An extended model of vulnerability

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Background
Since 1990 the vulnerability model for understanding mental illness as influenced by biological, psychological and sociological factors has been widely accepted within research focusing on the etiology of mental diseases. Yet, the exact influence of the three different factors has been purely defined and subject to basic disagreement. This paper tries to bring the discussion further by integrating sociological research on disability with current results within neurology, psychiatry and psychology.

Method
The history of disability research emphasizes both the rights and the oppression of people with disabilities. When integrating and synthesizing the knowledge of oppression, stigma, exclusion and accessibility with the neurological and neuropsychological knowledge today, it is possible to get closer to a theory of the sociological factors of mental illness and developmental disorders. Current research on neurological variations with respect to communicative abilities and the influence on the brain of stressors as well as a known diversity in normal psychological development can be related to current and classical sociological theories. The paper will outline some of these cross disciplinary considerations, its emerging trends and possible solutions.

Results and conclusions
Our conclusion has been that it is necessary to extend the traditional model of vulnerability and distinguish between two levels of vulnerability. The first level comprises the etiology of that impairment that we actually do not identify in any of the diagnostic systems. The second level comprises the interaction between the life-world of people with such impairment and the institutional systems of society as well as the conditions of everyday life. This is the level where the social problems of these people can be identified and thus it is possible to distinguish between impairment and disability when addressing the problems of people with mental illness and developmental disorder.