

Measuring child abuse and neglect

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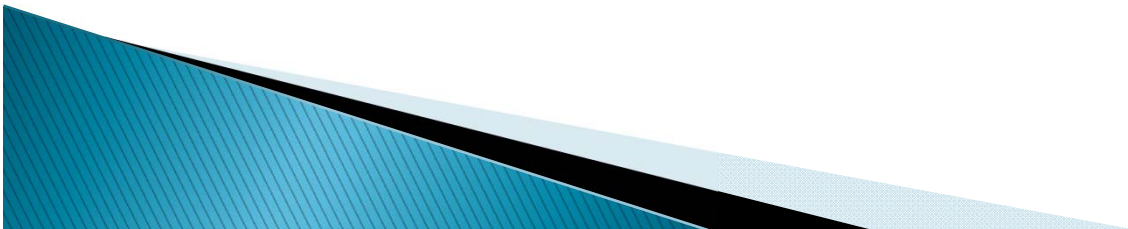
Karlstad and Örebro Universities, Sweden



Definition according to the Swedish Committee on Child Abuse 2001

Child maltreatment is when an adult person:

- Exposes a child for physical or psychological violence, sexual assault or humiliation
- or
- Neglects the basic needs of the child



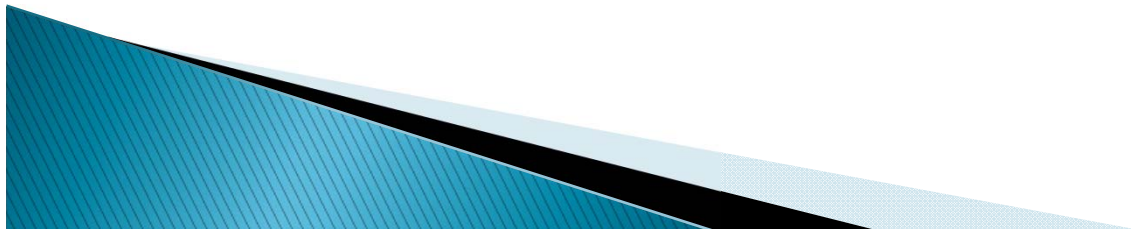
Definition problems

- ▶ Where is the border between a harsh behavior and corporal punishment?
- ▶ Is there an obvious border between corporal punishment and maltreatment?
- ▶ Should rules be the same all over the world or should cultural aspects be considered?
- ▶ Should it be considered if the violence was intentional or not?



How do you measure?

- ▶ Psychological violence
- ▶ Sexual assaults
- ▶ Humiliations
- ▶ Neglect
- ▶ Witnessing violence
- ▶ Multi-victimization/poly-victimization
- ▶ Solitary or repeated violence



Child Parent Conflict Tactic Scale (Straus 1979)

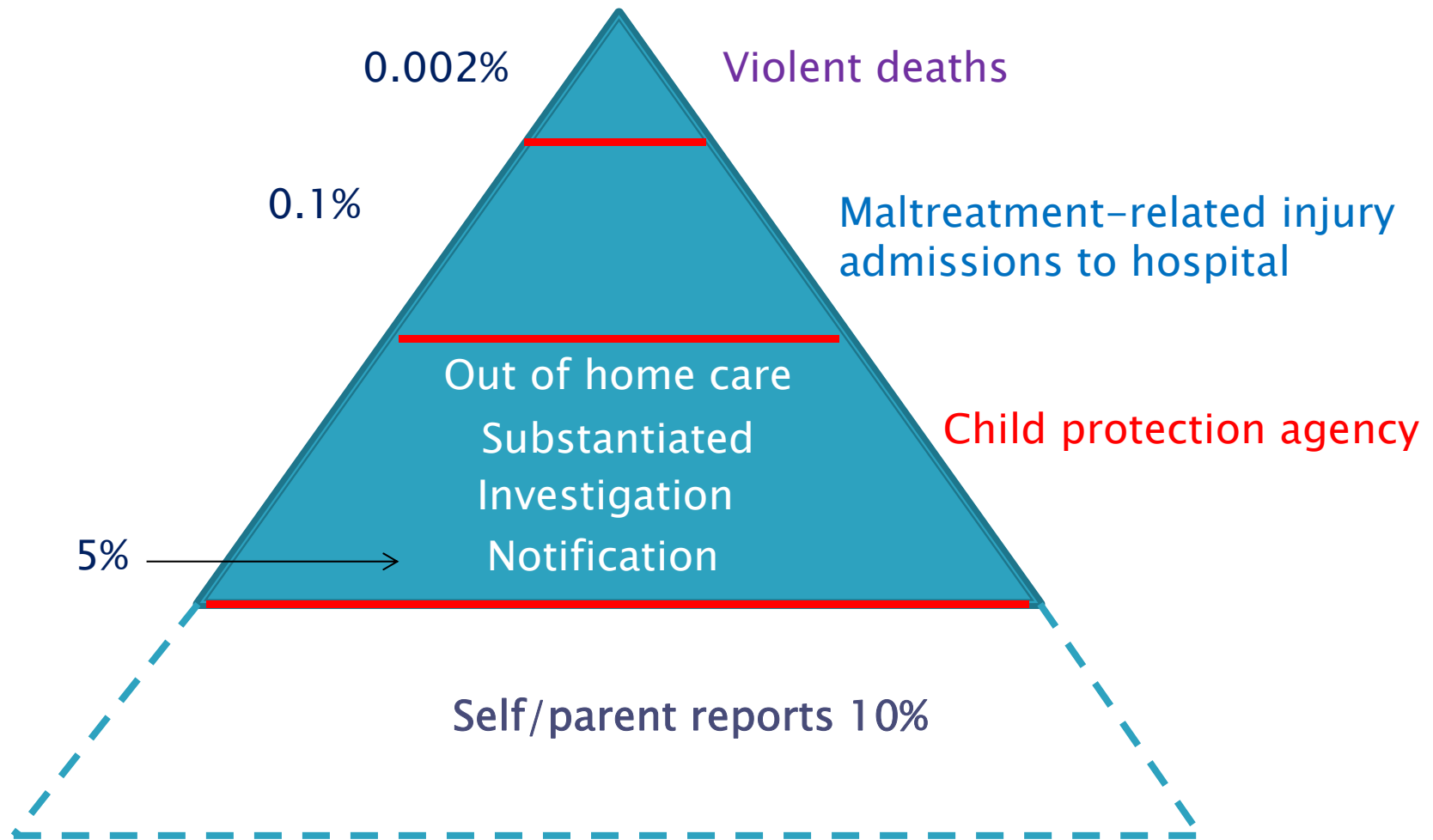
- ▶ Probably the worlds' most accepted and used scale for interpersonal violence, > 600 peer review papers. Specific scale for parent-child-relation (upbringing).
- ▶ Starts from the assumption that conflicts are unavoidable and asks about conflict solution techniques, from verbal consensus to advanced violence.
- ▶ Not asking about attitudes or emotions associated to the conflict solution techniques.
- ▶ Personal interview, telephone interview, questionnaires.
- ▶ Quantification from zero to > 10 times/year.
- ▶ Criticized for not putting the violence into a greater range of circumstances as family life circumstances, economy, isolation etc.



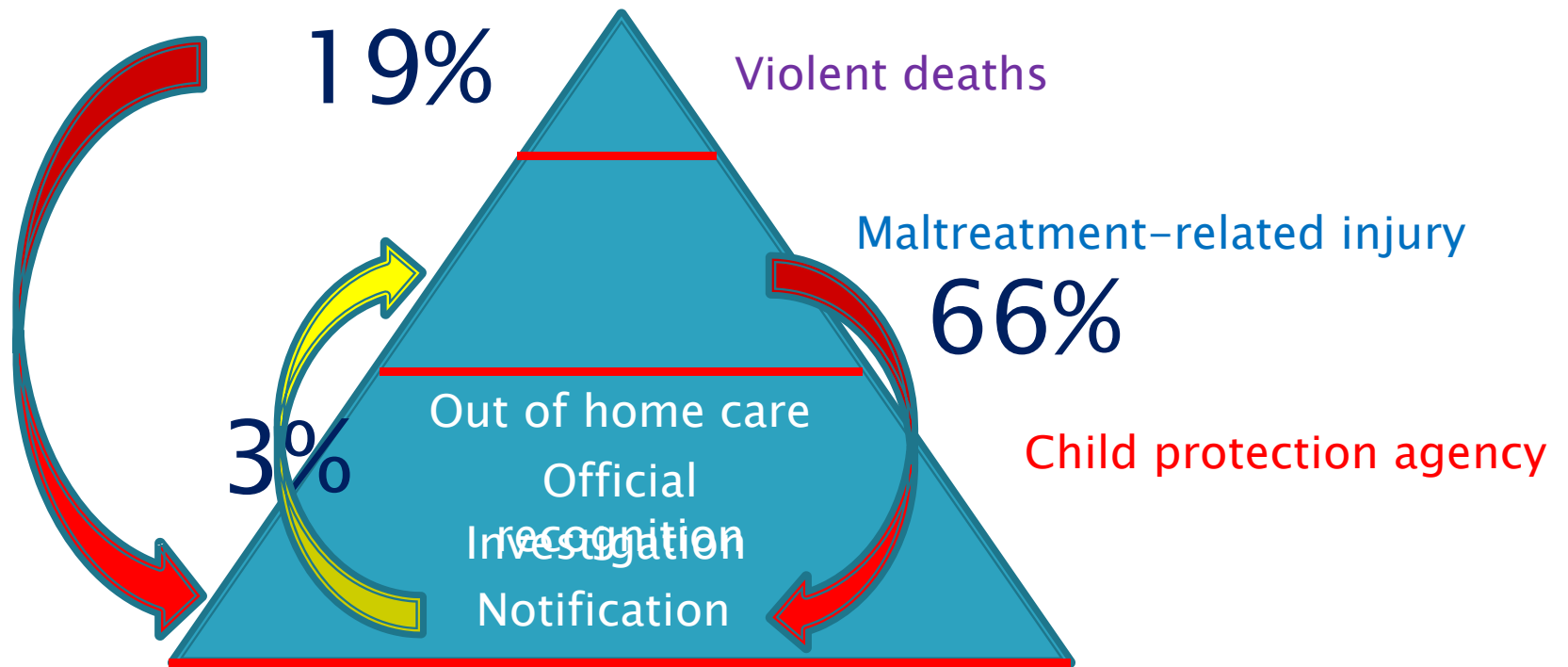
Sources

- ▶ Mortality registers
- ▶ Inpatient registers
- ▶ Outpatient registers
- ▶ Agency registers, out of home placements
- ▶ Police reports
- ▶ Parental reports of attitudes and behavior
- ▶ Children's' own experiences
- ▶ Secondary reports like reports on family violence (from hospitals, police officers etc.)



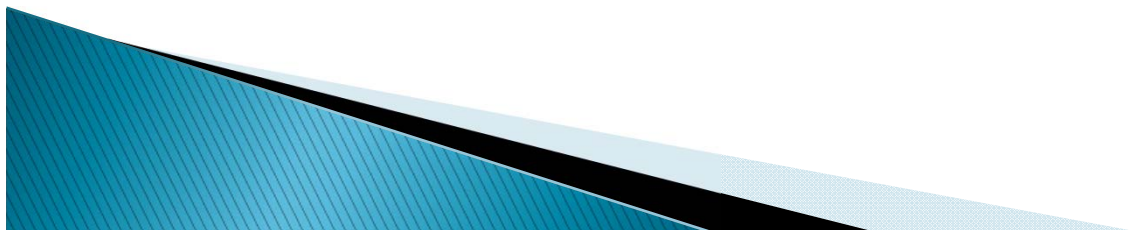


Gilbert R et al. Child maltreatment: variation in trends and policies in six developed countries. *The Lancet* 2012;379:758-781.



Limited overlap between sources

(linked data W.Australia)

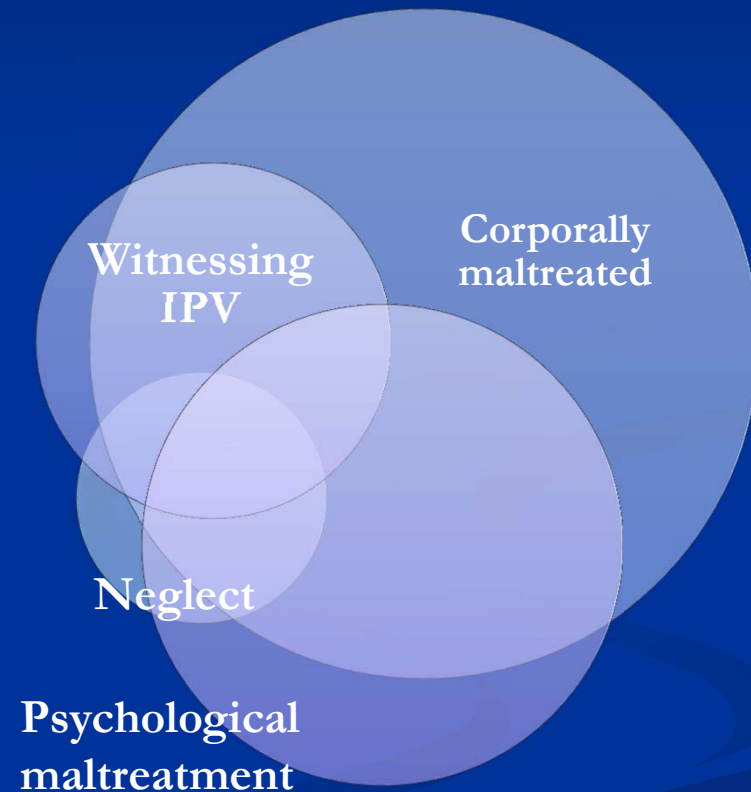


Children's multi-victimization

National study on
Corporal punishment
And other humiliation 2011
3202 Swedish children in 9th grade

Ever beaten at home 18 %
Witness of IPV 7 %
Emotional abuse 13 %
Neglect 3 %

Multi-victimized:
Neglected children 85 %
IPV witness 76 %



Child neglect: Definition problems

- ▶ Varying degrees from not providing certain needs to endanger life.
- ▶ Omission of caretaking rather than overt committed acts, as in other forms of abuse.
- ▶ Cultural expectations
- ▶ High correlation to poverty
- ▶ Multiple forms of neglect and abuse common
- ▶ Seldom isolated to one child
- ▶ Neighborhood important

A suggested typology of Neglect:

- ▶ **Care:** Not providing basic needs, food, clothing, hygiene
- ▶ **Medical:** Not providing appropriate medical assessment or treatment for illness, injury or disability, dental problems
- ▶ **Educational:** Not supporting schooling
- ▶ **Environmental:** Serious health or safety hazards
- ▶ **Supervisory:** Child unattended or left in inappropriate care

(Ferol Mennen et al. California. Child Abuse & Neglect 2010 (sept); 34(9):647-658.)

Long time consequences of child maltreatment

(Gilbert et al 2009)

Differences between prospective and longitudinal studies

	Prospective studies*	Retrospective studies*
Education and employment		
Low educational achievement	Moderate	Weak
Low skilled employment	Moderate	Lacking
Mental health		
Behaviour problems as child/adolescent	Strong	Strong
Post-traumatic stress disorder	Strong	Strong
Depression	Moderate	Strong
Attempted suicide	Moderate	Strong
Self-injurious behaviour	Weak	Weak
Alcohol problems	Moderate	Strong
Drug misuse/dependence	Weak	Strong
Physical health and sexual behaviour		
Prostitution/sex trading	Moderate	Strong
Teenage pregnancy	Inconsistent	Strong
Promiscuity	No effect	Strong
General adult health	Lacking	Moderate
Chronic pain in adulthood	No effect	Weak
Obesity	Strong	Weak
Health-care use/costs	Lacking	Moderate
Quality of life	Lacking	Lacking
Aggression, violence, criminality		
Criminal behaviour	Strong	Strong



Publishing

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