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Factors Affecting Indication Rates of Child Abuse and Neglect for Similar Counties in Illinois

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Illinois Wesleyan University

**Factors Affecting Indication Rates of Child
Abuse and Neglect for Similar Counties
in Illinois**

b y

Melinda K. Foulk

**Prepared for Graduation with Honors in the
Department of Sociology
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Abstract

This exploratory study examines child abuse and neglect by concentrating on one aspect of this complex public issue: the current state of advocacy in Illinois. Following a review of the literature, this paper explores the vital role of the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and its participation in advocacy for abused and neglected children.

A sample of six demographically similar counties from the state of Illinois is selected for study. Although demographically similar, the counties have statistically significant differences between their indication rates--those children found to be abused and neglected through investigation by DCFS. Current and respected theories in the fields of sociology, social work, and criminology are examined to explain these differences in indication rates. Although there is statistical significance and face validity indicated between some of the variables and indication rates, the small sample restricts this to an exploratory study.

Two final hypotheses are examined. The first regards the possible influence of the organizational structure and cohesion of each individual DCFS office on its indication rate. The second studies the possible effect of public visibility of the individual agency on its indication rate. Data was obtained from telephone interviews of the six agency directors. Of all the variables considered, the visibility of the DCFS office in the community is found to have the highest correlation to indication rates both statistically and on face validity. These findings are discussed and recommendations are made for continued study in the hope that this information will increase public knowledge of child abuse and neglect, thereby increasing protection of the vulnerable child.

Table of Contents

Preface	i
Introduction	1
The Problem: How Indication Rates are Determined	1
Society, Child Abuse, and Advocacy	3
Rights of Parents Argument and Philosophy	6
The History of Advocacy in Illinois	8
The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services	11
The Critical Question	15
Methodology	17
Counties and Indication Rates	17
Method of Inquiry	20
Unemployment and Child Abuse and Neglect	21
Race Differences and Child Abuse and Neglect	23
The Family and Child Abuse and Neglect	25
Crime and Income Influences on Indication Rates	28
Organizational Influences of County DCFS Offices on Indication Rates	29
Visibility of the Agency and Indication Rates	36
Discussion	41
Conclusions and Recommendations	46

Listing of Tables and Figures

Table 1.1--Demographical Variables Considered in Selecting the Six Illinois Counties and Their Respective Data, 1989	18
Table 1.2--Summary Data for the First Five Independent Variables, 1989	18
Table 2--Indication Rates for Six Illinois Counties	19
Table 3--Groupings of the Counties by Indication Rates, 1989	19
Table 4--Unemployment Rates in Relation to Indication Rates for Six Illinois Counties, 1989	22
Table 5--Race and Indication Rates for Six Illinois Counties, 1989	24
Table 6--Divorce Rates and Indication Rates for Six Illinois Counties, 1989	26
Table 7--Number of Crimes per County Population, Average Household Income, and Indication Rates for Six Illinois Counties, 1989	28
Table 8--Scores of Each County on Questionnaire and Its Indication Rate for Six Illinois Counties, 1989	33
Table 9--Visibility Scores of Six Illinois Counties in the Public Sector and Their Indication Rates, 1989	37
Figure 1--The Bureaucracy of Child Abuse/Neglect from Start to Finish	13

PREFACE

Two years ago I became involved through my employment at Planned Parenthood in Bloomington, Illinois in a project called the "OK, Not OK Touches" program. This program teaches young people about sexual abuse and how to prevent the possibility of being abused. Through my training, I became aware of the frightening statistics on sexual abuse and since then, have conducted additional research in this area, including a look at the perpetrators of sexual abuse. It is indeed a grim picture. As I learned more, I began to wonder especially about the advocacy, or protection and care, for not only the sexually abused child, but also the physically abused and neglected child. I also desired to assist in advocacy.

This wish led me to become a Youth Advocate last year through Project Oz, an agency providing advocacy and drug abuse education and prevention services in Bloomington, Illinois. As an advocate, I was given the responsibility of caring for and befriending an adolescent. Due to confidentiality, I cannot divulge the nature of her situation except that she is an open case with the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). Project Oz is contracted out to by DCFS to provide expanded services. As my friendship grew with my youth, so did my concerns about advocacy. I began to observe many discrepancies in the care for and protection of my young friend. It also became discouraging because though I was her friend

and role model, I was often unable to lend assistance in difficult or crisis situations.

Thus, emerged this paper. Because of my strong feelings on the subject, it has often been difficult to remain impartial and objective. In the spring of 1990, I began my research with a concern for advocacy of abused and neglected children. Through my research, I have encountered a diversity of views on child abuse and have been appalled by some of them. As a researcher, the most challenging obstacle was methodological. I knew there were discrepancies in advocacy for abused and neglected children, but how to explain these was a constant dilemma. It is difficult to determine whether or not I have accomplished my goal. Because this is such a complex area, no single theory may be found to adequately explain the differences. However, I hope that the findings in this pilot study can be used constructively to provide information to the agencies and the public to protect tomorrow's adults and caretakers.

Special thanks must be given to Dr. Jim Sikora for his continual support and for his challenging questions. The tedium of doing this type of research was new, anxiety provoking, and exhausting leading me to quit a number of times. His input and criticisms led me to new problems, directions, and possible solutions. To him, I owe my deepest appreciation. I would also like to thank Dr. Chris Prendergast for his editorial comments and for reminding me of what my reader is--uninformed. Dr. Teodora Amoloza's assistance with the statistical part of the paper is also deeply appreciated.

Next, I owe my gratitude to the directors of the DCFS agencies in the six counties and the public officials for their assistance in

gathering the information for this paper. These dedicated professionals took time from their busy schedules to help me. I could not have formulated my hypotheses without their comments and insights. Finally, I wish to thank my youth for showing me the need for more research in this area and for allowing me to become an advocate and friend.

Introduction

Investigations of child abuse and neglect are handled by the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), which label findings of abuse and neglect as indication rates (*Child Abuse and Neglect Statistics*, 1989). A review of these child abuse and neglect cases in the state of Illinois quickly reveals great diversity in investigations finding a child to be abused or neglected. Why does a difference exist? One would assume that, because of bureaucratic policy and standards, indication rates would be more constant within DCFS, the agency created specifically for protection and advocacy of the child, and the sole organization authorized to investigate reports of child abuse and neglect. Yet, indication rates vary widely from one region to another.

The Problem: How Indication Rates are Determined

DCFS is divided into eight regions overseeing the counties in its jurisdiction (the structure of DCFS will be described in further detail later in the paper) (*Child Abuse and Neglect Statistics--Annual Report*, 1989). Within the regional districts, indication rates range from a low of 22.3 (22.3 children per 1,000 children) for the Aurora Region to high of 39.7 in the East St. Louis Region. This disparity might be explained by socioeconomic or demographic variables. However, when demographical variables are controlled (held constant) for individual counties, the differences in indication rates do not disappear (*Child Abuse and Neglect Statistics--Annual Report*, 1989; *U.S. Bureau of the Census: County and City Data Book*, 1988).

Thus, where could the answer lie? Answering this question is the purpose of this present research. Due to the limited resources of finances, personnel, time, and the reliance on secondary analysis, this paper can only be considered an exploratory study. Information obtained here should give guidance for further research in this area. I begin with several theories in sociology and social work which suggest independent variables which may account for the differences between indication rates, the dependent variable. Six demographically similar counties from the state of Illinois are chosen for study and are examined in an attempt to explain the dependent variable. My hypothesis is that the differences can be accounted for by the two variables. One is the organizational social structures within each DCFS office. This builds on the findings of sociologist Peter Blau (1960) who noted that the structure of the group, or agency, determines the behavior and views of the individual employee. In this study, the employee is the DCFS caseworker. Secondly, it is also hypothesized that the office's amount of public visibility will impact the social control of each office, which will in turn, have a direct effect on indication rates.

Before analysis of the variables can be done, it is important to familiarize the reader with child abuse/neglect, the history of advocacy, and current practices. This review will show how the two variables, organizational structure and public visibility, can have the impact hypothesized.

Society, Child Abuse, and Advocacy

In recent years the United States has become increasingly concerned with child abuse and neglect. This is also true in the state of Illinois. For example, the number of these reported cases rose almost nine percent (9%) from 1988 to 1989 (*Child Abuse and Neglect Statistics*, 1989). In addition, there has been an increase of over 77,000 children reported over the last ten years. However, estimates of abuse and neglect, especially sexual abuse, have been much higher with some experts believing that 100,000 to 500,000 children are sexually abused annually (Wodarski & Johnson, 1988). When one considers the family members impacted by these abuses, the figures are large indeed and a national problem.

Despite its increased attention, the laws defining abuse and neglect are vague. (*Child Abuse and Neglect Statistics--Annual Report*, 1989). Some experts argue that the laws must remain vague to allow for the range of child abuse and neglect. On the other hand, other experts, their critics, would retort that keeping the law vague is a risk because it allows for cases to slip through the system and thus remain unnoticed. Lawmakers have decided the former is best, under the assumption that general laws allow for more cases to be prosecuted. Thus, the law defines child abuse and neglect as occurring when a parent, family member, caretaker, or stranger:

1. inflicts physical harm on the child* or allows another person to inflict harm or excessive corporal punishment,
2. allows the child to be in a hazardous situation in which the child could be maimed, disfigured, impaired, or killed,

3. inflicts, or allows to be inflicted, sexual offenses,
4. leaves the child uncared for or unattended for excessive periods of time, or
5. does not look after the well-being and safety of the child
(*Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act*, 1988; *Child Abuse and Neglect Statistics*, 1989).

*A child is defined as being under the age of eighteen (*Child Care Act*, 1988).

Laws may also remain vague because citizens do not want to believe children are physically abused, much less sexually abused in a country considered too advanced, well-educated, and sophisticated to ever harm children. Thus, without the public's outcry and lobbying for support, the issue of abuse and neglect has received little political attention, causing the laws to remain vague. Gill (1977) observes that the public's image of the abuser and of itself may be a political aspect of childhood and child rearing. For Gill (1977; 186), abuse is defined as:

Physical or emotional injury inflicted by parents or other caretakers. Implicit in this view is a concept of minimal rights to physical and psychological integrity, and the notion that only individual caretakers, who are "deviant". . . , would deprive children of these rights, whereas society protects them, and has no part in inflicting the abuse.

This statement can be expanded to include neglect and sexual abuse. Essentially, the perpetrator here is seen as "deviant," or not part of mainstream society. However, many abusers are young and respected members of the community (Lanyon, 1986).

By viewing the perpetrator as sick and dirty, society is marginalizing the phenomenon to the "disrespectable" sectors of the population. This allows society to deny that children could be harmed in any way and even if we admit the fact, the perpetrator is viewed as a deviant who could not have been stopped. Some, like Chase (1975), suggest that many experts on child abuse believe that many of the perpetrators are outside the reach of conventional treatment. Subsequently, abuse becomes a matter of healing a sick perpetrator, while denying the dimensions of the social problem. Since it is defined as a medical problem, it does not become a political priority, and it is ignored by the public and lawmakers alike.

In fact, until the nineteenth century, society had successfully denied children were abused. Children were seen as property of the parents, as a working commodity (Collins, 1988; Zalba, 1973; Giovannoni, 1979). Just as child rearing was believed to be a private family matter, so was child abuse and neglect (Giovannoni, 1979). Yet today, society is confronted with the fact that children are being abused and neglected at a high rate. For example, in fiscal year 1989, DCFS alone recorded 102,267 reports of child abuse and neglect (*Child Abuse and Neglect Statistics*, 1989), an increase of almost nine percent (9%) from the previous year. However, of those reports received, only 40,964 children were determined to be actual victims of abuse or neglect. In that same year, one-hundred (100) children died from child abuse or neglect.

To remain objective, it is not clear at this time if child abuse is actually on the rise or if society's views on protecting the child are changing, creating an increased reporting of abuse. Thus, increases

in rates could be due to society's increased recognition of the need for advocacy, or intervention outside the family for the protection of the child.

Society is beginning to realize that parents and/or caretakers do not always look out for the best interests of children, no matter how much it wishes to believe they do. The volume of abuse and neglect cases suggests that measures must be taken to ensure the safety of the child. Yet, reform is needed within the system to encourage and to meet society's changing attitudes and involvement in child advocacy.

Rights of Parents Argument and Philosophy

Not everyone supports public involvement. Schoeman (1980) writes on the rights of children and the sacred autonomy of the family. Philosophically, he does not view a child, especially an infant, as having any moral rights of protection, because to accept this would mean the child has moral independence. If this moral independence is impossible, one must examine exclusively the duty of parents to protect their children (see also Koller & Ritchie, 1978; Joffe, 1973). This is the opposite point of view of the advocacy position: with no moral rights of protection, the child is completely at the mercy of the parents' child rearing practices. Such a position negates the necessity for state and/or outside intervention into family matters because parents have absolute rights over their children. This right, Schoeman believes, comes from the right to have intimate relationships and is valid even if there is some "cost to the child" (14). On the other hand, if society lodges rights in the

family, society is obligated to preapprove all actions. In essence, he feels that most cases of family conflict should stay within the family with as little state intervention as possible because state intervention decreases the intimacy rights which, in turn, decreases moral space to form personal relationships.

Lemert (1973) holds the same view as Schoeman. He argues against the intervention of the court (especially juvenile court) in the family. He believes the "juvenile court is intended to succeed where the parents have failed. But the family . . . is the institution best suited for nurturing children into stable adults" (237). Removal of the child from the home or interference by outsiders, he believes, is more detrimental to the whole family and the child than non-intervention. Thus, he advocates for less intervention by the juvenile court.

Both authors recognize that advocacy has focused on the community rather than on the family or the parents (Reynolds, 1974). However, both ignore the reason for the community's (society's) intervention. Despite its low attention or political priority in the past, state legislatures, supported by its citizens, feel intervention is crucial for the child's minimal rights to safe upbringing. Contrary to what Lemert and Schoeman write, the large numbers of cases reported to DCFS are evidence that families do not always consider the best interests of the child. There are legitimate times when society is obligated (for legal and moral reasons) to intervene for the vulnerable child and to provide protection. Interestingly, although each author advocates nonintervention, neither suggests what to do in serious abuse cases except to allow the

police to intervene in some unspecified way. Further, they never define what situations are dangerous enough to warrant and allow outside intervention. Instead, there is much vagueness in their response to the problem of child abuse/neglect, to the point of almost denying that a problem exists. When a problem does exist, they prefer to leave it within the individual family domain.

Thus, it is felt that because families and/or caretakers do not always look out for the best interests of the child, the child, as a minor, has the right to protection. This is where outside advocacy steps in. Yet even when intervention occurs, the viewpoints differ. The history of advocacy is an uneven one, going through many different and sometimes competing conceptualizations on how best to protect the child. Certainly, this is the case in Illinois. To understand the ideologies of advocacy today, namely policies and procedures of DCFS, brief attention must be given to its origination and its transformation, especially in Illinois.

The History of Advocacy in Illinois

In 1877, protection was sought in the Illinois courts by the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals for a severely abused child. Because no other laws covered her child beating behavior, the mother of the young boy was charged under existing animal cruelty laws, and the Society was recruited to represent the child. At that time, the Society was the only organization to come to the aid of abused or neglected children and this was only in cases involving severe brutality and/or neglect. This 1877 case was a landmark for child advocacy in Illinois because it resulted in the formation of the

Illinois Humane Society and started child reform in the state (Dudley, 1971).

Child reform and advocacy began to take place across the nation at about this same time (Tiffin, 1982) as the larger society began to view children as having rights and to take an interest in their welfare. At this time the concept of **parents patriae** developed, an idea that society has a great interest in the welfare of its members, and the state, in particular, has a duty to protect those who cannot help themselves (Tiffin, 1982; Kopecky, 1982). This concept played a major role in the judicial arena such that, by 1922 many states had laws prohibiting various forms of child abuse (Tiffin, 1982).

Soon, child protection went from nonexistent to removal of the child from the home for virtually any reason (Dudley, 1971). Although laws were created by political entities, there was little involvement by either the state or federal governments. Instead, private agencies were created and headed by private interest groups, which created homes for both boys and girls to "properly raise" a respectable child (Dudley, 1971). It became the practice to simply remove children from their abusive families and to place them either with foster parents or in a children's home. Often, abused and neglected children were given to other families. However, many individuals disagreed with this practice. In Illinois, a reaction to this was the creation of the Juvenile Court in 1898, and abuse cases began to pass through the judicial system before there was removal of the child from the home (Dudley, 1971). Thus began a move from

private interests to governmental involvement with the abused or neglected child.

In the early 1900's social workers became involved in child advocacy and in 1912, the bill for a Childrens Bureau passed the United States Congress (Tiffin, 1982). Created by the federal government, this Bureau was to research and report on the state of child welfare in the United States. This symbolizes the entrance of the federal government in to child advocacy. Not all persons were pleased with the intrusion of the federal government for they feared this would undermine states' rights. However, with the Bureau's small allocated budget and staff, most of the responsibility of child welfare remained in each state.

Since these early days of child reform, few major ideological and bureaucratic changes have occurred. The largest one has been and increase in the bureaucratic policies and standards which deal with child abuse and neglect cases. Today, the state, instead of private agencies, is the major intervener in cases of abuse and neglect. Private agencies usually become involved only after the state and courts have legitimated their intervention. In other words, private agencies have become secondary agencies in child advocacy, yet they still play an important role. Today, social workers coordinate the investigating and the court prosecution dealings, and deal with the families and children, including the use of therapy, intervention, and rehabilitation (Giovannoni, 1979).

Because of the bureaucratization of child abuse and neglect, attention must be given to those institutions that are involved in a case of abuse or neglect. In Illinois, two of the major social

institutions are DCFS and the court system. Although the latter is also important, this paper's discussion will focus primarily on the former.

The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services

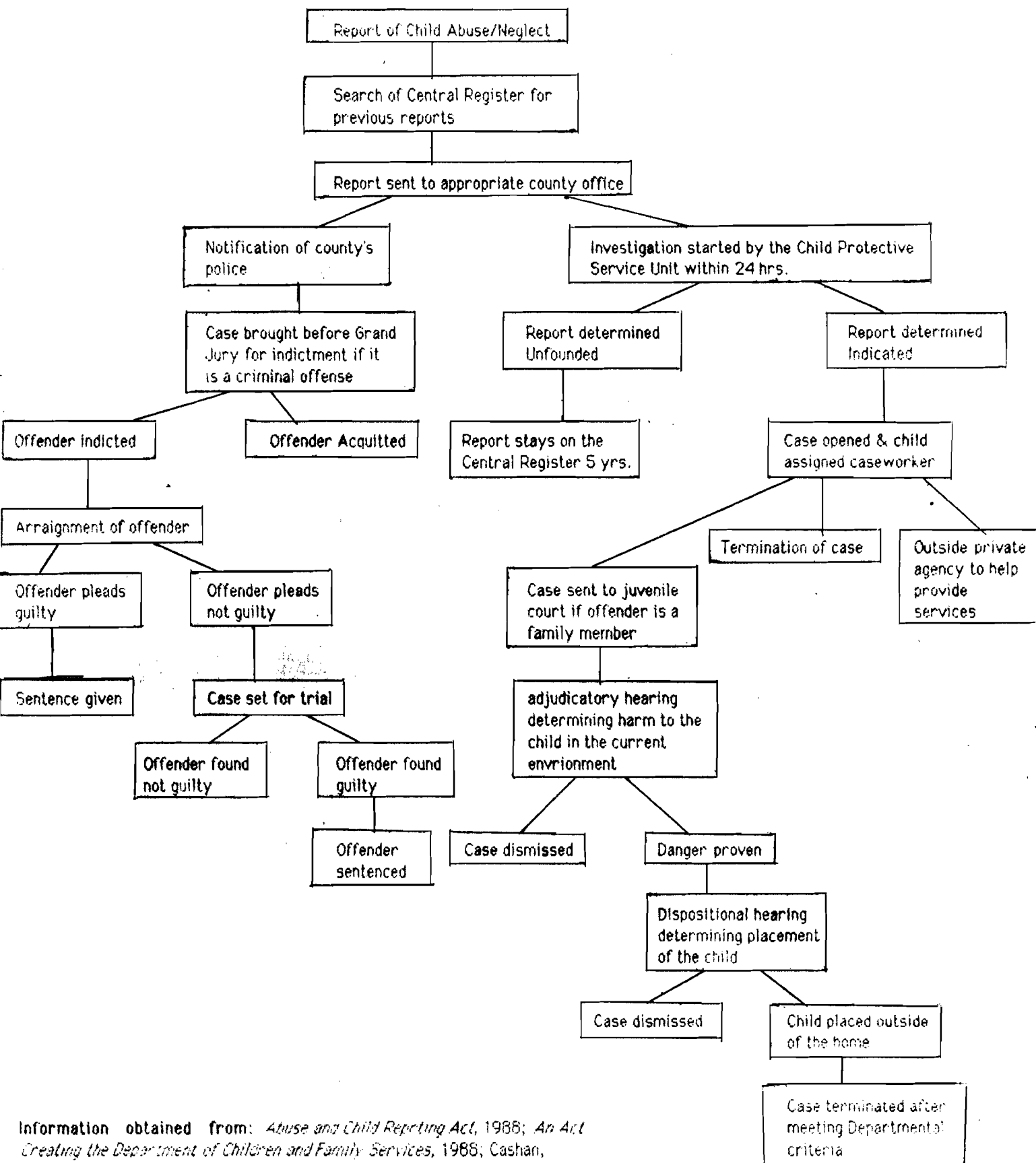
Seven decades after the inception of child advocacy considerations and its bureaucratization, the Illinois legislature created DCFS in 1963 (*An Act Creating the DCFS*, 1988). This department was created to provide social services to families and children, to operate children's institutions, to operate child abuse prevention shelters, and to coordinate adoption services for abused and neglected children. The Department also was to attempt to involve private agencies as well as the general public in advocacy. As the goals of the organization evolved, family preservation seemed to be as important, if not more important, than child protection because today, the primacy (primary) goal of each case is to restore the family (Cashen, 1990; *Illinois Department of Children and Family Services Text of Adopted Rules--Subchapter a, Part 302*, 1988).

To help identify child abuse and neglect situations, the state has established a program of mandated reporting. In Illinois, not everyone in the general public is mandated by law to report child abuse. Persons mandated to report include teachers, doctors, social workers, registered psychologists, and the police (see *Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act*, 1988), with prescribed fines for those who do not report. For example, doctors who fail to report child abuse or neglect may be sent for review to the Illinois Medical Disciplinary Board. Mandated reporters in Illinois made 59.8% of the

reports in 1989 with medical personnel making the most reports, 17.9% (*Child Abuse and Neglect Statistics*, 1989). This source states that the reporting rate for the medical field is higher than many other states. However, one must not underestimate the number of private citizens who report their suspicions. Regardless of the person reporting a suspected case of child abuse or neglect, a report is made either to 1) the local, county, or state police, 2) DCFS, or 3) the state child abuse hotline (See Figure 1 for a diagram of the child abuse/neglect process from the reporting of a case to its termination).

Before any action is taken, the report is immediately sent by DCFS to the state's Central Register to verify if the family or the perpetrator has previously been reported in cases of child abuse or neglect (*Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act*, 1988). Regardless of previous reports, the new report is recorded at the Central Register and progress reports are sent in by DCFS at regular intervals. The report and Central Register information are then sent to the appropriate county office and Child Protective Service Unit. Each regional DCFS has a Child Protective Service Unit which responds within twenty-four hours to a report received from the Central Register. In spite of this quick initial reaction, the Unit may take up to sixty days to decide if the report is unfounded or indicated (*Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act*, 1988). If the Unit determines that the initial report is true, or indicated, a formal investigation is started. A formal investigation involves the court system making formal charges against the perpetrator, intervention of the police, interviews of the subjects of the report, evaluation of

Figure 1--The Bureaucracy of Child Abuse/Neglect from Start to Finish



Information obtained from: *Abuse and Child Reporting Act*, 1988; *An Act Creating the Department of Children and Family Services*, 1988; Cashan, 1990; *Juvenile Court Act of 1957*, 1988; Reynolds, 1990

the environment, and determination of the risk of harm to the child in the given environment. If the case is indicated, the case will remain on the Central Register indefinitely, whereas an unfounded report will be closed and removed from the Central Register files after a specified time.

With the opening of a case, case plans are written which include the reasons for services, objectives and goals, and evaluations of the child's adjustments, and scholastic achievements (Cashan, 1990). Every six months, a case review is completed by the caseworker (*Illinois DCFS Text of Adopted Rules-- Subchapter a, Part 305, 1988; An Act Creating the Department of Children and Family Services, 1988*). The case worker reviews the case plans previously written to determine their current validity. If the child is in foster care or with a relative, an Administrative Case Review is performed in lieu of the case review. In this instance, the parents and child are allowed to participate in a review of the case along with a panel of DCFS workers, one of which is not involved in the case. The validity of the case plans are reviewed and further foster or relative care is assessed. In either case, the case plans are revised. Termination of a case is also desired. To this end, DCFS has created specific conditions for termination of a case (see *Illinois Department of Children and Family Services Text of Adopted Rules--Subchapter a, Part 306, 1988*).

The process of DCFS involvement from reporting to termination has been briefly discussed. However, DCFS is not the only social institution involved with the family and the abused or neglected child. The judicial system, especially the juvenile court, plays a large

role in shaping the policies for protection of the child. The primary goal of the courts and DCFS is to complement each other in order to best protect the child. However, because of the bureaucratic system, this is not always the case. Figure 1 illustrates the processes involved for criminal court, juvenile court, and DCFS. As can be seen, their lines do not cross, thus raising doubts as to their complementary capabilities.

The Critical Question

As the rate of reporting increases, it seems reasonable that the state government would continue to expand its services for abused and neglected children, especially when protection, or advocacy of the child, is seen as a top priority by DCFS (Cashan, 1990). Yet, DCFS has a shortage of child caseworkers with each having an average caseload of seventy families (Cashan, 1990), thus raising doubts about the adequacy of supervision, service distribution, and advocacy of the already exploited child. This is compounded by the Department's decreasing budgets (Cashan, 1990). Further, public awareness and policy seems benign or neglectful in admitting that there is a problem of abuse and neglect, turning from the problem rather than confronting it (Gill, 1977).

Therefore, the major problem today in advocacy is the inadequate and inconsistent protection of the child in an increasingly impersonal society. There are few satisfactory responses to this problem. One possible approach is to examine indication rates of DCFS. Across the state, county child abuse and neglect indication rates vary as much as the demography of the state, or so it appears

when initially studied(see *Child Abuse and Neglect Statistics*, 1989). However, with the strict regulation and bureaucratic procedures of DCFS, one would assume indicated child abuse and neglect rates would vary little from county to county when demographic variables are held constant. Yet, the opposite is true. Why this conundrum? This study and its methodology have been designed to approach such a question.

METHODOLOGY

Counties and Indication Rates

Six counties from the state of Illinois were chosen for study. Each was randomly assigned a pseudoname, A through F, because of the potentially sensitive nature of the research and to retain the anonymity of each director. Counties were selected in a two step process. First, only counties which were a primary metropolitan statistical area (PMSA) were selected (*U.S Bureau of the Census: County and City Data Book*, 1988). PMSA was used as a convenient guide to compare demographically similar counties, thus eliminating counties which were primarily rural or primarily urban. Next, of these counties, six were chosen on the similarity of their variables in relation to county B because of the author's experiences and familiarity with the social service agencies in the county. Thus, county B was selected to be the reference point and the remaining five matched or closely resembled the variables found in county B. Table 1.1 displays the data for these variables.

For each county, an indication rate was obtained from the *Child Abuse and Neglect Statistics* for 1989. Table 2 shows these rates with the numbers indicating abuse and neglect rates per 1,000 children under the age of eighteen for each county taken from the *1980 Census* (this is the same procedure used by DCFS). As the raw scores suggest, these numbers vary quite drastically in the case of counties A and F. A z score test revealed that every combination of

Table 1.1--Demographic Variables Considered in Selecting the Six Illinois Counties and Their Repsective Data, 1989

County	Number of people	#/household	Number of Farms	# in Public Schools	# of Children
A	171,000	2.40	2.70	23,700	38,100
B	123,000	2.50	1.70	18,700	29,300
C	127,000	2.60	1.90	21,600	38,200
D	160,000	2.60	1.50	25,200	46,800
E	179,000	2.46	1.20	33,000	48,400
F	125,000	2.70	1.70	22,200	40,000

Source: United States Bureau of the Census: County and City Data Book, 1988.

Table 1.2--Summary Data for the First Five Independent Variables, 1989

County	% Minority	Divorce Rate	# of Crimes	Ave. Hosehold Income	Unemployment Rate
A	10.98	5.20	9,684	14,549	3.70
B	4.99	4.40	5,568	17,376	5.50
C	11.89	5.90	6,157	20,675	10.60
D	7.88	6.00	7,208	19,959	11.10
E	7.93	5.50	10,603	15,875	5.60
F	0.61	5.10	3,124	20,210	9.50

Source: United States Bureau of the Census: County and City Data Book, 1988.

Table 2--Indication rates for Six Illinois Counties, 1989

County	Indication Rate
A	25.2
B	14.2
C	14.1
D	12.3
E	19.1
F	9.8

Source: *Child Abuse and Neglect Statistics, 1989.*

Table 3--Groupings of the Counties by Indication Rates

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Indication Rates	Low	Average	High
Counties	D & F	B & C	E & A

the two counties was significantly different in abuse and neglect rates, with the exception of the pairing of counties B and C ($p < .05$)

Because of the small sample of counties included in this exploratory study, the results of statistical tests cannot be overstated. In future research, with the addition of more counties, statistical tests may offer more validity. Therefore, to aid in illustration and research, the counties were divided into three groups: those having either high, average, or low indication rates. Referring to Table 2, the data seem to fall into three clusters. Thus, they were divided accordingly (see Table 3). Hopefully, when examining the independent variables, they will lie accordingly: high, medium, or low.

Method of Inquiry

To research the differences in rates between counties, the chosen method is a systematic analysis, complete with supporting or refuting data, of various theories in the fields of sociology, social work, and criminal justice. First, a brief summary of each theory is given. Then, each theory is applied to the six counties to determine whether it, as the independent variable, is adequate in explaining the differences in indication rates for these counties. The major variables to be researched are (see Table 1.2 for summary):

1. unemployment rates and child abuse and neglect,
2. race differences,
3. divorce rates,
4. crime and income influences,
5. organizational elements of DCFS offices, and
6. visibility of DCFS offices.

Unemployment Rates and Child Abuse and Neglect

The first variable considered is the unemployment rate for each county and whether or not differences in county unemployment rates are associated with the differences in child abuse and neglect rates. Several researchers have found a correlation between unemployment and crime in the environment and in the family (Neustrom, Jamison, Manuel, & Gramling, 1988; Atkinson, Liem, & Liem, 1986). These researchers found unemployment rates to have a direct effect on crime and violence in the family. Thus, it would be expected that the higher the unemployment rate, the higher the rates of child abuse and neglect.

There is a view which sees work as defining the importance of the role of the person in entering mainstream society. With the worker role as a key status, losing a job denies this definition of role and provokes one to commit extreme deviant acts, sometimes crimes, both in society and within the family (Naffine and Gale, 1989). Naffine and Gale question this view. Controlling for gender, their study compared crime rates between females and males and partially rejected the above: there were higher crime rates for unemployed males but not for unemployed females. Others (Neustrom et al., 1988) also question this connection of crime to unemployment, but say the correlation is complex. They believe that being unemployed can lead to poverty which may lead to increased crime rates--especially when there is poverty in a wealthy neighborhood.

Atkinson, et al. (1986) relate unemployment directly to the family. They found that unemployed workers had less social support

from within the family and the surrounding environment than employed persons. Unemployed workers also reported the occurrence of more family arguments, stress, and violence, along with a decrease in family cohesion and communication. Presumably, this increase in family violence would include an increase in child abuse and neglect.

These unemployment views are not supported by the current data. Whereas the previous data found an increase in the number of crimes in relation to the unemployment rate, a Pearson r test shows an inverse relationship between the unemployment rate and the indication rate; $r=-0.804$ (see Table 4). A Student's t Distribution finds this correlation to be statistically significant ($p<0.05$).

**Table 4--Unemployment Rates in Relation to Indication
 Rates For Six Illinois Counties, 1989**

County	Unemployment Rates	Indication Rates
D	11.5	12.3
F	9.5	9.8
B	10.6	14.2
C	5.5	14.1
E	5.6	19.1
A	3.7	25.2

 Source: *Child Abuse and Neglect Statistics, 1989; United States
 Bureau of the Census, 1988.*

However, as stated before, because of the small sample, these statistics may not validly reflect the truth. It should also be noted that the very high indication rates of County A and its low rate of unemployment in relation to the other counties, greatly biases the results of the Pearson r test. Subsequently, as stated before, the counties were broken into three groups having either low, average, or high indication rates (see Table 3). When this is done, the information appears slightly different. Table 4 shows these counties in their respective groups along with their unemployment and indication rates. As can be seen, there does appear to be some indication of an inverse relationship. Counties D and F have average to high unemployment rates (of the six counties, not overall in the state), while having low indication rates. Likewise, counties E and A have some of the lowest unemployment rates along with the highest indication rates. Thus, it is difficult to conclude that increasing unemployment rates are associated with an increase in indication rates.

Race Differences and Child Abuse and Neglect

The next independent variable is the influence of race on indication rates. Countless studies (Collins, 1988; Blumstein, 1982; Sigler & Horn, 1986) have shown how blacks are discriminated against by the judicial system. For example, blacks account for one-eighth of the American population, but compose fifty percent (50%) of the prison population (Strauss, Gelles, & Steinmetz, 1980). In regards to the family, after reviewing divorce court statistics, Lockhart and White (1989) concluded that rates of marital violence

are higher in the black family than the white family. However, they hold these results as tentative citing this may give a distorted view of black violence because it may show an over-representation of social class standing rather than race, or of blacks and lower-class people. Still, Strauss, Gelles, and Steinmetz (1980) showed that black women have a 400 percent greater chance of being victims of marital violence than white women. Also, twice as many black husbands are abused by their wives than white husbands.

Are the same marital violence rates generalized for children through indication rates? Are black families found disproportionately in DCFS cases? DCFS does state that more black children are indicated as victims of abuse and neglect than whites (*Child Abuse and Neglect Statistics*, 1989). In fact, they account for forty-one percent (41%) of those reported and indicated,

Table 5--Race and Indication Rates for Six Illinois Counties, 1989

County	% Black Minority	Indication Rate
D	7.88	12.3
F	0.61	9.8
B	4.99	14.2
C	11.89	14.1
E	7.93	19.1
A	10.98	25.2

Source: *Child Abuse and Neglect Statistics, 1989; United States Bureau of the Census, 1988.*

even though they only account for about twenty percent (20%) of the population in Illinois. Stopping here, the evidence seems to support a significant correlation between race and indication rates. However, attention should be given to the individual counties. It seems logical that as the ratio of blacks to whites decreases, the indication rates would decrease. Likewise, as the ratio increases, indication rates would increase. This would support previous studies of crime rates. If there is a higher proportion of blacks to whites in a county and the indication rates are also higher, then racial composition would be a major predictor of child abuse/neglect. However, this is not true.

As with the previous section, a Pearson r statistic is applied to the data and finds a positive, but average correlation (0.625) between the percentage of blacks and minorities in the county and its indication rate. Further, the correlation is not found to be statistically significant when a Student's t Distribution is applied ($p < 0.05$). Again, the face validity of the data must be examined. County C has the highest percentage of blacks and minorities, yet has an average indication rate. Likewise, County D has a fairly large minority population while having the next to lowest indication rate. Therefore, it cannot singly account for the significant differences in indication rates.

The Family and Child Abuse and Neglect

The third independent variable to be considered is the family. Marital violence was touched upon in the previous section and family violence was mentioned in relation to unemployment. In fact, it has been found that the two most common types of family violence are

wife abuse and physical punishment of children (Levinson, 1989). One indicator of this family breakdown is the 1.2 million divorces per year (Collins, 1988). Often, these divorces involve violent disputes and abuse (Collins, 1988). When children are involved, the strain on the family becomes greater on the separating parents, especially for the chosen caretaker after the divorce. This strain is compounded if the caretaker is a mother who has little to no financial or social support.

Some studies have examined the behavior of children and interparental conflict in intact and divorced families and have found that children of divorced parents have more conflicts with their parents and display more deviant behaviors (Forehand, Wierson, McCombs, Brody, & Fauber, 1989). These authors believe that these behaviors exist because the children imitate and react to conflicts

Table 6--Divorce Rates and Indication Rates for Six Illinois Counties, 1989

County	Divorce Rate	Indication Rate
D	6.0	12.3
F	5.1	9.8
B	4.4	14.2
C	5.9	14.1
E	5.5	19.1
A	5.2	25.2

Source: *Child Abuse and Neglect Statistics, 1989; United States Bureau of the Census, 1988.*

they observe between feuding parents. Mackinnon (1989) agrees that children of divorced families are more deviant because they tend to mirror their parent's conflictual behavior.

Thus, can it be subsequently stated that higher divorce rates are associated with higher amounts of abuse? Because divorce does put strains on the parents and their relationship, both before and after the divorce, and has been shown to be associated with more abuse of offspring, the supposition is plausible (Collins, 1988). Also, another study (Christensen, 1990) has shown that children are subject to more abuse from step-parents than natural parents. If this is true, then we would expect to find that when the divorce rate is higher, more persons will possibly remarry, causing an increase in child abuse.

Subsequently, divorce rates are examined in relation to indication rates for each county. Unfortunately, remarriage rates were not readily available for study. A Pearson r test finds a miniscule negative correlation of -0.0586 between the divorce rate of a county and its indication rate. Further study of Table 6 also displays little correspondence between divorce and indication rates. County B has the lowest rate of divorce, but only has an average indication rate. At the same time, County D has the highest divorce rate, yet has the lowest indication rate. As a consequence, it is not felt that divorce rates, by themselves, can adequately explain the variations in indication rates.

Crime and Income Influences on Indication Rates

Another plausible hypothesis is the claim that there is a cycle of abuse and abusing: victims of crime become inflictors of crime (Widom, 1989). A study by Widom used a cohort study looking at adult criminals and their past family history of child abuse and neglect. He found a complex relation between being a victim of child abuse and neglect and becoming involved in juvenile crime and later adult crime. Accordingly, abused and neglected children were more likely to commit crimes in their teenage years and in adulthood.

If this is true, is the inverse true: higher crime rates are related to higher rates of child abuse and neglect? Table 7 shows the relationship between crime in a county and its population. The Pearson r test results in a high correlation, $r = 0.837$. The

Table 7--Number of Crimes per County Population, Average Annual Household Income, and Indication Rates for Six Illinois Counties, 1989

County	# Crimes/Pop.	Income--\$	Indication Rates
D	4.51	19,959	12.3
F	2.50	20,210	9.8
B	4.54	17,376	14.2
C	4.86	20,675	14.1
E	5.90	15,857	19.1
A	5.86	14,549	25.2

 Source: *Child Abuse and Neglect Statistics, 1989; United States Bureau of the Census, 1988.*

Student's t Distribution test shows this number to be statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). When face validity is considered, the results appear even better. As a county's crime rate increases, so do the indication rates for that county. Thus far, this independent variable seems to have the greatest effect on the dependent variable, indication rates of each county.

Rafter (1990) has tried to account for the cause of crime--biological, gender, and poverty. Of these three, she believes that poverty is most associated with the crime rate: crime rates increase as income decreases. Table 7 lends some support to this hypothesis. Both counties A and E have the highest indication rates and have the lowest income. Yet, at the same time, the highest income (county C) has only an average indication rate.

Organizational Elements of County DCFS Offices on Indication Rates

The fifth element to be considered is the structural, or organizational, effects of each DCFS office on indication rates. Blau's views (1960) are relevant here because he believes that the structure of a group or organization plays a determining role in the action or inaction of the individual caseworker. However, Blau's study examined the effects of the group on the individual, whereas this research utilizes a slightly different approach. Instead of obtaining information from individual employees, a methodology beyond the resources of this researcher, this study focuses only on the director of the DCFS office in each county. Since directors directly influence the structure and style for operating individual offices and

therefore, their employees, it is assumed that the organizational structure has an impact on the caseworker in determining a child to be abuse or neglect, thereby creating indication rates.

The director can be seen as a manager whose primary task is to coordinate the work of others and to create a work atmosphere that helps facilitate efficient goal attainment (Crow & Odewahn, 1987). In the case of DCFS, the goal is advocacy of the child. In human service agencies, directors are very visible to their superiors, employees, and to varying degrees, the public. Thus, their actions are important to the total organizational structure. In line with Blau's views, Caplow (1983) emphasizes that the director must be able to facilitate and control information in such a way as to help create and increase cohesion in the office. For him, if cohesion is high, goals are agreed upon and there are few conflicts withing the agency.

How directors handle information and conflict is very important in determining the level of cohesion in the agency. When information is received, directors must decide whether to share the information with many, few, or no subordinates. This also pertains to delegation of responsibility. If directors choose to reveal little information, their employees may feel upset about being constantly uninformed. On the other hand, if much information is revealed, cohesion increases as a sense of trust develops (Crow & Odewahn, 1987).

The handling of conflict also plays an important role. Conflict usually results from the breakdown of communication (Caplow, 1983). Typically, the director is directly involved in resolving the conflict. Hopefully, both parties are brought together in the

supervisor's presence and through a negotiation process, grievances are aired. In the end, the director must lead each party to exchange ideas and to reach a compromise (Caplow, 1983). How effectively the director is able to resolve conflicts has a direct effect on the cohesion and work quality of the the employees.

In addition to the organizational structures, the attitudes of directors about their agency, are vitally important. Directors must constantly keep personal values in check, or in perspective, and not let them influence the agency (Crow & Odewahn, 1987). Given this information, both the organizational structure and personal views, or attitudes of directors, have a direct effect on indication rates.

In this research, if the organization promotes high social cohesion and the director exhibits a positive attitude toward the goals of DCFS as a whole, then it is predicted that indication rates will be higher for that office. However, if cohesion is low and the director is ambivalent or hostile towards the goals of DCFS, then it is predicted that indication rates will be lower for that office.

Results from Interviews with Individual Directors

To research the relative cohesion of the agencies, office directors of the county DCFS agencies were contacted and asked for their assistance, via a telephone interview, with the study. Before a phone interview was scheduled, each person was sent a copy of the researcher's questionnaire for prior agency approval. After each director had reviewed and accepted the questions, a phone interview was conducted.

One may wonder how valid results from DCFS directors can be related to indication rates when the Protective Service Units are regional, rather than county specific. However, it is believed the measures used are valid because even though the investigative team is not at a particular office on a daily basis, the Unit must frequently have contact with the director and his/her staff. Thus, if cohesion is high at an agency, it is assumed that the team will feel more a part of the group and be more likely to indicate a report. Also, if the director is highly involved and displays a positive attitude towards the goals of the agency, the team will not be as inhibited in finding child abuse and neglect for fear of possible reprimands for lenient application of guidelines by that county's director. Thus, it is felt that this approach, though not problem free, is a credible approach.

To enable better comparison between counties, most questions were closed-ended (see Appendix A). Some were open-ended because a restriction of possible answers could have led to a biased or unfit answer. Each closed-ended question was quantified, or assigned a numerical value. When totaled, the highest possible score was 33 and the counties were then coded accordingly as being either high, average, or low in the organization of that county's DCFS office. High organization meant that the director had a positive attitude about the agency and conducted the agency in such a way to have high positive cohesion of its employees. Likewise, average organization meant the director had an average attitude and the agency had average cohesion. Low organization meant the director had a poor attitude and there was low cohesion of the agency. A county was determined to be high in its organizational cohesion if it

scored between 30 and 33; average if it was between 26 and 29, and low if it was 25 and below.

Questions one through thirteen on the questionnaire (see Appendix A) were designed to measure organizational variables, covering issues ranging from the director's training, personal views about and style of running the agency, and the amount of cohesion in the office. None of the agencies obtained the highest score possible of 33. Table 8 shows that a few came close. Due to the inability to contact the director, data are not shown for county D. Three weeks were spent attempting to contact this individual, but schedules never coincided. This point shall be elaborated on later.

**Table 8--Scores of Each County on Questionnaire and Its
 Indication Rates for Six Illinois Counties, 1989**

County	Score	Indication Rates
D		
F	26	9.8
B	31	14.2
C	30	14.1
E	26	19.1
A	31	25.2

Source: *Child Abuse and Neglect Statistics, 1989; United States Bureau of the Census, 1988.*

Closer examination of the data is warranted before deciding if it can be concluded that the structure of the organization, as set forth by the director of the office, affects indication rates. As with the other independent variables, a Pearson r correlation test produces an $r = 0.371$. A Student's t Distribution does not find this to be statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). However, closer examination of the face validity is again warranted.

First, Group 1 containing counties D and F, the low indication rate group is examined. As stated previously, organizational data are not available for county D due to an inability to contact the director therefore, concentrating focus on county F. Because the county is in the low group, it is expected that their organizational cohesion will also be low. However, this is not supported by the data. This agency scored 26, which indicated average organizational cohesion, but only barely (26 was the cut-off line between average and low cohesion). Thus, although scoring average on its amount of cohesion, it was possibly low enough to support the hypothesis, which says that the amount of organizational cohesion will have a direct effect on that county's indication rates.

Second, we examine Group 2 containing counties B and C, which is the average indication rate group. As indicated in Table 8, their scores, 31 and 30 respectively, are almost identical, as are their indication rates. It will be remembered that statistical analysis showed these two counties not to be statistically different. Yet, because these two counties have only "average" indication rates, they are expected to have "average" organizational cohesion. However, this is not the case. Because both counties scored in the high

organizational category, it can only be tentatively concluded that the type of structural organization has a large impact on indication rates.

Another problem with the hypothesis is evident when examining Group 3 containing counties A and E. Here, both counties have high indication rates. Because of this, it is expected that there will be higher organizational cohesion. Contrary to what was expected, county A scored relatively high, 31, while county E scored only average, 26. One explanation for this difference is due to the large difference between their indication rates, 25.2 for county A and 19.1 for county E, even though they are slotted in the high indication rate category.

Finally, comparing Group 3 (high) to Group 2 (average), it is expected for Group 2 to score lower than Group 3, if the differences in rates were due only to the organizational cohesion. This is not reflected in the data. Instead, both counties in Group 2 have scores identical to county A in Group 3, whereas county E in Group 3 scored lower.

Answers to the open-ended questions are similar for all of the groups. Each county has a low turn-over rate of its employees with a length of employment averaging approximately ten years. This is encouraging because it helps to give stability to the office and ensures better protection of the child. The results, though, are puzzling.

Based on the data, it cannot be concluded that indication rates reflect the organizational cohesion, or structure, of each agency. There does seem to be some small support for this, but it is not conclusive. At the same time, it is still felt that the organization of

the agency plays an important role in determining the number of children indicated as abused and neglected. However, because of the data, it is conceded that this may not be as important a variable as expected.

Visibility of the Agency and Indication Rates

The final variable to be examined is the amount of visibility of the agency in the community. It is felt that the more visible the agency is in the community, the higher will be its indication rates. The supposition is that if the agency is open to public scrutiny, it will attempt to maximize its (the agency's) goals. A DCFS office is assigned the goal, by the public and the law, of protecting the community's abused and neglected children, the premise on which DCFS was originally founded. If each individual office is aware of this assignment and attempts to meet this expectation, then to appear as if they are achieving their goal and are accountable to the public good, more children should be indicated as abused and neglected. Therefore, the social control of the public, gauged by the relative visibility of the agency in the community, has a direct effect on the indication rate for that county. In other words, the more the public visibility of the agency, the higher are the indication rates of abuse and neglect.

Questions 14 through 18 on the questionnaire (see Appendix A) were designed to test this hypothesis. Again, the choices for the closed-ended questions were assigned a numerical value, with highest value possible being 13. Again, no agency had this score (see Table 9). If a county scored between 11 and 13, it was determined

to have high visibility, if between 8 and 10, it had average visibility, and had low visibility if it scored 7 or less. Again, the counties were divided into three groups based on their similarity of indication rates (see Table 3). A Pearson r test shows high correlation between the visibility of a county and that county's indication rate ($r = 0.929$). A Student's t Distribution finds this to be statistically significant ($p < 0.05$).

First, Group 2 shall be examined. Each office, on the average contracts out to between seven and ten private agencies in the area. It is felt that the number of contracted private agencies is a good indication of public visibility because the more agencies that are contracted with, the more persons are involved in the advocacy system and knowledge of its (DCFS's) successes and failures. Thus, the more outside help, the greater the visibility of the DCFS office, and subsequently, its indication rates are higher. Also, both

**Table 9--Visibility Scores of Six Illinois Counties in the
 Public Sector and Their Indication Rates, 1989**

County	Score	Indication Rate
D		
F	7	9.8
B	9	14.2
C	9	14.1
E	12	19.1
A	12	25.2

Source: *Child Abuse and Neglect Statistics, 1989; United States Bureau of the Census, 1988.*

counties B and C indicate average support from their community. This concept follows the outside assistance measure. The more DCFS deals with outside agencies and individuals, the more sensitive it is toward public opinion of their agency. In essence, if an office is more visible, the more concerned that office is about public opinion, and the more the public is concerned with the office's actions. Thus, because the offices in Group 2 do not contract out to many private agencies, their directors feel that public support is average. Along the same lines, it is expected that because of less social control of the public, the office is less concerned with accounting to the community for their actions. However, the data do not reflect this. Instead, both directors feel they are very much accountable to the public for their actions.

Interest is raised when reviewing the open-ended question asking why the DCFS office contracted out to private agencies (See Appendix A, #15). Both directors mention money. County B's director said they contract out because it is "less expensive. . .It enables the agency to provide more care/advocacy." Along the same lines, county C's director said it is "easier to get money in the budget for a private agency." This is very interesting because the money is indirectly applied to child protection. No mention was made of a desire to increase public awareness.

Thus far, the conclusion is that the amount of public visibility plays an important role in determining indication rates. Further examination of the remaining two groups is necessary. Next, Group 1 is examined. Again, due to an inability to contact the director of county D, only county F shall be examined. County F scored quite low

on its amount of public visibility. The director only reports to contracting out to between three and six private agencies in the area. The office has few outside contacts, thus supporting the hypothesis. The few private agencies contracted out to by the DCFS office creates a lower public visibility and subsequent lowered indication rates. Despite having low outside visibility, the director felt there is an average amount of support from the public. This does not fit exactly with the hypothesis, but it does seem to be plausible because it is doubtful that no one in the public would ever be concerned about the agency's actions.

When asked if staff is accountable for their actions to the public, he/she identified they are accountable for some, but certainly not all because they are just doing what is necessary as mandated by law. This fits the hypothesis fairly well because the director feels that the public is not extremely significant in determining the advocacy of a child.

The director's answer to the open-ended question asking why they contract out to these private agencies is very interesting and is felt to be very important. The director said their agency contracts out because it is "department procedure." There is never any mention of the child in the answer. It is as if these private agencies are involved because they "have" to be and the director's involvement is minimal, if not unenthusiastic.

Based on this data, it seems as if there is strong support for the hypothesis that visibility of the agency in the general public has a direct effect on that county's indication rates. However, one group is left to analyze.

Finally, discussion is turned to Group 3, containing counties A and E. A review of Table 9 finds that both counties scored quite high on visibility. Each county reports contracting out to between fourteen and sixteen agencies in their area. As stated before, it is believed that the more outside agencies involved with DCFS, the higher the indication rates due to its increased visibility in the community. The hypothesis is again supported by the data. Both offices contract out to many private agencies in their area. Also, each director felt that there is a great deal of support of their agency from the community. In fact county A's director, incidentally the county with the highest indication rate, desired even more community support and involvement. Parallel to this, the directors emphasized very strongly that their offices are accountable for their actions. On the open-ended question, the directors stated that private agencies are contracted out to help provide increased child protection services. County E's director even said that contracting out to these agencies is also done to "increase public awareness of the issues [of child abuse and neglect]." Their answers are interesting because they seem more concerned about the child than Group 1 or 2.

Based on the data presented and analyzed, both statistically and on its face value, it is believed that this hypothesis is strongly supported. Visibility of the agency in the public has a direct effect on its indication rates. Each group, based on its indication rates, corresponds exactly to the amount of visibility it has in its community. In addition, the open-ended questions also lend support to the view. Thus, it is believed that this hypothesis is a valid explanation of indication rates.

Discussion

This pilot study began with a desire to understand child abuse and neglect and to find ways in which to improve advocacy. To better understand the issue of child abuse/neglect, it was necessary to familiarize the reader with the concept of child abuse and neglect, namely with its vague definitions, advocacy of the exploited child, and finally, society's reactions to child abuse and neglect. As shown, it is a complex issue that is not readily agreed upon. While it is felt that most individuals agree that abuse and neglect occur, there is much diversity among the public on how extensive that abuse is and whether outside intervention is warranted (Schoeman, 1980; Lemert, 1973).

Next, to assist the reader in understanding the current state of child advocacy, a brief history of advocacy of the child was presented. It is interesting to see how, in just a few decades, child protection went from nonexistent to overbearing. There were no laws in existence in 1877, but by the early twentieth century, children were being removed from the home, often on a permanent basis, without the intervention of the law. Understandably, this practice angered many. Thus, started the beginning of the bureaucracy of advocacy in government agencies.

This led the reader into the focal point of this paper, namely, the current state of child protection as viewed by the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and the consequent effect on the

rates of child abuse and neglect. This department was formed by the legislatures to provide, among other services, advocacy services to abused and neglected children. Figure 1 was used to inform the reader of the complexity of the system. Unfortunately, there are many points where the child can become lost in the process of being protected.

Hopefully, it is now evident to the reader how this information ties together. All of this information can be related to each other when one looks at the indication rates of child abuse and neglect for demographically similar counties. Even though there are differences in public opinion about the issue of child abuse/neglect and its advocacy, DCFS is ideally immune to this subjectivity. DCFS was formed to protect the child in an objective, or removed manner. Then, why do the indication rates for similar counties have such great variance?

Because child abuse and neglect is such a complex issue, differences between counties could be due to many different factors. Therefore, many current and respected theories from different areas of study were used in an attempt to understand why these differences between counties exist. The aim of the methodology utilized was to further advance our knowledge of child abuse and neglect. Although it often fell short of conclusiveness, it is felt that it can lead us to better advocacy of the child. Based on the information given, it is believed that steps can be taken to better protect the abused and neglected child.

Of the first five hypotheses considered, the relation of crime in a county seemed best related to indication rates. It indicated that as

crime increased in a county, its indication rate would likewise increase. Although tentative, it could be interpreted in the opposite direction--as indication rates rise, so do crime rates. This would imply that higher crime rates reveal higher rates of abuse and neglect in a county. This could possibly be used in conjunction with other research showing that being the victim of child abuse may lead to crime as an adult. Thus, there may be some validity in stating higher crime rates can be indicators for higher rates of abuse and neglect in a county. The remaining four variables, unemployment, divorce rate, minorities, and income, did not have enough support either on the statistical or face validity level.

The main part of the research was with the last two variables, organizational cohesion of the agency and its visibility in the community. It was hoped that both of these variables would be instrumental in answering the variances between individual county indication rates. However, this was not proved to be true. The amount of organizational cohesion of the agency was shown to have negligible effect on a county's indication rate. At this time it is difficult to determine whether this is an accurate deduction or, more likely, a failure of the questionnaire. Despite nonsupport in this pilot study, it is felt that this variable is very important in determining the number of children as victims of abuse and neglect. The work atmosphere, as set forth by the director of the agency, is still felt to have a large impact on the individual employee. Further research is strongly suggested and desired to create a more valid measure of the agency's cohesion.

Finally, the most supported hypothesis was found to be the amount of public visibility of the agency in the public's eye. It was believed that the greater the visibility of the agency, and thus direct social control by the public, the greater the indication rates would be for that county. This hypothesis was strongly supported by the data, both statistically and on its face validity. Counties that contracted out to many private agencies had a higher indication rate as well as more concern about public opinion, involvement in advocacy of the child, and general attitude towards their agency and goals. It is not believed that these results are spurious, but rather, are a beginning explanation of the variances of indication rates between similar counties. In other words, the more visible the agency is in the county, the more individuals are aware of the maximization of goal criteria of that agency. If the public is more aware, the agency will work harder to meet its goals, as set forth by the laws (see *An Act Creating The Department of Children and Family Services, 1988*). Conversely, if the agency is not very visible in the community, it feels less obligated to maximize its services because of a lack of interest and public scrutiny. Other indicators of agency visibility should be explored in future related research.

It must be remembered that each of the seven above independent variables most likely contributes, in some degree, to an individual county's indication rate. Or also, that each correlation was the result of a third, unexamined variable. One possible third variable could be the influence of the investigator who indicates a reported child. While there are legal guidelines, there remains much personal discretion. It would be valuable to interview these

investigators in further research. At the beginning of this study, it had been hoped to identify a clear indicator of the variances between agencies. However, based on the small sample, this was almost impossible. Plans for further research and an expanded study are in process.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Although inconclusive at this point, it is felt that this study has provided some valuable information. The introductory research showed the wide diversity of public opinion on even the existence of child abuse and advocacy. It is felt that action must be taken to educate communities of the frequency and the physical and emotional dangers of child abuse and neglect. It also explained the complex system of protecting the child in both the judicial system and through DCFS.

The methodology also raised some interesting information. It was initially felt that unemployment rates would lead to an increase of child abuse/neglect, which would in turn lead to higher indication rates. However, its inverse was found to be true. This is still not fully understood. Perhaps an expanded study would display the figures differently. Also, it was surprising to find such a high correlation between crime and indication rates. Being abused as a child is certainly not a healthy environment in which to develop, yet it was not expected to show its effects in crime rates as highly as it did. This can help exemplify the emotional impact of child abuse and neglect.

One disturbing factor of the study was the unavailability of county D's director. This person was never in, seemed to be in a meeting, or was on the telephone. With this busy schedule, one may question how this director can adequately supervise and give

support to a busy staff. At the same time, it may be that this person is doing what is expected, dealing with public problems.

Because only the last independent variable offered a strong answer, only one tentative solution can be offered. Measures can feasibly be taken which would increase the public's awareness of the issues of child abuse/neglect and about DCFS and its goals. Public awareness campaigns are one example. In addition, more private agencies could be required to be contracted out to by each office. This would help to increase public awareness, thereby increasing the number of children being protected.

Child abuse will never disappear. It has always existed and will continue to exist, even if we choose to turn our heads in disbelief. If measures are not taken to increase advocacy of the child in the near future, the consequences of our lack of action and care ought to be feared. Adequate advocacy of the child is needed for many reasons. First, it protects the already exploited child from the danger of more harm or neglect. Second, by stopping the abuse/neglect and providing adequate intervention services, we are contributing to the growth of a productive individual, instead of possibly creating a welfare case or an individual with severe emotional and physical disabilities. Third, it is just humane to want to protect those who cannot protect themselves. This final reason is felt by far to be the largest initiative to protect the abused and neglected child.

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APPENDIX A

Questionnaire Presented to Individual DCFS Directors

1. Do you feel there is much consensus in your office?
a) yes b) no
2. Are there quarrels between employees in your office?
a) many b) few c) none
3. How often do you have staff meetings to discuss what each employee has been doing?
a) 1 time/week b) 1 time/month c) every other month
d) twice/year e) 1 time/year f) never
4. How often do you meet with each employee to review their case load?
a) 1 time/week b) 1 time/month c) every other month
d) twice/year e) 1 time/year f) never
5. On the average, how long does an employee stay at your agency?
In other words, do you have a high turnover rate?
-This is an open-ended question
6. Are close tabs kept on employees comings and goings on a daily basis?
a) very close tabs b) loose tabs c) no tabs
7. Do you have any incentive programs or recognition awards to reward work on a case well done?
a) yes b) no
8. Do you have any feedback mechanisms, such as comment boxes, which allow for employees to anonymously suggest new programs or to criticize existing ones?
a) yes b) no
9. How long have you directed this agency?
10. Have you had training in managing a human service agency?
a) extensive b) some/brief c) none

11. How many people and who are involved in making decisions on a mundane task, such as buying paper products?

12. Do you feel you are:

a) good at delegating responsibility b) tend to want to keep responsibility to yourself c) keep the responsibility to you and just a few others

13. Do you feel you should be on a close, equal basis with your employees, or do you feel you should remain distant to most efficiently run your agency?

a) close, equal basis b) distant basis c) somewhere between a and b

14. How many private agencies do you contract out to in your area?

a) 0 b) 1-3 c) 4-6 d) 7-10 e) 11-13 f) 14-16
g) 17 and above

15. Can you briefly explain why you contract out to these agencies?

16. Do you feel you have much support of your agency within your area's general public?

a) much support b) average support c) low support

17. Do you feel you are accountable to the area's public for your employees' actions?

a) strongly feel this way b) accountable for some actions, but not others c) strongly disagree

18. What do you feel is the purpose of your agency?

19. Do you find your job rewarding?

a) almost always b) sometimes c) seldom