

A 10-YEAR STUDY OF ADAPTATION AND RESILIENCY IN SWEDISH FAMILIES

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Purpose: The purpose of this study was to continue longitudinal research of mothers which began in 1993-1994, "Maternal Adaptation and Family Dynamics During Childbearing and Childrearing in Norway, Sweden and the United States". In this "Time 4" continuation of the original study, the purpose was to validate conclusions from the three prior surveys and discover what Swedish mothers' lives had been like during the past 10 years using both qualitative methods and quantitative methods of research.

Method: Using a Swedish internet database and a Swedish colleague, seventeen women were located. Fourteen mothers completed the two quantitative instruments, the Family Apgar, and Family Adaptation Inventory. Thirteen of those mothers were interviewed using semi-structured interviews and audio-taping. Audio-tapes were transcribed, and two doctoral and one master's level faculty members from different institutions independently examined the verbatim transcriptions of participants. Raters were instructed to use a protocol based on a model of family resiliency. Themes were then defined and counted within the categories of Risk/Vulnerability and Protective Factors. The Swedish rater first detailed individual statements, and later completed a synthesis and integration of the two thematic lists based on Swedish culture and linguistics. Subsequently the primary investigator verified existing themes and confirmed the appropriate identification and labeling of themes among the raters.

Findings: Quantitative findings revealed statistically significant findings in areas of having preschool children in the home, number of hours mother's worked outside the home, and families in which a major illness had occurred. A high level of congruence among raters revealed the following qualitative findings. Protective factors far outweighed vulnerability and risk factors. Mothers' satisfaction with life manifested itself in love of home, contentment with employment, fulfillment from an active and healthy life, and support from a society that provides a wide range of social benefits for the family. Vulnerability occurred primarily when mothers were tired, lacked personal time, or someone in the family was experiencing a serious illness.

Discussion: The results of this study enhance the scholarly scientific knowledge about the uniqueness of Swedish mothers, and increased understanding of family dynamics, adaptation over time, and cross-national research of families. Many of the findings relate in some way to overall social benefits available for families. Although the American women have yet to be interviewed, it is expected that results will reveal a similar pattern of adaptation, but a different pattern of family life. NOTE: The American women will be interviewed in the Fall of 2004 prior to the SNRS conference so those results may be available for reporting.