does it really make a difference? *Child and Family Social Work*, 7, pp 57-63.
- Ainsworth, F., & Hansen, P. (2006). Five tumultuous years in Australian child protection: little progress. *Child and Family Social Work*, 11, pp 33-41.
- Alberth, V., & Barth, R. (1996). Predicting growth in child abuse and neglect reports in urban, suburban and rural counties. *Social Service Review*, 70, pp 58-82.
- Alvarez, K. M., Kenny, M. C., Donohue, B., & Carpin, M. C. (2003). Why are professionals failing to initiate mandated reports of child maltreatment, and are there any empirically based training programs to assist professionals in the reporting process? *Aggression and Violent behavior*, 9, pp 563-578.
- Andersson, G. (1995). *Barn i Samhällsvård*. [Children in social childcare]. Lund: Student litteratur.
- André Löfholm, C., & Sundell, K. (2003). *Social barnavård i Stockholms stadsdelar: en kvantitativ beskrivning av inkommen information och beslut under 1: a kvartalet 2002*. [Social childcare in Stockholm districts- a quantitative description of information and discussion during the first quarter of 2002]. FoU report no 2003:1. Stockholms Socialtjänstförvaltning: FoU-enheten.
- Azar, S., Povilaitis, T., Lauretti, A., & Pouquette, C. (1998). The current status of etiological theories in interfamilial child maltreatment. In: J. R. Lutzker, (Eds.). *Handbook of child abuse research and treatment*. New York: Plenum Press.
- Bergmark, Å., & Lundström, T. (2000). Kunskaper och kunskapssyn. Om socialarbetare inom socialtjänsten. [Knowledge and approach to knowledge. About social workers in Social Services]. *Socionomernas forsknings supplement*, 12, pp 2-15.

- Besharov, D. J. (1990). *Recognizing Child Abuse: A Guide for the Concerned*. New York: The Free Press.
- Borres, M.P., & Hägg, A. (2007). Child abuse study among Swedish physicians and medical students. *Paediatrics International: Official Journal of the Japan Paediatric Society*, 49, pp 177-82.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1977). Toward an experimental ecology of human development. *American Psychologist*, 32, pp 513-531.
- Cawson, P. (2002). *Child maltreatment in the family- the experience of a national sample of young people*. London: NSPCC.
- Cocozza, M. (1997). Barn som far illa –ur ett sociologiskt konfliktperspektiv [Neglected children- from a sociological conflict perspective]. Thesis in Sociology: University of Linköping.
- Cocozza, M. (2003). *Anmälningsplikten som instrument för att identifiera barn som behöver samhällets skydd*. [Mandatory reporting as an instrument for finding children in need of protection of society]. Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. Report no 26. Linköping University, Faculty of Health Sciences.
- Collins, M. E. (2006). The children order: A perspective from the United States. *Child care in Practice*, 1, pp 113-12.
- Coulton, C. J., Korbin, J. E., & Su, M. (1995). Neighbourhoods and child maltreatment: A multi level study. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 23, pp 1019-1040.
- Cwikel, J. (1994). Social epidemiology: an integrative and practice research and practice strategy applied to homelessness. *Journal of Social Service Research*, 19, pp 23-47.
- Daro, D., & Mcurdy, K. (1994). *Current trends in child abuse reporting and fatalities: the results of the 1993 annual fifty state survey*. National Committee for the Prevention of Child Abuse: Chicago.
- Drake, B., & Pandey, S. (1996). Understanding the relationship between neighbourhood poverty and specific types of child maltreatment. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 20, pp 1003-1018.
- Drake, B., & Zuravain, S. (1996). Bias in child maltreatment reporting: revisiting the myth of classlessness. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 68, pp 295-304.
- Egelund, T., Kvilhaug, A., Liebing, A., & Östberg, F. (2000). *Social barnavård-kunskaps och professionalisering*. [Social childcare knowledge and professionalization]. Stockholm: Centrum för utvärdering av socialt arbete, 2000:5.

- Finkelhor, D., & Byron, L. (1986). High- risk children. In: D. Finkelhor & Araji S, (Eds). *A Source-book on child sexual abuse*. (pp 60-88). Beverly Hills CA: Sage publications.
- Flaherty, E.G., Sege, R., Binn, H. J., Mattson, C. L., & Christoffer, K. K. (2000). Health care providers' experience reporting child abuse in the primary care setting. *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescence Medicine*, 154, pp 489-493.
- Freisthler, B., Darcely, H. M., & La Scala, E. (2006). Understanding the Ecology of Child maltreatment. A review of the literature and direction for further research. *Child Maltreatment*, 11, pp 263-280.
- Garbarino, J. (1976). A preliminary study of some ecological correlates of child abuse: The impact of socioeconomic stress on mothers. *Child development*, 47, pp 178-185.
- Garbarino, J., & Crouter, A. (1978). Defining the Community context for Parent-Child Relations: The correlations of Child maltreatment, *Child Development*, 49, pp 604-616.
- Garbarino, J. (1992). The meaning of poverty in the world of children. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 35, pp 220-237.
- Garbarino, J., & Kostelny, K. (1992). Child maltreatment as a community problem. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 16, pp 455-464.
- Garbarino, J., & Eckenrode, J. (1997). *Understanding abusive families. An ecological approach to theory and practice*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Garbarino, J., & Sherman, D. (1980). High- risk neighbourhoods and high- risk families: the human ecology of child maltreatment. *Child development*, 51, pp 188-198.
- Gelles, R. (1993a). Poverty and violence towards children. *American Behavioural Scientist*, 35, pp 258-274.
- Gelles, R. (1993). Through a sociological lens: Social structure and family violence. In Gelles, R. J., & Loseke, D.R (Eds). *Current controversies on Family Violence*, (pp31-46), Newbury Park: Sage publications.
- Gibbons, J., Conroy, S., & Bell, C. (1995). *Operating the Child Protection System*. London: HMSO.
- Gilbert, R. N. (Ed). (1997). *Combating child abuse: International perspectives and trend*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Giovannoni, J. (1989). Substantiated and unsubstantiated reports of child maltreatment. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 11(4), pp 299-318.
- Gordon, L. (1988). *Heroes of their own Life's: The Politics and History of family violence*. Boston: Viking.

- Hacking, I. (1991). The making and molding of child abuse. *Critical Inquiry*, pp 253-288.
- Hessle, S. (1988). *Familjer i Sönderfall: en rapport från samhällsvården*. [Families in decomposition, report from the Social childcare]. Stockholm: Norstedts.
- Hessle, S., & Vinnerljung, B. (1999). *Child welfare in Sweden: An overview*. Stockholm: Department of Social Work, Stockholm University.
- Hiatt, S.W., Miyoshi, T. J., Fryer, G. E., Miyoshi, P. K., & Krugman, R. D. (1998). *World prospective on child abuse. The third international resource book*. University of Colorado School of Medicine, Kempe Children's Center.
- Hollander, A. (1985). *Omhändertagande av barn: en studie av barnavårdsmål vid förvaltningsdomstolarna åren 1974, 1977 och 1982*. [The compulsory care of children: A study of child care cases at the court during 1974, 1977 and 1982]. Stockholm: Aktuell juridik.
- Hindberg, B. (2006). *Sårbara barn- att vara liten, misshandlad och försummad*. [Vulnerable children-to be little, abused and neglected]. Stockholm: Förlagshuset Gothia.
- Höjer-Widén, K. (1992). *Samhället och barnen- svensk lagstiftning*. [Society and children in Swedish legislation]. Stockholm: P. A Nordstedts Förlag.
- Jenny, C., Hymel, K. P., Ritzen, A., Reinert, S. E., & Hay., T. C. (1999). Analysis of missed cases of abusive head trauma. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 281, pp 621-626.
- Kaunitz, C., Andréé Löfholm, C., & Sundell, K. (2004). *Social barnavård i Stockholms stadsdelar: en kvantitativ beskrivning av myndighetsutövande under första kvartalet 2002, 2003, 2004*. [Social Childcare in Stockholms districts, a quantitative description of the exercise of authority under the first quarter in 2002, 2003, 2004]. Stockholm: FoU.
- Kalichman, S. (1999). *Mandated reporting of suspected child abuse, ethics, law & policy*. Washington DC: American Psychological Association.
- Kenny, M. C.(2001). Child abuse; teachers perceived deterrents. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 25, pp 81-92.
- Kempe, C. H., Silverman, F., Steele, B., Droegemueller, W., & Silver, H. (1962). The battered child syndrome. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 181, pp 4-11.
- Khoo, E. G., Hyvönen, U., & Nygren, L. (2002). Child welfare or child protection: Uncovering Swedish and Canadian orientations to social intervention in child maltreatment. *Qualitative Social Work*, 1, pp 451-471.

- Khoo, E. G., Hyvönen, U., & Nygren, L. (2003). Gatekeeping in child welfare: A comparative study of intake decision making by social workers in Canada and Sweden. *Child welfare league of America*, 32, pp 507-524.
- Lagerberg, D., & Sundelin, C. (2000). *Risk och prognos i socialt arbete med barn. Forskningsmetoder och resultat*. [Risk and prognoses in social work with children. Research methods and results]. Stockholm: Centrum för utvärdering av socialt arbete: Förlagshuset Gothia.
- Lagerberg, D. (1998). *Barn som far illa, ett dilemma för barnhälsovården?*[Maltreated children, a problem for child healthcare providers]. Uppsala Akademiska sjukhuset: Landstinget i Uppsala län.
- Lagerberg, D. (2004). A descriptive survey of Swedish child health nurses' awareness of abuse and neglect, II. Characteristics of the children. *Acta Paediatrica*, 93, pp 692-701.
- Lawrence-Karski, R. (1997). California's Reporting System. In: Gilbert, N. (Ed). *Combatting child abuse. International perspectives and trends*. (p 9-35). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lazenbatt, A., & Freeman, R. (2006). Recognizing and reporting child physical abuse: a survey of primary healthcare professionals. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 53, pp 227-36.
- Lindell, L. (2005). *Child Physical Abuse, Report and Interventions*. Dissertation no.879 Linköping University: Unitryck.
- Lindsey, D. (1994). *The welfare of Children*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Lindsey, D. (1994). Mandated reporting and child abuse fatalities: Requirements for a system to protect children. *Social Work Research*, 18, pp 41-54.
- Linköpings Kommun.(1999). Områdesbeskrivningar. (Area descriptions). Linköping: LK Statistik och utredningar.
- Linköpings Kommun. (2000). Statistikinformation. (Statistic information). Linköping: LK Statistik och utredningar; 2000:23.
- Lundén, K. (1998). *Förskolebarn som far illa. [Maltreated preschool children]*. Rapport nr.3: 98, Psykologiska Institutionen, Göteborgs Universitet.
- Lundén, K. (1998). *Att identifiera omsorgsvikt hos förskolebarn*. [Identifying neglect regarding pre-school childcare children]. Göteborgs universitet: Psykologiska institutionen.

- Lundström, T. (1993). *Tvångsomhändertagande av barn. En studie av lagarna professionerna och praktiken under 1900-talet*. [Compulsory care of children. A study of legislation, professions and practice in the 19 th century]. Stockholm: Institutionen för socialt arbete, Stockholms Universitet.
- Lundström, T., & Wiklund, S. (2000). *Att växa upp i familjer med långvarigt försörjningsstöd. En forskningsöversikt om barns uppväxtvillkor i familjer med socialbidrag och små ekonomiska resurser*. [To grow up in families with long time social allowance. A research review]. Stockholms Socialtjänstförvaltning: FoU-enheten.
- Lundström, T., & Vinnerljung, B. (2001). Omhändertagande av barn under 1990 talet. [Compulsion care of children during the 1990ies]. I Szehely, M.(Ed). *Välfärdstjänst i omvandling* (SOU 2001:51). Stockholm: Fritzes.
- Lundström, T., & Sallnäs, M. (2003). Klass, kön och etnicitet i den sociala barnvården. [Class, gender and ethnicity in the social child care]. *Socialvetenskaplig tidskrift*, 10, pp193-213.
- Länstyrelsen i Västra Götaland. (2003). Barnavårdsanmälningar och utredningar. [Mandated Reports and investigations]. Länstyrelsen i Västra Götaland, sociala enheten, 2003:54.
- McClelland, R., & Battle, S. F. (1984). Applying Social Epidemiology to Child Abuse. *The journal of Contemporary Social Work*.
- Melton, G. B. (2005). Mandated reporting; a policy without reason. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 29, pp9-18.
- Ministry of Health and Social Affairs. (2005). From, www.regersingskansliet.se
- Newberger, E., Reed, R., Daniel, J., Hyde, J., & Kotelchuck, M. (1977). Paediatric social illness: toward an etiologic classification. *Paediatrics*, 60, pp178-185.
- Ohlsson Hort, S. E. (1997). Towards a deresidualization of Swedish child welfare policy and practice. In Gilbert, R. N. (Ed). *Combating child abuse: International perspective and trends*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Parton, N., Thorpe, D., & Wattam, C. (1997). *Child protection risk and the moral order*. London: Macmillan Press Ltd.
- Parton, N., & Mathews, R. (2001). New Directions in child protection and family intervention in Western Australia: a policy initiative to re-focus child welfare practice. *Child and Family Social Work*, 6, pp 97-113.

- Parton, N. (2006). Every child matters: The shift to prevention whilst strengthening protection in children's services in England. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 28, pp 976-992.
- Pelton, L. (1978). Child abuse and neglect: The myth of classlessness. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 48, pp 608-617.
- Regeringen Proposition (1979/80:1) *Om Socialtjänsten*. [About Social Services].
- Regeringen Proposition (2002/2003: 53) *Stärkt skydd för barn i utsatta situationer*. [Strengthen protection to children in exposed situations].
- Saulsbury, F. T., & Cambell. (1985). Re-evaluation of child reporting by physician. *American Journal of Diseases of Children*, 139, pp 393-395.
- SFS (1902:67) Lag angående uppfostran åt vanartade och i sedligt avseende försummade barn. [Law regarding vicious disposed children and in morality respect neglected].
- SFS (1960:97) Lagen om samhällets barnavård. [Law regarding Social childcare].
- SFS (1980:620) Socialtjänstlag [The Social Services Act].
- SFS (1990:52) Lagen om vård av unga. [The Care of Young Persons Act].
- SFS (2001:453) Socialtjänstlag [The Social Services Act].
- Sedlak, A. J., & Broadhurst, D. D. (1996). *Third National Incidence Study of Child Abuse and Neglect*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
- Socialstyrelsen. (1998). *Anmälan, Utredning, Insats; Individ och familjeomsorgens arbete med barn*. [Report, Investigation, Support; The family-service work with children]. SoS Rapport no 4, Stockholm: Erlanders Gotab.
- Socialstyrelsen. (2005:81). *Källan till en chans. Nationellt stöd för kunskapsutveckling inom Socialtjänsten*. [The source to a chance: National support to the development of knowledge within Social services]. Stockholm: Fritzes.
- Socialstyrelsen. (2004). *Socialt arbete med barn och unga i utsatta situationer*. [Social work with the children and Adolescents in exposed situations]. Stockholm: Socialstyrelsen.
- Socialstyrelsen. (2006). *Socialtjänsten i Sverige, en översikt 2003*. [Social Services in Sweden – an overview, 2003]. Stockholm: Socialstyrelsen.
- Sundell, K. (1997). Child-care personnel's failure to report child maltreatment: some Swedish evidence. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 21, pp 91-105.

- Sundell, K., & Karlsson, U. (1999). *Sociala barnavård i tio svenska kommuner. Vilka barn berörs, hur utreds de och vad händer sedan?*[Social child care in 10 Swedish municipalities, what children were investigated, how were they investigated and what was the outcome of the investigations?]. FoU-rapport 1999:26, Stockholms Socialtjänstförvaltning: FoU-enheten.
- Sundell, S., & Colbjörnson, M. (2000). *Samhället stöd till elever med psykosociala problem. En undersökning av 23 grundskolor 1995 och 1998.* [The support to pupils with psychosocial problems a study of 23 schools in 1995 and 1998]. FoU rapport 1994 (16). Stockholms Socialtjänstförvaltning: FoU-enheten.
- Sundell, K., & Egelund, T. (2001). *Barnavårdsutredningar- en kunskapsöversikt.* [A Review of Investigations of Child Maltreatment]. Centrum för utvärdering av socialt arbete (CUS). Stockholm:Gothia.
- Sundell, K., Vinnerljung, B., André-Löfholm, C., & Humlesjö, E. (2004). *Socialtjänstens barn.* [The children of Social Services]. FoU-rapport 2004 (4): Stockholms Socialtjänstförvaltning: FoU-enheten.
- Svedin, C-G., & Gustafsson, P.A. (1994). Barnmisshandel och sexuella övergrepp. Journal analys utvärderar handläggningsrutinerna. [Child physical abuse and Sexual abuse, an analysis of charts]. *Läkartidningen*, 91(4), pp 227-231.
- Svedin, C-G., Wadsby, M., & Sydsjö, G. (1996). Children of mothers who are at psychosocial risk. Mental health, behaviour problems and incidence of child abuse at age 8. *Scandinavian Journal of Social Medicine*, 24, pp 227-36.
- Spearly, J., & Lauderdale, M. (1983). Community characteristics and ethnicity in the prediction of child maltreatment rates. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 7, pp 91-105.
- Sydsjö, G., (1996). *Psykosociala risk graviditeter och deras utfall.* [Psychosocial risk pregnancies and their outcome]. Linköpings University Medical Dissertation No.350. Linköping: Linköping University, Faculty of Health Sciences.
- Sydsjö, G., Wadsby M., & Svedin, C-G. (2007). Life development for 20 pairs of children with and without psychosocial problems- A 16-year-long study with follow-up. *Nordic Journal of Psychiatry*, 61, pp 19-26.
- Thorpe, D. (1994). *Evaluating Child Protection.* Milton Keynes: Open University P. Buckingham.
- Trocme, N. M., Tourigny, M., MacLaurin, B., & Fallon, B. (2003). Major findings from the Canadian incidence study of reported child abuse and neglect. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 27, pp 1427-1439.

- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2004). Child maltreatment 2001. Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office 2003.
- Van Haering, A.R., Dadds, M., & Armstrong, K. L. (1998). The child abuse lottery-will the doctor suspect and report? Physician's attitude towards and reporting of suspected child abuse and neglect. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 22, pp 159-169.
- Vinnerljung, B. (1996). *Fosterbarn som vuxna*. [Children in foster care as adults]. Lund studies in social welfare, XX111, Lund: Arkiv förlag.
- Vulliamy, A.P., & Sullivan, R. (2000). Reporting child abuse: paediatricians experience in the protection system. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 24, pp1461-1470.
- Wells, S. (1987). *Screening practice in child protection service*. Washington. D.C. National Legal Resource. Centre for child advocacy and Protection.
- Wells, S., Fluke, J., & Brown, C. H. (1995). The Decision To Investigate: Child Protection Practice in 12 Local Agencies. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 17, pp 523-546.
- Wiklund, S. (2006). *Den kommunala barnavården-om anmälningar,organisationen och utfall*. [The Social child care-reports, organisation and outcome]. Stockholm University, Department of Social Work. Stockholm: Institutionen för socialt arbete, Stockholms Universitet, nr 117-2006. Edsbruk : Akademitryck AB.
- Zellman, Gail. (1990). Child abuse reporting and failure to report among mandate reporters. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 5, pp 3-22.
- Zellman, Gail., & Faire, C. (2001). Preventing and reporting abuse. In:J. Briere, L. Berliner, J.A. Bulkley., C. Jenny & T Reid (Eds.). *The APSAC handbook on child maltreatment (2nd ed)*. (pp 449-475). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Zuravain, S., & Taylor, R. (1987). The ecology of child maltreatment: Identifying and characterizing high-risk neighborhoods. *Child Welfare*, 66, pp 497-506.